

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF PASTORAL CARE SKILLS FOR SEMINARIANS IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Manh Ha<sup>1</sup>  
Poonpilas Asavisanu<sup>2</sup>

**Received:** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Revised:** 30<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Accepted:** 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to develop a leadership model for the enhancement of pastoral care skills of seminarians in Vietnam. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied during the study, which included document study and content analysis, interviews, and questionnaires to find the desirable pastoral and leadership characteristics and to determine the gap between the current and desired characteristics of the parish priests. The participants of the study included 2,308 seminarians and parishioners from six seminaries in Vietnam. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. A paired-samples t-test and Pearson correlation were conducted. The findings from the study revealed the following eight characteristics relevant to pastoral care: Protection, Wisdom, Sanctity, Humility, Creativity, Courage, Confidence, and Care. A paired-samples t-test was conducted on pastoral characteristics for both the current and expected states. There was a significant difference in the scores for *CPC* ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) and *EPC* ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ );  $t(2,308) = 40.263$ ,  $p = .000$ . A paired samples t-test was also conducted on leadership characteristics for both the current and expected states. A significant difference was also found for the *CLC* ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) and *ELC* ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ );  $t(2,308) = 40.497$ ,  $p = .000$ . The statistical findings indicated that there was a difference in the expectations of parishioners and seminarians in the pastoral care they were receiving and the expected and current leadership characteristics of their parish priests. This supports the need for a model to be implemented during seminarians' training to carry out their future responsibilities as parish priests more effectively. A subsequent model was developed incorporating the eight characteristics of pastoral care and leadership and sent to religious experts for approval and validation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D., in Educational Leadership, Chaplain for Vietnamese Catholic Migration in Bangkok Archdiocese of Thailand, manhaop@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Program Director, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand. poonpilasav@au.edu

**Key Words:** Pastoral and Leadership Characteristics; Seminarians; Parishioners; Parish Priests;

### **Introduction**

One of the world's major religions is Catholicism; it teaches people to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and encourages Catholics to attend church services, such as the Holy Mass on Sundays and on significant feast days of the church. Attendance by Catholics at Holy Mass during the past decade in the United States has significantly decreased in contrast with the steady level of attendance by Protestants in their Church services (SAAD, 2018). From 2005-2008, about 45 percent of Catholics had been attending the Holy Masses in the church, but from 2014 to 2017, this ratio decreased to approximately 39 percent. As a religion in Vietnam, Catholicism has been confronted with many challenges, including political pressure from the country's communist government, strong authoritarian repression, and other local problems. Despite these challenges, Catholicism in Vietnam has been growing, and the attendance rate in Holy Mass in Vietnam's Catholic Churches has been as high as 80-90 percent. Nonetheless, changes in the social landscape, both globally and locally, in the thoughts and perspectives of younger generations and family and traditional structures have presented new pastoral challenges for Catholicism in Vietnam (Catholic Vietnam, 2016).

The Church in Vietnam has encountered similar problems as the other Catholic churches around the world, where recently, parishioners and churchgoers have decreased in number, falling from 80% in 2002 to 72% in 2015 (Vietcatholic, 2018). Noting that some dioceses and parishes lack prudent priests to take care of the parishes and parishioners (Thien, 2017), it has become crucial for the parishes to have dedicated priests with good leadership skills in pastoral care and management, to run and stably develop the parishes effectively, and be able to draw in more parishioners to attend the Holy Mass. Adding to such concerns is secularization which tends to discourage Priests from keeping good spiritual life, including the inability to keep their vow of chastity; while also striving to cope with many pitfalls like financial problems, animosity issues, and power that could eventually destroy their religious faith (Huy, 2014). Materialism is another influential concern that could also affect the priests' attitude resulting in neglect of their duties in the parishes under them.

Pastoral care is a basic responsibility of Catholic priests, especially in their roles as church leaders, parish pastors, or parish priests. Pastoral care refers to the services rendered by the parish priest to his flock — the parishioners-regarding their spiritual needs through spiritual guidance and counseling. In the rapidly changing pace of the world's religious environment, it has become

necessary to re-examine parish priests' skills in leadership and pastoral care to meet the demanding context of today's parishioners. Pastoral care, therefore, needs to respond to the multitude of modern-day demands, which implies that pastoral care should aim to renew the faith of the Christian community and contribute to the solidarity of the Catholic faith. Notable questions have been confronting many contemporary leaders of the Catholic faith. For example, what is the root cause of the decreasing number of people attending Church services, especially during the Holy Mass. Some researchers point out that one of the causes could be secularization or the disassociation or separation from religious or spiritual concerns (Dobbelaere, 2011). Other causes mentioned in FABC (2010) include the incompetence of leaders and inadequate skills in management and pastoral care, among others. Considering that pastoral care is one of the primary aspects of serving the parishioners and is a major responsibility of the parish priest, knowledge in pastoral care should therefore be inculcated among the seminarians.

