

A Scoping Review of the Benedictine Rule of Leadership: A Contemporary Analysis Based on Galbraith and Galbraith

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this review is The Benedictine Rule of Leadership, written by Galbraith & Galbraith (2004). It seeks to explore how a leadership framework dating back several centuries can remain relevant in present-day contexts. Based on the Rule of St. Benedict, the research highlights five central leadership principles: vision and purpose, empowerment and growth, culture and community, humility and integrity, and problem-solving and fairness. In a scoping literature review, thematic analysis was applied to academic sources found regarding the relationship between these principles and present-day ideas about leadership, such as servant leadership, ethical leadership, and authentic leadership. As shown by the findings, the Benedictine approach to leadership represents not only an interesting historical phenomenon but also a highly practical leadership ideology based on the interrelationship between ethics, personal integrity, and sustainable development. Although rooted in religion, this approach has universal applicability to various organizational settings where the establishment of trust, motivation, and stability is crucial. As can be seen, the relevance of this approach to modern organizational reality cannot be ignored, although there are potential limitations and challenges of applying Benedictine leadership in diverse, secular, or multicultural organizations.

Keywords: Benedictine leadership, servant leadership, organizational sustainability, leadership theory

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in the 21st century is characterized by complexity, dynamism, and increasing ethical expectations. Besides being efficient, organizations should also be morally sound, socially responsible, and sustainable. Accordingly, studies in the field of leadership are increasingly shifting their attention to such approaches as ethical leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership, which focus on ethical action, relational aspects, and development rather than positional power (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977).

The Rule of St. Benedict, a document dating back to the sixth century, provides guidelines on living in community, practicing morality, and leading people in monasteries. Gradually, the Rule was recognized as an outstanding leadership theory because of its emphasis on humility, ethical leadership, community formation, and stability (Galbraith & Galbraith, 2004). While most of the theories developed today focus separately on ethics, culture, or relationships, Benedictine leadership combines all of them in one concept.

Expanding the research done by Galbraith and Galbraith (2004), this review highlights dimensions of Benedictine leadership that can be especially useful for organizations nowadays. This provides a systematic way of ensuring ethics, relational aspects, and sustainable organizational performance are achieved. The study attempts to show the applicability of Benedictine leadership by analyzing the relationship between the principles provided and leadership theories today to prove its significance in overcoming organizational challenges such as ethical dilemmas, employee motivation, and organizational sustainability.

Specifically, this study has the following objectives: 1) Determine the five key principles of Benedictine

Leadership based on the Rule of St. Benedict; 2) Analyze the concepts of Benedictine Leadership vis-a-vis servant, ethical and authentic leadership theories; 3) Compare and contrast the theoretical and practical relevance of Benedictine Principles of Leadership in today's organizational management practices; 4) Evaluate the benefits, shortcomings, and application of the Benedictine leadership paradigm; and 5) Conceptualize the role and impacts of Benedictine leadership principles on organizations and followers' behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present research follows a scoping review approach based on the guidelines put forth by Arksey & O'Malley (2005). Scoping reviews provide flexibility for synthesizing the interdisciplinary literature base and highlighting conceptually and empirically identified knowledge gaps. It does not aim to provide definitive answers but rather to offer a comprehensive overview of existing knowledge. Because Benedictine leadership is inherently connected to theology, ethics, organizational theory, and leadership studies, it can be explored effectively with a scoping review approach.

Data Sources

A wide range of academic materials was examined to provide broad coverage. Firstly, the seminal work of Galbraith & Galbraith (2004) formed the theoretical basis of the research. Secondly, peer-reviewed articles from leadership studies, organizational behavior, and ethics journals served as the contemporary perspective on the issue at hand. Further reading included scholarly literature on servant, ethical, and authentic leadership, and sustainability in organizations. Databases used include Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost.

Search Strategy and Study Selection

A structured search strategy was employed to identify relevant literature for this scoping review. Electronic databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost were utilized to ensure comprehensive coverage of both foundational and contemporary sources. The search process involved combinations of keywords such as "Benedictine leadership," "Rule of St. Benedict," "monastic leadership," "ethical leadership," "servant leadership," and "organizational sustainability." The search was limited to English-language publications to ensure consistency in interpretation. No strict time restrictions were imposed to include both classical and modern contributions to the field. The study selection process followed a multi-stage screening approach. First, titles and abstracts were reviewed to identify potentially relevant sources. Second, full-text articles were assessed against the inclusion criteria. Sources that did not directly address leadership frameworks, Benedictine principles, or ethical leadership were excluded.

