



FROM FAITH TO STEWARDSHIP: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF MOTIVATION TO LEAD IN THE PATH FROM GENERAL RELIGIOSITY TO FORMAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Alexander M. Ehms, Cole Lipiec, Dylan Apson, and Edgar De Leon

Stewardship is a calling, one that requires conviction, purpose, and a willingness to serve. Oftentimes, our religious beliefs instill a deep sense of responsibility to lead. This study examines how general religiosity influences the likelihood of holding a formal leadership position, proposing that Motivation to Lead (MTL) serves as the pathway through which faith inspires leadership. Using survey responses from working adults in the United States, our findings reveal that individuals with stronger religious beliefs are more likely to step into leadership roles, a pattern driven by two key motivational forces: Affective-Identity and Social-Normative motivations to lead. Those who see leadership as part of their identity and those who feel a moral obligation to lead are significantly more likely to occupy formal leadership positions. However, a willingness to lead without concern for personal gain, reflected in Non-Calculative motivation to lead, was not a significant predictor of leadership attainment, suggesting that leadership often requires more than just selfless intent; leadership requires a clear sense of purpose and responsibility. Our findings reinforce the biblical narrative that stewardship is a calling and a sacred duty.

Keywords: faith-based leadership, religiosity, calling to lead, Christian leadership, organizational leadership, motivation to lead

Leadership, in the Christian sense, is not a prize to be won nor a pedestal to climb. Godly leaders do not call the loudest, nor do they seek the spotlight. Instead, these leaders recognize that greater responsibility brings greater accountability before God (Luke 12:48). Leadership, therefore, is not a privilege to be pursued for personal

gain but a sacred responsibility for which leaders will ultimately give an account. Research has long established a link between general religiosity and prosocial behaviors. Ellison (1992) found that more religious individuals are more likely to exhibit interpersonal friendliness and cooperation. Similarly, Smith (1999) reported a positive relationship between religiosity and civic engagement, while Mattis et al. (2000) demonstrated that religiosity is associated with greater volunteerism. While previous research has examined the role of faith in shaping moral character and ethical decision-making, few studies have explored how religiosity influences leadership motivation and emergence in workplace settings (cf. King, 2008). Given that leadership requires guiding, mentoring, and supporting others, it is plausible that religiosity cultivates leadership aspirations and helps determine why one chooses to lead.

Although faith and religiosity are conceptually distinct, they are closely intertwined. Faith refers to an individual's theological beliefs and personal relationship with God. In contrast, religiosity reflects the extent to which those beliefs are internalized and expressed through religious commitment, identity, and practice. Because faith is inherently internal and difficult to observe directly, scholars frequently operationalize it through measures of religiosity that assess the centrality of religious beliefs in an individual's life. Accordingly, the present study examines general religiosity as an empirical indicator of lived faith, while recognizing that it does not capture all dimensions of spirituality.

Christianity offers a unique perspective on leadership, one that stands in stark contrast to the world's definition. Jesus Christ redefined greatness by teaching that true leadership is expressed through humble service to others (Matt. 20:26). Through this lens, leadership is not about rising above others but about how to lift them up. We propose that general religiosity cultivates leadership aspirations by influencing the underlying motivations that drive individuals to step forward. Motivation to Lead (MTL), as conceptualized by Chan and Drasgow (2001), is not a singular construct but a combination of three distinct forces that shape how individuals perceive and approach leadership.

For some, leadership is deeply personal. Affective-Identity MTL describes individuals who view leadership as an intrinsic part of their identity and who find purpose and fulfillment in guiding others. This motivation aligns with the Christian concept of calling, as believers are encouraged to use their God-given gifts in faithful service to others as stewards of His grace (1 Pet. 4:10). Those with strong religious convictions may naturally align with this perspective, seeing leadership not as a career move but as a divinely ordained vocation.

For others, leadership is less about personal desire and more about obligation. Social-Normative MTL reflects individuals who step forward not because they seek leadership but because they believe leading is the right thing to do. Likewise, Scripture portrays leadership as a sacred responsibility, calling leaders to faithfully care for those entrusted to them and to exercise stewardship with diligence and integrity (Prov. 27:23). Leadership, in this view, is a moral responsibility that must be taken seriously, not for personal gain, but for the well-being of others.