### **Research Objectives:**

The following research objectives form the basis for this study:

1. To determine the desirable pastoral and leadership characteristics of parish priests according to the Bible and Catholic theology, Catholic experts and parishioners
2. To identify the expected and current pastoral characteristics of the parish priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam
3. To determine the expected and current leadership characteristics of the parish priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam
4. To find the difference between the expected and current pastoral characteristics of the parish priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam
5. To establish the difference between the expected and current leadership characteristics of the parish priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam
6. To examine the relationship between the current pastoral characteristics and current leadership characteristics of the parish priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam
7. To propose a leadership model for enhancement of the pastoral care skills for seminarians in Vietnam

### **Literature Review**

#### *Leadership in the Development of Pastoral Care According to the Bible*

According to the Bible, in the development of skills in pastoral care, leadership is advantageous for Christian leaders. Like shepherds, Christian leaders guide the parishioners and understand them in the unique way that is described in the Bible. The use of leadership for the development of pastoral care skills is declared many times in the Old Testament and New Testament. The Holy

Bible lists leadership extremely clearly with four major tasks of leaders. According to Holy Bible, the duties of leaders are:

*Protecting the flock with confidence*

Leaders must have the courage to protect their flock (or parishioners) from predators and wolves. Leaders have to sacrifice themselves for their parishioners. St. Matthew, repeating the words of Jesus Christ, declared that “even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20: 28).

*Managing the parish with wisdom*

The most important characteristic that a shepherd leader must possess to lead the community and church entrusted to them is wisdom. The leader runs the parish and helps the parishioners with their spiritual direction, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10: 27), and he “leads them out” (John 10:3).

*Leading the flock with sanctity*

As a shepherd, the leader should have sanctity because he follows the steps of Jesus Christ, who always has sanctity. “Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy” (Levi 19:2). Parish priests should respond to that calling. In fact, the parish priest who leads the souls of parishioners should be holy. Otherwise, “Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?” (Luke 6:39).

*Administering the parish with humility*

Like the shepherds, leaders should be humble like their Master Jesus Christ, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philip 2: 6-8). “The Lord has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted the lowly” (Luke 1:52). Saint Augustine also said, “Humility is the foundation of all other virtues.” Hollerich (2018) also stated, “I shall want nothing except the grace of humility to serve the Church.”

The Church pastors or parish priests must have a very strong connection to God by covering themselves with a serving attitude, obtaining individual duty, including a conscience of mercy, complying with God’s rules, recognizing God’s speech, and relating themselves to God’s expressions. In the Book of Proverbs, the ten individual attributes of the parish priest are stipulated: knowledge, truthfulness, caring for, consulting with the wiser, self-discipline, knowledge of persuasion, consideration, restraint, and obedience to God. In

his epistles or letters, St. Paul pointed out the personal traits of a leader: assurance, humbleness, enthusiasm, brawny spirit traits, forgiveness, high quality in paying attention, and willingness to change.

Along the lines of the Holy Bible, leadership is crucial in the development of pastoral care skills for Christian leaders. Like shepherds, Christian leaders guide the parishioners, and understand them in the unique way that is described in the Bible. The use of leadership for the development of pastoral care skills is declared many times in the Old Testament and New Testament. The Holy Bible lists leadership extremely clearly with major tasks of leaders, which implies that the duties of Catholic leaders should focus on: protecting the flock with confidence; managing the parish with wisdom; leading the flock with sanctity, and administering the parish with humility.” Hollerich (2018) added that the Church pastors, also known as parish priests, must have a very important connection to God, by covering themselves with a serving attitude, obtaining for themselves individual duty, including a conscience of mercy, complying with God’s rules, recognizing God’s speech, and relating themselves to God’s expressions. In the Book of Proverbs, the ten individual attributes of a Pastor are stipulated as knowledge, truthfulness, caring for, consulting with the wiser, self-discipline, knowledge of persuasion, consideration, restraint, and obedience to God. In his epistles or letters, St. Paul also stressed that the personal traits of a Catholic leader should include: assurance, humbleness, enthusiasm, brawny spirit, forgiveness, high-quality in paying attention, and willingness to change. One of the missions of a pastor is to transform parishioners to become good and perfect because the heavenly God, the Father in heaven, is perfect. Transformational leadership can help the Christian leaders, especially the Pastors to raise the parishioners to a high level as the Almighty Father in heaven. Burns (1978), who proposed the notion of transformational leadership, expressed it not as a set of specific behaviors but rather a process by which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation.” He added that transformational leaders are individuals who appeal to higher ideals and moral values.

