An Examination of the Relationship Between Exemplary Leadership Practices of Senior Pastors and Church Growth Measures [Dissertation Notice]

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This study examines the relative effectiveness of servant leadership and transformational leadership, seeking to provide empirical evidence of each model’s independence and unique contributions, as well as their shared contributions. Leaders of church organizations were invited to participate in this survey study beginning with the identification and assessment of servant and/or transformational leadership styles. Staff members and lay leaders in each church organization later assessed their pastor’s leadership style and leadership effectiveness, in addition to providing evaluations of their church’s organizational health.

Both servant and transformational leadership behaviors were expected to relate positively to leader, organizational, and follower outcomes. In addition, each leadership style was expected to contribute uniquely to the explanation of leader, organizational, and follower outcomes, supporting the independence of the servant leadership and transformational leadership constructs. These hypothesized relationships were supported for a majority of the study variables.

When considered together, both servant and transformational leadership demonstrated independent, positive relationships with many of the outcomes examined, including leader effectiveness, church health perceptions, trust in leader, trust in organization, and follower satisfaction, with marginal support for affective commitment. Additionally, servant leadership independently predicted normative commitment and transformational leadership independently predicted faith maturity, with no significant findings for either predictor on continuance commitment, follower giving, church health statistics, change in church size over time or change in church finances over time.


This study examined the extent of the relationship between exemplary leadership practices of senior pastors in the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) and traditional church growth measurements. Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI-Self) was administered to 240 senior pastors who had led their churches for at least five years. The researcher gathered church growth measurements from the Annual Church Profiles (ACP) of the same senior pastors in the GBC. The study sought to determine if significant relationships existed between the senior pastor’s exemplary leadership practices (independent variable) and the church growth measurements (dependent variable).

The LPI-Self measured five leadership practices that include model the way, challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Descriptive statistics for all variables were obtained using frequency distribution that included mean, median, standard deviation, variance, and interquartile scores. Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients (Pearson r) measured variable relationships. The results indicated that none of the church size and growth measurements were significantly related to Kouzes and Posner’s exemplary leadership practices. This analy-
sis indicated that Kouzes and Posner’s exemplary leadership prac-
tices of senior pastors cannot be used to predict church size or growth.