Finally, there are those who readily assume leadership, not because they desire power or feel obligated, but because they see an opportunity to serve. Non-Calculative MTL describes individuals who step into leadership without weighing the personal costs

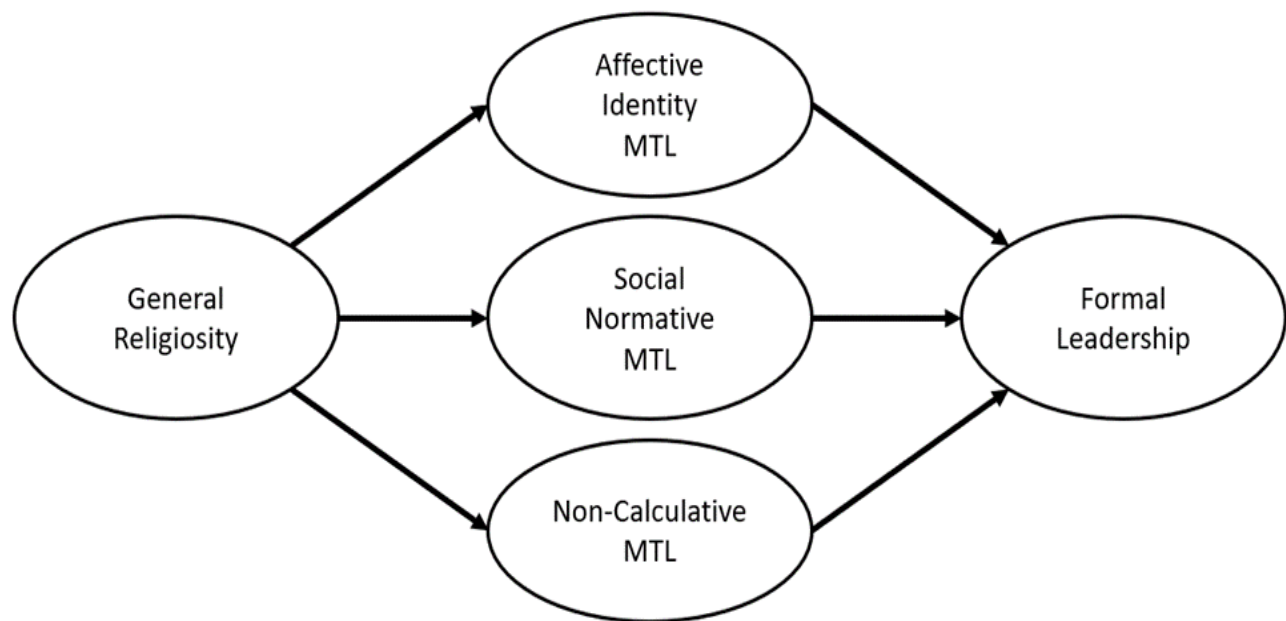
or benefits. Rather than asking, what do I gain from this? They ask, how can I contribute? This perspective reflects the biblical call to place the interests of others above one's own, choosing humble service over personal advancement and accepting leadership without regard for personal reward (Phil. 2:3–4). Together, these motivations form a framework for understanding why people lead, whether through identity, obligation, or selfless service.

If religiosity fosters these three leadership motivations, the final question is whether religiosity ultimately translates into leadership attainment. Research suggests that those highly motivated to lead, particularly those driven by Affective-Identity and Social-Normative motivations, are significantly more likely to pursue and obtain formal leadership roles within organizations (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). This suggests that religiosity not only inspires the desire to lead but may also influence those who step into leadership positions.

This study makes three key contributions to leadership research. First, the study builds on existing scholarship on faith and leadership, examining the link between religiosity, leadership motivation, and leadership attainment, an area underexplored in organizational studies. Second, the study sheds light on how faith influences the path to leadership, showing that MTL serves as the bridge between belief and action.

Finally, this study speaks directly to the role of faith in leadership and workplace culture, offering insight into how religious values intersect with inclusion and leadership development. While cases of religious discrimination have increased (Ghumman et al., 2013), our findings suggest that religiosity should not be viewed solely as a source of division in the workplace, but as a factor that can cultivate strong, prosocial leadership. Christian values of servant leadership, humility, and moral responsibility may offer organizations a framework for developing leaders who prioritize ethical decision-making, stewardship, and the well-being of others. For our complete theoretical model, please see Figure 1.