Christian leaders should follow Jesus Christ like the servants who are called to serve others, not to be served. Servant leadership is therefore suitable for Christian leaders. The term servant leadership was coined by Greenleaf (1977), who emphasized that servant leaders must possess good qualities that stand for peace, tranquility, and common good for all, implying that they should stand for values and live a principled life through which they stand to represent, be an advocate of meaningful work ensuring social equity, fairness, and harmony among their followers. Scholars such as Graham (1991), Akuchie (1993), Hawkinson and Johnston (1993), Snodgrass (1993), Spears

(1996), and Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) also stressed two main elements of servant leadership, which are interests for tasks and interests for human beings. While Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) used five elements to describe the characteristics of ideal servant leaders, i.e., altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational building, Spears (1996), who studied the servant leadership style from Greenleaf, developed and expanded Greenleaf's notion further with ten elements, i.e., listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building.

Pastoral Counseling, as defined by Benner (1992), refers to the guidance adopted by the Church experts to provide console to those people who are in difficult situations. It is carried out by enhancing their understanding of God's grace and faithful attendance or consciences, and thereby enhancing their capability to live their lives in more abundance and in the radiance of such consciousness. Catholic Priests of today play a number of roles in the day to day life of the faithful in the church. Priests and Pastors are expected to live a life similar to that of Jesus Christ by setting an example as leaders, helpers, and as healers. Part of the job of a Parish Priest as a helper, is to provide pastoral counseling services to parishioners and members under his care. Within this context, the Catholic priest must employ his knowledge of the Holy Bible and spirituality to help individuals overcome such problems as depression, anxiety, marriage and family conflicts, and drug and alcohol abuse (Worthington et al., 1996).

#### *Seminarian Formation*

Seminarians should follow Jesus Christ, who is their master and Lord. The training that seminarians receive during their formation is aimed at making them essential leaders. They are members of the church and receive the authority and power during the laying of hands by the bishop at the time of their priestly ordination. The Catechism of Catholic Church, no. 771, mentions that "the Church is essentially human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities." It explains that "the Church is the visible society and the spiritual community" (John Paul II, 1997). Every organization here on earth needs leaders, and in the same way, the Catholic Church is also in need of leaders. The difference is that their leadership is servant leadership, and their authority comes from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew's gospel clearly explains that Jesus Christ is the founder of the church, and He gave them power of leadership over the church to his apostles. The apostles of Jesus Christ selected their followers from among their disciples and called them "bishops, priests and deacons" so that they may

fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ (John Paul II, 1992). While giving the authority and power to his disciples, Jesus told them that “as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” The followers of Jesus are known as the apostles. To lead the Christian community of the future and to evangelize the world, the Lord Jesus had given the Apostles special powers and authority (John Paul II, 1992). In chapter ten of the Gospels of Mathew and Luke, Jesus Christ stated that “he who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects who sent me, and he who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me.” Jesus appointed Saint Peter as the head and father of the Christian community, the so-called church. The Gospel of Mathew mentions that Jesus even changed the former name of Simon to Peter, which means “rock.”

