

Analyzing Leadership Attributes in Faith-Based Organizations: Idealism Versus Reality

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- This paper aims to contribute to the growing discussion about leadership in the contemporary Church of England with a particular interest in the complex interaction between social context and leadership practices.
- Implicit leadership theory (ILT) is used to explore mutual expectations around distributed models of lay and ordained leadership as well as ‘ordinary’ members’ of congregation.
- Applying a qualitative research method, we conducted 32 semi-structured interviews in 6 Church of England parishes.
- Through the systematic analysis of relevant contextual factors at multiple levels, we identify limited congruence between ideal leadership attributes and actual behavior.
- We contribute to the ILT literature by identifying ethical attributes, such as the ability to help others flourish, as particularly pertinent to the religious setting.
- We also identify the malleability of some leadership attributes. We further contribute to the literature on organizational studies in faith-based organizations by offering novel insights into the relationship between leadership, followership and contextual factors at local parish level which have significant practical implications for recruiting and training church leaders and followers.

Church of England contextual factors at parish level influencing the leadership expectations of leaders and followers and the relevance of leadership attributes

Theological Context	Social & Societal Context	Organisational Context- Institution CoE	Organisational Context- Wider Parish	Organisational Context- Parish	Personal Context
Understanding the role of the parish in the <i>missio dei</i> Understanding of ministry (e.g. evangelical)	Free Market Model Change in expectations of younger generation: Action-oriented Frenetic Limited time	Organizational tradition & structure Dispersed power & hierarchy Objectives: Focus on growth	Relationship to Cathedral, Diocese, Bishop Engagement with community	Initiatives such as Church Plant Cluster of parishes Merger of parishes Resource availability Fluctuation of vicars Characteristics of congregation Working with volunteers	Background/ Experience Personality Objectives and Understanding of clerical job role & congregation

Figure 1. Church of England contextual factors at parish level

Given the critical situation facing the Church of England, church leaders need to have a better understanding of what makes successful and long-standing relationships with congregational members. Since many clergy appear overstretched by the breadth of potential responsibilities, we suggest that awareness is promoted of dual leadership roles, distinguishing between the religious authority of clergy and institutional structures involving lay leaders (Harris 1998b). Thus, CPD training on delegation and shared leadership should be significantly enhanced, alongside training in basic managerial skills. Because of the competing expectations between clergy and laity which generated significant

levels of incongruence, clergy could also benefit from insights into ILT research as a way of actively forming more effective relationships (Epitropaki et al. 2013). This study has demonstrated that investigating the level of congruence between ILTs and actual leadership practices across three hierarchical levels in faith-based organizations is essential for understanding church-based leader-follower interactions. Contextual factors clearly have significant explanatory power for understanding complex leadership dynamics (and hence the malleability of ILTs) and for identifying ethical leadership attributes that have been overlooked in previous ILT research.



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