This paper follows a structure by building the theoretical foundation, exploring how general religiosity connects to MTL and the likelihood of attaining leadership roles. We present our hypotheses and explain our methodology, including how participants were selected, the measurement instruments used, and the analytical process. The results section outlines our findings on whether MTL serves as a bridge between religiosity and leadership attainment. In the discussion, we interpret these results, considering both theoretical insights and practical applications. We conclude by outlining key takeaways for those interested in applying biblical principles to the leader selection process.

Figure 1*The Mediation Pathway Linking Religiosity to Formal Leadership*

THEORY & HYPOTHESES

Religiosity shapes self-perception and confidence in leadership roles. Identity theories suggest that individuals who see themselves as leaders are more likely to pursue and attain leadership positions (Lord & Hall, 2005). Religious individuals often integrate faith into their self-concept, viewing service, guidance, and responsibility as part of their moral duty. This internalized leadership identity may explain why some researchers are of the mindset that religiosity translates into greater leadership aspirations and actual leadership attainment (King, 2008). Thus, one observes:

Hypothesis 1:

General religiosity is positively associated with occupying a formal leadership position. Building on the proposed direct relationship between general religiosity and leadership attainment, the following examines the motivational mechanisms by which faith may translate into formal leadership roles. Drawing on the multidimensional framework of MTL, we argue that religiosity shapes leadership emergence by strengthening individuals' leadership identity, reinforcing moral and social obligations to lead, and fostering a willingness to assume leadership responsibilities without concern for personal gain. Together, these motivational pathways offer a theoretically grounded explanation for how religious commitment moves beyond values and beliefs to influence concrete leadership outcomes, forming the basis for Hypotheses 2a through 2c.

Leadership is a quiet inheritance. For those shaped by faith, leadership does not begin with a title or a formal lesson but begins in the spaces where conviction meets

action. A pastor standing firm when others waver. An elder whose few words carry the weight of experience. Leadership is observed before it is understood, experienced before it is claimed. The foundation has already been laid in ordinary moments that hardly seemed to matter at the time. These moments, repeated over time, shape an individual's sense of social norms. Social learning theory suggests that people absorb behaviors by watching others (Bandura, 1986), and in religious settings, leadership is always on display. Leadership becomes not just an aspiration but an expectation. Leadership is something that is seen, understood, and eventually embraced. Likewise, Scripture emphasizes that individuals grow through the influence and refinement of one another, reinforcing the idea that leadership in faith communities is learned through observation, mentorship, and example (Prov. 27:17).

But leadership is more than observation. It is also identity. Rooted in symbolic interactionism, role identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2022) posits that people become who they are through the roles they assume and the expectations associated with those roles. In faith communities where service is woven into daily life, leadership often emerges not as an ambition but as an instinct. Small acts like sharing special music with the congregation or volunteering to lead the intercessory prayer do not come with titles or recognition. However, these experiences shape identity nonetheless, reinforcing the quiet pull toward something greater than the self. Each act strengthens the perception of leadership as part of one's identity, weaving leadership into the fabric of the individual. Likewise, Scripture encourages believers to live in a way that reflects God's character so that their actions point others to Him (Matt. 5:16). As individuals faithfully live out their calling, leadership often emerges naturally through the influence of their example.

At its core, leadership is more than identity or the result of social normative expectations; leadership is a reflex and a willingness to act without hesitation or expectation of reward. The Meaning-Making Model (Park, 2013) suggests that people strive to align their values with their actions, reducing the tension between belief and lived experience. For religious people, leadership is not a pursuit but a response, an expression of faith that takes shape in the moments when action is needed most. Whether guiding a congregation, uniting a community, or standing for justice, these acts are not about seeking recognition. They are a way of making belief tangible, ensuring that faith is not merely professed but lived, even in a world that continually challenges our faith. This principle is reflected in Scripture, where Christian leaders are called to shepherd those entrusted to their care willingly, serve eagerly rather than for personal gain, and lead by example rather than by exercising authority over others (1 Pet. 5:2–3). As such, leadership is not an achievement or a means to an end. Leadership is an outpouring of faith; an offering made without consideration of personal cost. Leadership is not about authority but about responsibility, taken up not for self-interest but for love of others. Those who answer this call do so not because they calculate the benefits, but because they cannot imagine doing otherwise. Thus:

Hypothesis 2a

Affective-Identity MTL mediates the relationship between general religiosity and occupying a formal leadership position, such that individuals with higher religiosity are

more likely to develop a strong leadership identity, which in turn increases the likelihood of holding a formal leadership role.