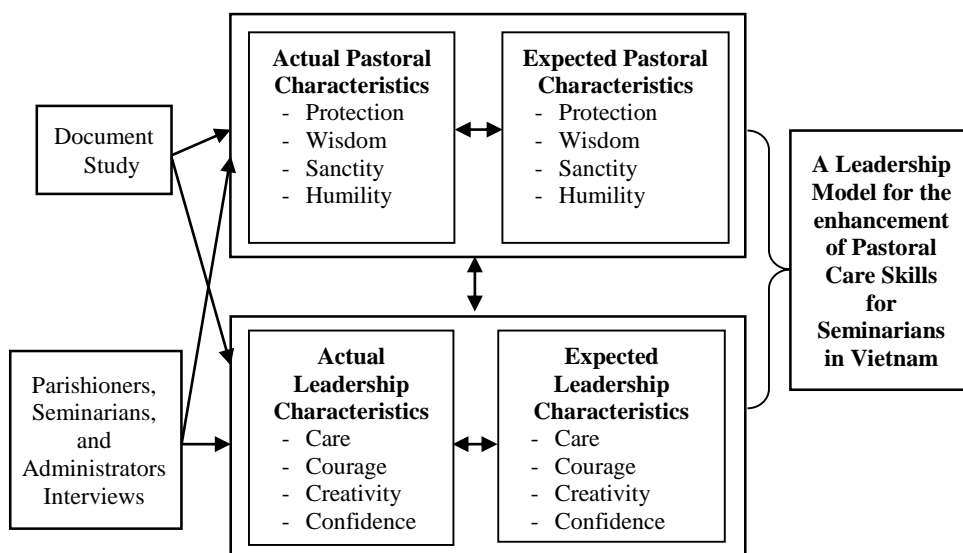
The seminarians are the future priests, that is, the leaders of the Christian community that will be entrusted to their care. So, they should follow the example of Christ, who had great concern for the people during His life here on earth. Jesus, the great leader, whom the seminarians are supposed to follow, gave up even his life for the people as part of his mission. While following the example of Jesus in their life, the seminarians should follow certain lifestyles, for example, the life of obedience, life of celibacy, life of poverty, etc. As part of this mission, seminarians should give up their personal belongings, including their homes and parents. This is to make them fully available for the community of faithful who will be taken care of by them (John Paul II, 1992). The future leaders of the church, the seminarians, should completely devote their entire life to following Christ and as leaders of the church.

Seminary formation in the Asian context, especially in the context of Vietnam, is aimed at preparing the young generation interested in becoming priests for the proclamation of the Good News. For the smooth completion of this objective, seminarians should be able to understand the particular socio-cultural context of Vietnam and the broader context of the Asian continent. For the attainment of this goal, seminarians should know not only the doctrine of the church but also the environment of their mission. Studying at the seminary prepares priest candidates for a fundamental understanding of the truth of revelation and the treasury of human wisdom so that they can serve the church and people, especially in ethical aspects. For this, seminarians are expected to know the region’s traditions, major religions, different political affiliations, Asian theology, philosophy, and religious and cultural studies. The seminary for Church service, especially the Church in Vietnam, contributes to evangelization in the context of culture, etc. The purpose of training could be summarized in seven categories: holy, liberal, independent,

mature human and emotional, proficient in spiritual values, intimate, and devoted (John Paul II, 1992).

Seminary formation can be divided into two parts, minor seminary training and major seminary training. Seminarians, the young people who desire to follow the example of Jesus, are admitted to the minor seminaries after their school education. Then they undergo several years of formation there, basically in the areas of the Bible, languages, spirituality, and liturgy, among others. The seeds of a priestly vocation are primarily sown there in the minor seminaries with the special care of the seminary formators. After having completed the specific years of formation in the minor seminaries, candidates are sent to the major seminary, where they undergo training mainly in philosophy and theology. In the major seminary, seminarians are given clear training in the doctrines of the church, liturgy, theology, church's fathers, sacraments, etc. During seminary formation, seminarians are also addressed as "Brothers."

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### Method

The research study utilized an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. In order to arrive at the ultimate goal of developing the model, steps were undertaken to achieve the objectives of the research study. These steps were: (1) determining the desirable pastoral and leadership characteristics of parish priests according to the Bible and Catholic theology, Catholic experts, and parishioners; (2)



identifying the expected and current pastoral characteristics of the Parish Priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam; (3) determining the expected and current leadership characteristics of the Parish Priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam; (4) finding the difference between the expected and current pastoral characteristics of the Parish Priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam; (5) establishing the difference between the expected and current leadership characteristics of the Parish Priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam; and (6) examining the relationship between the current pastoral characteristics and current leadership characteristics of the Parish Priests in the six seminaries in Vietnam. Through these steps, the objectives of the research study were achieved through a content analysis of the documents related to the Church doctrines, interviews of the administrators of the six seminaries in Vietnam, development of a survey instrument that was distributed to the parishioners of the dioceses of the six seminaries.

#### *Instrument Development*

For the first and second objectives, document analysis of 105 documents comprising 73 books of the Holy Bible and 32 Church documents, including books on Catholic theology, articles, and journals, was conducted to find the ideal characteristics of parish priests in terms of pastoral care. Additionally, literature related to Transformational and Servant Leadership was reviewed to identify good leadership traits and literature related to pastoral counseling frameworks. In order to confirm the findings from the content analysis, six administrators from seminaries in Vietnam were interviewed. The responses from the interviews were analyzed using quantitative content analysis the main ideas and themes were extracted to provide the constructs related to pastoral care and leadership needed to draft the questionnaire. The questionnaire was finalized, validated, and pilot tested according to standard research methodology and was then distributed to the target population.

#### *Population and Sample*

From a total population of 2,246,402 parishioners in the dioceses of Vietnam and 1,082 seminarians in the six seminaries, a sample size of 2,450 was determined based on the standardized table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The respondents were randomly selected, and the questionnaires were distributed in person. A total of 2,309 respondents returned the questionnaires indicating a return rate of 94.2 %. Please see Table 1. Of the 2,309 confirmed respondents, 925 were seminarians (40 %), and 1,384 (60 %) comprised the other parishioners in the dioceses.

Table 1: *Total population in six seminaries in Vietnam, number of samples, and respondents who returned the questionnaires*

Seminaries in Vietnam	Population (parishioners/seminarians)		Questionnaires distributed	Returned questionnaires	%
St. Joseph Seminary, Hanoi Archdiocese	315,764	186	420	395	94.1
Hue Seminary, Hue Diocese	72,210	143	300	277	92.3
Vinh Thanh Seminary, Vinh Diocese	558,256	206	430	401	93.3
Sao Bien Seminary, Nha Trang Diocese	220,000	175	370	347	93.8
St. Joseph Seminary, Saigon Archdiocese	688,710	207	530	506	95.5
St. Quy Seminary, Can Tho Diocese	191,462	165	400	383	96.0
Total (six dioceses)	2,246,402	1,082	2,450	2,309	94.2

## Findings

The findings from the first objective, the document analysis, revealed the following eight characteristics relevant to pastoral care: *Protection, Wisdom, Sanctity, Humility, Creativity, Courage, Confidence, and Care*. They are explained here:

### *Protection*

Refers to the ability of parish priests to protect the parishioners. Parish priests help the parishioners overcome their difficulties and provide comfort and support.

### *Wisdom*

Refers to the ability of the pastor to give or to provide the word of God, sound doctrine, sacramental celebrations, and pastoral care in the parish, hospital, and home. This includes exercising the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel, and teaching the Catholic faith (in accordance with the rite of priest's ordination).

*Sanctity (Holiness)*

This characteristic would define who the pastor is. He is a human but also holy because he follows Jesus Christ his master, who is holy. He prays for himself to be holy, to be a good example for others, and encourages people to pray for themselves and for the world.

*Humility*

Refers to the characteristics of a pastor as a human being who should be humble. The priest needs to be aware that he is human but called by God to be a representative of Jesus Christ in the world. God works through the priest and what he does shows that he is the pen in God's hand.

*Creativity*

Refers to the ability of the pastor to run or lead the parish and the parishioners through his efforts as he sees the good and positive things about others. Parishioners often do not have high education, so by searching for new things and information, the parish priest could have some new information to share with the parishioners, which is also necessary.

*Courage*

Refers to the ability of the pastor to run or lead the parish. As Pope Benedictine XVI said to the seminarians of Almo Capranica Seminary of Rome Diocese on 20/1/2006, "This world is in need of courageous, loving priests, who are not afraid to bring God's love to all, especially those who are miserable in poverty or struggle with difficulties." These aspirations are attained when the parish priest. To advise and express ideas to others is difficult, especially when they are doing wrong, but the pastor needs to be brave to lead others to go the right way as the church taught and in God's will, but he needs to choose the appropriate time.

*Confidence*

This refers to the characteristic of a parish priest to run or lead the parish. The pastor leads the people to God and God's people on their faith journey. He runs the parish with confidence and will not be afraid of anybody or anything.

*Care*

Refers to the ability to take care of the needs of the parishioners. The parish priest is like a father in the family and stands behind the stage to provide support for parishioners to do good things like charity or contribute to building the society

Findings for the remaining objectives included determining the gap between the current and expected pastoral care and leadership states and statistical analysis to determine if there was a significant difference between the means of the current and expected values. A paired-samples t-test was conducted on pastoral characteristics for both the current and expected states. There was a significant difference in the scores for *CPC* ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) and *EPC* ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ );  $t(2,308) = 40.263$ ,  $p = .000$ . Please see Table 2 for a detailed explanation.