Hypothesis 2b

Social-Normative MTL mediates the relationship between general religiosity and occupying a formal leadership position, such that individuals with higher religiosity feel a greater sense of duty to lead, which in turn increases the likelihood of holding a formal leadership role.

Hypothesis 2c

Non-Calculative MTL mediates the relationship between general religiosity and occupying a formal leadership position, such that individuals with higher religiosity are more willing to assume leadership responsibilities without concern for personal gain, which in turn increases the likelihood of holding a formal leadership role.

METHODS

The study began with 360 participants, each recruited through Pollfish, a survey platform renowned for its vast global network of over 250 million voices spanning 160 countries. To ensure the study's relevance, only adults aged 18 and older, residing in the United States and actively employed, were invited to participate. Yet, as with any rigorous research, some participants were excluded from the final sample. Some exclusions were immediate. Twenty-six participants reported being unemployed, thereby disqualifying them from the final count. Others were subtler: 42 individuals, despite initially participating, reported disengaging toward the end of the survey, suggesting that their responses lacked the honest, accurate reflections necessary for meaningful insights. Six participants faltered on the attention checks embedded in the survey to distinguish the truly attentive from those merely clicking through.

By the end of this careful curation, 74 participants had been excluded, leaving a refined and reliable final sample of 286, with a robust 79.44% retention rate. These remaining voices spanned the full spectrum of experience, ranging in age from 19 to 79, with an average age of 40.38 years ($SD = 14.82$). Gender distribution was nearly even, with 50.35% identifying as male and 49.65% as female. Their backgrounds were equally diverse: 74.13% identified as Caucasian, 16.43% as Black, 3.50% as Asian, 2.45% as Hispanic, and the remaining 3.50% either selected "other" or preferred not to disclose their ethnicity. Furthermore, given our study's focus on leadership, 59.79% of participants identified as holding a formal leadership position in their current workplace.

Measures

All survey items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) unless otherwise indicated. All items were self-reported.

General Religiosity was measured by asking participants to complete a six-item scale originally developed by Shariff et al. (2008) and later refined by Ritter and Preston (2011). The scale exhibited strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.94$). Participants responded to items such as "I strongly believe in the teachings of my religion or faith"

and “My religion or faith holds significant importance in understanding who I am as a person.” Questions designed to go beyond religious affiliation, instead probing the extent to which faith shaped personal identity and worldviews.

MTL was measured using an abbreviated version of the scale originally developed by Chan and Drasgow (2001). Given the nature of the present study, shortening the instrument was both a methodological necessity and a strategic decision to reduce participant burden while maintaining data quality. Although shortening validated scales may reduce construct coverage, Gabriel et al. (2019) suggested that this risk can be minimized through the careful selection of items that adequately represent the underlying construct. Consistent with established recommendations for shortening validated instruments, item reduction should preserve the theoretical breadth of the construct rather than rely solely on internal consistency (Stanton et al., 2002) and should be guided by both psychometric performance and conceptual representation (Goetz et al., 2013). Because the three-dimensional structure of the MTL construct has been consistently supported in the literature (Badura et al., 2020), three items were retained for each of the original dimensions—Affective-Identity, Social-Normative, and Non-Calculative motivations—based on their theoretical relevance, psychometric performance, and ability to preserve the conceptual integrity of the original scale.

Affective-Identity MTL ($\alpha = 0.90$) was measured using the statements “I often prefer being a leader rather than a follower when working in a group,” “I usually want to be the leader of a group,” and “I tend to take charge in most groups or teams.”

Social-Normative MTL ($\alpha = 0.82$) was measured using the statements “I agree to lead whenever I am asked or nominated by other members,” “I believe in the value of leading others,” and “I volunteer to lead others if I can.”

Non-Calculative MTL ($\alpha = 0.76$) was measured using the statements “I will lead a group even if there are no clear advantages to leading,” “I never ask ‘what’s in it for me’ when deciding to lead,” and “I never expect to get more privileges for leading.”