Table 2. *Difference Between the Expected and Current Pastoral Characteristics of Parish Priests in Seminaries in Vietnam*

		Paired Differences				t	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Mean df.	SD df.			
Pair	EPC	4.07	0.39	0.46	0.55	40.26	2309	0.000
	CPC	3.62	0.51					

A paired samples t-test was also conducted on leadership characteristics for both the current and expected states. A significant difference was also found for the *CLC* ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) and *ELC* ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ );  $t(2,308) = 40.497$ ,  $p = .000$ . Please see Table 3.

Table 3. *Difference Between the Expected and Current Leadership Characteristics of the Parish Priests in Seminaries in Vietnam*

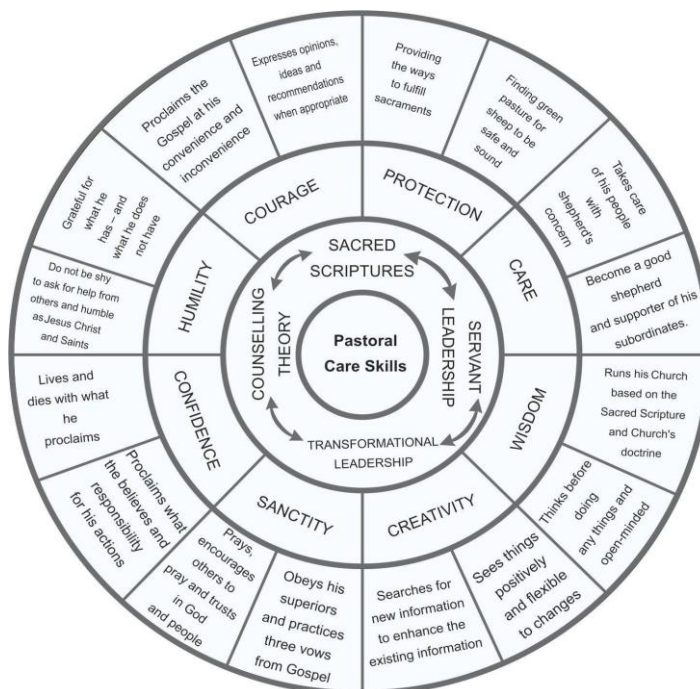
		Paired Differences				t	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Mean df.	SD df.			
Pair	ELC	4.07	0.46	0.51	0.60	40.49	2309	0.000
	CLC	3.56	0.55					

The statistical findings indicated a difference in the expectations of parishioners and seminarians in the pastoral care they were receiving and the expected and current leadership characteristics of their parish priests.

#### *Model Development*

From the findings of the previous research objectives, a model was developed. The model incorporated the pastoral care skills and findings from the study. The model was validated by 25 experts who had knowledge, experience, and expertise related to the Catholic religion and seminarian training. For the development of this model, the researcher made use of the results of the first

three objectives to identify the most appropriate pastoral care skills. Then, referring to the three leadership theories mentioned earlier and the Sacred Scriptures, the eight pillars were created, indicated in the model's second ring. From these eight pillars, the researcher then included the corresponding elements that most respondents considered essential (the researcher chose two highest score items of each pillar) for pastoral care skills. These elements were derived from the results of the analysis of the following three objectives of the research study, which specifically led to the necessary elements of the pastoral and leadership characteristics of parish priests. Finally, these elements went into the outermost ring of the model, appropriately corresponding to the eight pillars. It should be noted that the researcher intentionally used the keyword 'pastoral care' in the middle of the model because this is the output of this research study. The following are the elements in the established Leadership Model. The final model is shown below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Final Leadership Model for Enhancement of Pastoral Care Skills for Seminarians in Vietnam**

## Discussion

In order to obtain the most tangible impacts from the research study, the established leadership model could be introduced in the formation program of seminarians in the six seminaries in Vietnam, in five (5) units of lectures as well as during the practical session (practicum). The expected outcome

resulting from the adoption of the model would enable the seminarians to 1) Acquire the knowledge about nature, concepts, aims and objectives of pastoral care skills; 2) Develop their ability to integrate pastoral care skills in the present and future of their pastoral works (ministry); 3) Understand the dimensions of a culture of their pastoral ministry such as humanistic, personal, social, religious, psychological, emotional, and so forth; 4) Develop the attitude to appreciate the role of service and practices of different circumstances; 5) Understand the new model in order to serve better in their pastoral ministry; 6) Develop their skills to adapt the different strategies in pastoral ministry, and 7) Develop positive attitude in promoting pastoral care skills through this effective model.