Formal Leadership (i.e., whether participants held a formal leadership role) was measured by asking them to respond to the question: “Do you currently occupy a formal leadership position within the hierarchical structure of your organization, with responsibilities that include overseeing and managing other staff members?” While multi-item scales are typically preferred for measurement reliability, prior research supports using single-item measures in specific contexts where they effectively capture the intended construct (e.g., Conway et al., 2009).

Attention Checks were included in the study to account for the limited cognitive resources of participants and their potential to engage in satisficing instead of providing optimal responses to survey questions. Examples of these items include “Please select somewhat disagree” and “Please choose somewhat agree for your response to this item.”

Demographics such as age and gender often shape how individuals experience the workplace, subtly influencing behaviors, decisions, and interactions. In this study, these demographic factors were included as control variables, allowing for a more precise examination of the key relationships at play. Pollfish, the survey platform, had already gathered this information before participants even reached the questionnaire. This ensured that each respondent’s age and gender were seamlessly integrated into the dataset, eliminating the need for additional questioning.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics and correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1. As expected, general religiosity ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.69$) was positively associated with all three forms of MTL. Individuals who reported higher levels of religiosity were more likely to express a stronger leadership identity ($r = .26$, $p < .01$), a heightened sense of duty to lead ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), and a willingness to assume leadership roles without weighing personal costs ($r = .25$, $p < .01$). Religiosity was also significantly correlated with actually holding a formal leadership position ($r = .25$, $p < .01$), suggesting that faith may play a role in leadership attainment.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	40.38	14.82	(1.0)						
2. Gender	0.50	0.50	-.04	(1.0)					
3. General religiosity	4.62	1.69	-.03	.09	(.94)				
4. Affective-Identity	4.65	1.58	-.10	.14*	.26**	(.90)			
5. Social-Normative	5.14	1.33	.10	.11	.35**	.64**	(.82)		
6. Non-Calculative	4.86	1.35	.09	.06	.25**	.60**	.70**	(.76)	
7. Formal leadership	0.60	0.49	-.05	.20**	.25**	.32**	.34**	.24**	(1.0)

Note. $N = 286$. Means and standard deviations are reported in the raw metric of the variables. Cronbach's alpha is reported in parentheses in the diagonal.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Looking at the interplay between leadership motivations, Affective-Identity MTL showed a strong relationship with Social-Normative MTL ($r = .64$, $p < .01$) and Non-Calculative MTL ($r = .60$, $p < .01$), reinforcing the idea that those who see leadership as part of their identity often also feel a duty to lead and are willing to do so without concern for personal benefit. All three forms of motivation were significantly linked to the Formal Leadership position, with the strongest effects observed for the Social-Normative ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) and Affective-Identity ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) motivations.

Among the control variables, gender (coded as 0 = Female, 1 = Male) was positively correlated with holding a formal leadership role ($r = .20$, $p < .01$), indicating that men in the sample were more likely than women to occupy leadership positions. Age, however, showed no significant relationships with general religiosity, leadership motivation, or formal leadership, suggesting that leadership aspirations and attainment were not strongly tied to age differences in this sample.

Table 2 presents the regression analyses examining the effects of general religiosity on the three dimensions of MTL—Affective-Identity, Social-Normative, and Non-Calculative motivations. Across all models, general religiosity emerged as a significant predictor of leadership motivation, reinforcing the idea that faith may inspire individuals to take on leadership roles.

Table 2
Effects of General Religiosity on Motivation to Lead

Variables	Affective identity		Social normative		Non-calculative	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Constant	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)
Age	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)	0.10 (0.06)	0.11 (0.06)	0.09 (0.05)	0.10 (0.05)
Gender	0.13 (0.06)	0.11 (0.06)	0.11 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)
General religiosity		0.24 (0.06)***		0.35 (0.06)***		0.25 (0.06)***
R^2	0.03	0.09	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.07
ΔR^2		0.06		0.12		0.06

Note. $N = 286$. Table presents standardized β coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
 $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

For Affective-Identity MTL, which reflects an intrinsic desire to lead, general religiosity was positively associated ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$; Model 2). This suggests that individuals with strong religious beliefs are more likely to see leadership as part of their identity, supporting the notion that faith instills confidence in one's ability to guide others. A similar pattern emerged for Social-Normative MTL, which captures a sense of duty and obligation toward leadership. General religiosity was the strongest predictor in this domain ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$; Model 4), suggesting that highly religious individuals may feel a greater responsibility to step into leadership roles. For Non-Calculative MTL, which reflects a willingness to lead without concern for personal gain, general religiosity was again a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < .001$; Model 6). This indicates that more religious individuals are likely to assume leadership roles without focusing on personal costs or rewards, aligning with Christian principles of selfless service and humility in leadership.

Among the control variables, age and gender did not show consistent effects across the models, with no significant relationships emerging for leadership motivation dimensions. This suggests that religiosity, rather than demographic characteristics, is a more meaningful driver of leadership motivation in this sample. Taken together, these findings provide compelling evidence that general religiosity significantly influences all three components of MTL.

Table 3 presents the regression analyses examining the extent to which general religiosity and MTL predict the likelihood of occupying a formal leadership position. The results provide important insights into the direct and mediated effects of religiosity on leadership attainment.

In Model 7, gender was a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.20, p < .01$), indicating that men were more likely than women to hold formal leadership positions. In Model 8, general religiosity was positively associated with holding a formal leadership position ($\beta = 0.24, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. This suggests that individuals with higher religiosity scores were more likely to occupy formal leadership roles, even when controlling for demographic factors. Model 9 assessed the mediating effects of Affective-Identity, Social-Normative, and Non-Calculative motivations. When these variables were included in the model, the direct effect of general religiosity on leadership role occupancy weakened but remained significant ($\beta = 0.14, p < .05$), suggesting partial mediation. Notably, Affective-Identity MTL ($\beta = 0.16, p < .05$) and Social-Normative MTL ($\beta = 0.21, p < .05$) were both significant predictors of holding a formal leadership position, supporting Hypotheses 2a and 2b.

However, Non-Calculative MTL was not significantly associated with formal leadership role occupancy ($\beta = -0.04, p > .05$), meaning Hypothesis 2c was not supported. This suggests that while religiosity may encourage a willingness to lead without concern for personal gain, such motivation does not necessarily translate into obtaining a formal leadership position. Overall, these findings indicate that general religiosity influences leadership attainment both directly and indirectly through leadership motivation, particularly through the Affective-Identity and Social-Normative motivations. The non-significant effect of Non-Calculative MTL suggests that individuals who lead without weighing personal costs may not be as likely to secure formal leadership positions, possibly because leadership selection processes often reward individuals who actively seek and take ownership of leadership roles.

Table 3

Effects of General Religiosity and Motivation to Lead on Formal Leadership

Variables	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Constant	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.05)
Age	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)
Gender	0.20 (0.05)**	0.18 (0.06)**	0.14 (0.05)*
General religiosity		0.24 (0.05)***	0.14 (0.06)*
Affective identity MTL			0.16 (0.07)*
Social normative MTL			0.21 (0.09)*
Non-calculative MTL			-0.04 (0.08)
R^2	0.04	0.10	0.18

ΔR^2	0.06	0.08
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Note. $N = 286$. Table presents standardized β coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that higher levels of general religiosity are associated with leadership motivation and attainment. Within the Christian theoretical framework developed in this paper, these findings are interpreted as consistent with the influence of faith on leadership. When individuals report higher levels of religiosity, they are more likely to see themselves as leaders and to feel a sense of moral responsibility to lead. These are not minor psychological effects; they are identity-shaping forces that manifest into real-world leadership attainment. For administrators and particularly those in Christian institutions, this raises a compelling question: Does our leadership selection process align with the values we claim to uphold?

Too often, formal leadership roles are awarded based on visibility, self-promotion, or strategic ambition; characteristics that do not necessarily reflect the type of non-calculative leadership Christ modeled. Those motivated by faith may lead quietly, out of a deep sense of duty, not for reward or recognition, and yet, the findings of this study would suggest that this selfless motivation is not associated with leadership attainment. These individuals may be overlooked precisely because they are not pursuing leadership for personal gain. Their commitment is not rooted in what they can achieve, but in whom they serve.

This calls for a rethinking of how we recognize and elevate leaders. Administrators should begin by questioning their criteria: Are we rewarding boldness more than humility? Are we mistaking charisma for character? Are we unintentionally reinforcing secular leadership norms in spaces that should be governed by spiritual discernment?