In the analysis of the respondents' perceptions, a difference was found between the current and expected perceptions of parishioners on the pastoral care that they receive. As this difference was significant, it suggested that parish priests should improve or enhance their pastoral care characteristics to be able to fully carry out pastoral care as directed by the Gospel and the sacred tenements of the Catholic Church. The characteristics of parish priests on protection, wisdom, sanctity, humility, courage, creativity, confidence, and care could not be disputed as to their desired and accepted characteristics, and their importance was shown by the high means obtained from the sample. However, demonstration of such characteristics might not have been shown evenly or at all times by parish priests in the eyes of their parishioners. Considering the positive perceptions of parishioners toward their parish priests should be upheld, especially in the current environment, as they are the religious leaders who need to sustain the ability to powerfully influence their followers (Küng, 2001). As attendance in Holy Mass and participation in related religious activities for many Catholics (SAAD, 2018) had been going on a downward trend, it has become even more imperative for parish priests to be seen in a positive light by their parishioners. From the results of an older study by Thaliath (1964), parishioners always expect that ordained Priests should be able to lead them "surely and securely not only in their spiritual needs but also in the other aspects of their everyday lives." This reflects the kind of preparation seminarians should undergo to fulfill their expected roles after they are ordained as priests and subsequently become parish priests. He, therefore, recommended that leadership training should be imbued in the whole course of the seminarians' formation and should comprise an important aspect of the whole seminary program.

The findings from this research show that there is still room for enhancing the formation of seminarians in the seminaries. The proposed leadership model could be useful as an additional instrument that could be employed to enhance

the pastoral care skills of seminarians during their formation program, as this would adequately equip them with the tools and skills when they become parish priests. Additional results of this study also point to leadership as being a driver of the expected pastoral characteristics that the parishioners in Vietnam desire that their parish priests would possess. Nonetheless, improving the leadership skills of seminarians may not be something that can be accomplished in simply one course or semester. It should be a life-long process of training for priests, accumulated through years of hard work and faithfulness to the tenements of the Catholic Church (Beck, 2018).

Although different styles of leadership with varying characteristics are available and could be introduced in the formation program for seminarians, those leadership styles are either transformational or transactional or instructional or stewardship in nature, which could be inadequate to equip the seminarians with the appropriate tools to make them effective and efficient Church leaders with improved pastoral care skills based on the concepts of leadership in the Bible. Some of the previous studies did not take into consideration the Sacred Scriptures in establishing the characteristics of the leadership styles to be incorporated in the formation program in the seminaries, especially with respect to servant leadership (Krejcir, 2008) which requires obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ “who come to serve and not to be served.”

The recently developed leadership model strived to be complete in the sense that it incorporates not only transformational leadership styles but also servant leadership as well as counseling theory guided by the teachings in the Sacred Scriptures and inculcating the eight pillars of pastoral care and leadership that were established through a content analysis of the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Once introduced in the training program of the seminaries, this leadership model is therefore expected to be more sufficient and adequate than those from the previous studies for the enhancement of the spiritual and secular forms of the seminarians in terms of their pastoral care skills, making them ready after being ordained as priests, to become good pastors or parish priests.

The overall result of this research hopes to fill a gap in the literature related to leadership training of seminarians and pastoral care. When this model is implemented in the six seminaries in Vietnam for the training of candidates for the priesthood, the most tangible output would be Priests with desirable pastoral care and leadership characteristics. This research-based model also hopes to encourage seminarians to consider their current role towards effective administration and management with the necessary leadership skills. The four

determinants essential to successful pastoral care and four educational leadership characteristics are recommended to be adopted in the seminaries in Vietnam. Therefore, parish priests with high qualifications in pastoral administration can play their roles to reach the desired common goals. The implication of this developed model for parish priests' professional growth is best achieved by the integration of theory and practice and could be accomplished through the conduct of short-term programs designed for becoming effective pastoral care and academic program directors. Nevertheless, to better understand the complex skill sets of effective pastoral care and academic leadership based on the model, a long-term program could be organized that focuses on pastoral care and management of the parish by the Pastor, and on the effectiveness of academic leadership. Hopefully, this model will help the parish priests understand and have good leadership qualities and run the parish under good management.