The story of David's anointing demonstrates that God does not evaluate leaders by outward appearance but by the condition of their hearts (1 Sam. 16:7). Even the prophet Samuel initially judged Eliab by his impressive stature, yet God chose David because He saw qualities that were invisible to human eyes. In the same way, Christian institutions must develop the eyes to see leaders the way God sees them. Not by resumes or rhetoric, but by the condition of the heart. That discernment requires more than interviews or CVs; it calls for spiritual attentiveness and a willingness to elevate those who may never seek power but are already faithfully leading in quiet ways.

Scripture doesn't leave us without structure. 1 Timothy 3:1–13 outlines the characteristics of worthy leaders—integrity, faithfulness, humility, and self-control—not flashy talent or public visibility. These are measurable not through performance reviews, but through sustained relationships, community witness, and spiritual fruit. If a candidate's leadership flows from faith, that flow should be evident in how they live, not just in how they speak.

This study invites practitioners to do more than analyze. This study calls for action. Administrators need to create space for leadership to emerge organically from

service. Paying attention to those who lead through example, not title. And most importantly, we need to ensure that institutional practices reflect the kind of leadership the faith proclaims; leadership that seeks not to be served, but to serve.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. Most notably, religiosity was operationalized using a general measure of religious belief and personal faith importance rather than a construct specifically designed to capture the Christian spiritual orientation. This, unfortunately, makes it difficult to assess the nuanced ways in which Christian faith shapes leadership identity, moral obligation, and stewardship. Christianity emphasizes distinct spiritual principles such as humility and sacrificial service that may not be fully captured by generalized religiosity scales. As a result, the strength and nature of the observed relationships may differ when faith is measured through constructs more closely aligned with Christian theology.

Future research would benefit from the use of scales such as the Christian Religious Internalization Scale (Ryan et al., 1993) or the Christian Spirituality Scale (Biaggi, 2018) in studies that seek to replicate these findings and provide further empirical evidence for the theoretical arguments in this paper. Such constructs may offer greater explanatory power in understanding how Christian values translate into leadership motivation and leadership emergence. By moving beyond general religiosity, scholars can better capture the mechanisms through which Christian faith shapes leadership behavior and organizational influence.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps no biblical figure better illustrates the findings of this study than Nehemiah, a man whose leadership was neither inherited nor sought for personal glory, but emerged from conviction, prayer, and deep responsibility. Nehemiah was not a priest, prophet, or military general. He was a cupbearer—a civil servant in exile. And yet, when he learned that the walls of Jerusalem lay in ruin, he did not wait for a title or commission. He wept. He fasted. He prayed. And then he acted.

What is striking is how closely Nehemiah's story mirrors the type of leadership motivation explored in this research. He is moved not by self-interest, but by duty (Social-Normative MTL). His sense of identity is entwined with his faith and his people (Affective-Identity MTL). And while he shows little concern for recognition or reward, he accepts the burdens of leadership because the work must be done (Non-Calculative MTL). At every step, Nehemiah grounds his decisions in faith, not ambition, and earns his influence through character and consistency.

For today's administrators, especially in Christian institutions, Nehemiah's story is more than an inspiring tale. Nehemiah's story is a model. The leaders worth elevating may not be the ones who campaign for visibility, but the ones who quietly carry burdens no one else will. They are often the ones praying behind closed doors, serving when no one is watching, and leading without a platform. They may not fit institutional molds, but they carry within them the very essence of biblical leadership. Like Nehemiah, they do not need recognition to lead; they need only a cause, a call, and the courage to say yes. In a world where leadership is often equated with visibility and control, this research is a

reminder that in the Christian tradition, the path to leadership begins with surrender, sacrifice, and service. The challenge for administrators is to build systems that can see that path clearly and honor it.

About the Author

Dr. Alexander Ehms is an Assistant Professor at Buffalo State University with 16 years of professional experience and a doctorate in Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management.

Cole Lipiec is a digital marketing professional at Northtown Automotive Companies and an Honors graduate of SUNY Buffalo State.

Dylan Apson is a Digital Marketing Apprentice at Google with an M.S. in Business Management from SUNY Buffalo State.

Edgar De Leon is Pastor of the Buffalo Suburban Seventh-day Adventist Church and holds degrees from Southern Adventist University and Andrews University.

Together, the authors share a commitment to faith, leadership, and service.

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