A leader must shoulder many responsibilities; to be a parish priest demands even much more, for he is responsible for leading the parish to develop and manage the Church well and taking care of the souls and the spiritual life of the parishioners. The seminaries and all the parishes are the places where the leadership for the future generations and for the Catholic youth is being formed. The findings from the research study, which examined the current and desirable practices in the area of pastoral care and leadership, reveal that the pastoral care in the seminaries has to be improved by the collaboration of all concerned, such as the bishops, priests, and parishioners. Through the careful implementation of the leadership model, some improvements could take place in the areas of pastoral care skills and leadership characteristics in the six seminaries in Vietnam. In the process of enhancing pastoral care, the directors and lecturers of the seminaries have a great role to play, being the leaders of the pastoral ministry. This would also benefit the administrators/educators in the seminaries as they could acquire good leadership in pastoral care skills for fulfilling their mission of training future priests.

#### REFERENCES

- Akuchie, N. D. (1993). The servants and the superstars: An examination of servant leadership in light of Matthew 20: 20-28. *The Christian Education Journal* 16: 39-43
- Barbuto, J. E., Jr. & Wheeler, D. W. (2006). Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership. *Group and Organization Management* 31(3): 300-326
- Beck, J. (2018). Deepening the Leadership Capacities of Seminarians. *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 38: 120-136



- Benner, D.C. (1992). *Strategic Pastoral Counseling. A Short-Term Structured Model*. Michigan: Baker Book House
- Bible. (2004). *The New American Bible*. Saint Paul's, Philippines.
- Burns, J.M. (1978). *Model of Transactional and Transformational Leaders*. New York Press
- Catholic Vietnam. (2016). Growing Despite of Communist Oppression. Retrieved from <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2016>
- Dobbelaere, K. (2011). The meaning and scope of secularization. Clarke, P.B. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, pp. 599–615. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- FABC. (2010). *The Paradigm Shift in the Mission and Ministry of the Priest in Asia*. Assumption University, Bangkok. Thailand
- Graham, L. W. (1991). Servant-leadership in organizations: Inspirational and moral. *Leadership Quarterly*, 2(2): 105-119
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant Leadership*. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ
- Hawkinson, J. R. & Johnston, R. K. (1993). Contemporary models and the emerging challenge. *Servant Leadership*, Vol. 2. Chicago: Covenant
- Hollerich, B. (2018). [vaticannews.va](http://vaticannews.va), Manuella Affejee, 2018-11-02
- Huy. (2014). <http://dongthanhtam.net/Tu-lieu/Mot-so-van-de-lien-quan-den-tinh-cam-va-tinh-duc-cua-linh-muc-3071.html>
- John Paul II. (1992). *Pastores Dabo Vobis* [I will Give You Shepherds], 25th March 1992. Retrieved from <http://www.vatican.va>
- John Paul II. (1997). Catechism of the Catholic Church, 15th August 1997. Retrieved from <http://www.vatican.va>
- Krejcie R.V. & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities.
- Krejcir, R.J. (2008). Problems Observed in Seminaries. *Francis A. Schaeffer Institute Educational and Psychological Measurement 30*: 607-61of *Church Leadership Development*. Retrieved from [www.churchleadership.org](http://www.churchleadership.org)
- Küng, H. (2002). *The Catholic Church: A Short History*. Grünewald, Mainz
- SAAD. (2018). Challenges for the Future, retrieved from <https://www.saad.org.uk>
- Snodgrass, K. R. (1993). Your slaves—An account of Jesus' servant leadership in the New Testament. In Hawkinson, J.R. & Johnstone, R.K. (eds.). *Servant leadership* (Vol. 1, pp. 17-19). Chicago: Covenant
- Spears, L. (1996). Reflections on Robert K. Greenleaf and servant leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 17, 33-35
- Thaliath, J. (1964). Leadership Training in the Seminaries: A Survey of the Attitudes of Rectors and Programs of Studies and Activities in the

- Seminaries Bearing on Leadership Training. Master's Thesis.  
Retrieved from [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_theses/1898](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1898)
- Thien, T. (2017). <http://giaophanthanhhoa.net/on-goi/on-thien-trieu-la-gi-13593.html>
- Vietcatholic (2018). retrieved from <https://tvtonline.com.au/vi/chuyen-nganh-vi/lich-su-chinh-tri-ton-giao-van-hoa/so-nguoi-cong-giao-du-le-giam-sut-trong-nhieu-nam-qua>
- Worthington, E. L., Kuru, T. A., McCullough, M. E., & Sandage, S. J. (1996). Empirical research on religion and psychotherapeutic processes and outcomes: A 10-year review and research prospectus. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(3), 448-487. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.119.3.448>