In summary, the selection process began with initial search results of approximately seventy sources, after title and abstract screening of forty sources, and an after full-text review of twenty-eight sources included in final analysis. This process ensured that the final dataset was both relevant and manageable while maintaining breadth of coverage.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for selected sources were as follows: 1) They should discuss any leadership theory or framework concerning the Benedictine principles; 2) The sources must cover ethical, servant, or authentic leadership, and other forms of relational and moral leadership; and 3) They must be written in English and appear in scholarly journals, books, and credible academic sources.

All those sources that did not have any relation to the practices of leadership or were not found to be highly academic were omitted from the analysis. These included all those sources which were largely based on personal opinions, were just descriptive in nature, or lacked academic and empirical credibility. In addition, older sources, non-peer-reviewed material, and those studies which were not directly related to the research topic also fell into this category.

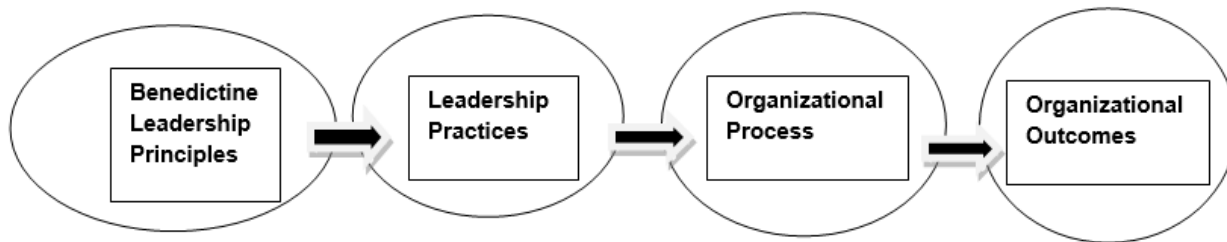
Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involves identifying themes through coding and refining the emerging themes based on their conceptual relevance to literature. The themes are then linked to the core Benedictine principles, and their validity is confirmed based on their conceptual relevance to organizational factors, such as ethical climate, follower engagement, and sustainability. Then, the themes are interpreted in relation to organizational outcomes, enabling the development of a conceptual framework that links leadership principles to practical implications which consequently relates to existing contemporary leadership theories. This structured analytical process ensures that the findings are both systematic and theoretically grounded.

Conceptual Framework

Diagram 1., illustrates how Benedictine Leadership Principles influence leadership practices, which in turn affect organizational outcomes. It attempts to show how leadership effectiveness is rooted in ethical and relational values, thus providing a roadmap for applying Benedictine principles in modern organization.

Diagram 1. Relationships of Benedictine Leadership Principles with Leadership Theories, Practices, and Implications



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the scoping review methodology and applying thematic analysis on the chosen relevant literature, this study provided the following results:

Key Benedictine Leadership Principles and the Core Relevant Themes from Existing Literature

Five major interrelated principles essential to the Benedictine leadership were established through this scoping review, including vision and purpose, empowerment and development, culture and community, humility and integrity, and problem-solving and justice. All these principles are based on the Holy Rule of St. Benedict and receive great recognition in the modern leadership literature.

Table 1: Synthesis of Benedictine Leadership Principles, Supporting Literature, and Leadership Behaviors

Key Benedictine Leadership Principle (Holy Rule of St. Benedict)	Core Focus (Identified Themes)	Key Supporting Literature	Leadership Behaviors
Vision and Purpose (Prologue (45), Chapters 4, 58, 72,)	Mission alignment, standards, direction	Avolio & Gardner (2005); Bass & Steidlmeier (1999); Grint (2010); Galbraith & Galbraith (2004);Senge (2006); Kotter (2012)	Articulating vision, setting standards, aligning goals
Empowerment and Growth (Chapters 3, 33, 34, 64, 72, 73)	Innovation, development, autonomy	Greenleaf (1977); Liden et al. (2008); van Dierendonck (2011); Sendjaya et al. (2008); Galbraith & Galbraith (2004); Deci &	Delegating authority, mentoring, and encouraging innovation

		Ryan (2000); Kouzes & Posner (2017)	
Culture and Community (Chapters 1, 3, 4, 33, 48, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 71, 72,)	Teamwork, rituals, shared values.	Brown & Treviño (2006); Neubert et al. (2009); Reave (2005); Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez (2004); Galbraith & Galbraith (2004); Schein (2010); Edmonson (1999)	Building trust, reinforcing norms, fostering collaboration
Humility and Integrity (Prologue, Chapters 4, 7, 62, 72)	Accountability, ethics, self-awareness	Owens & Hekman (2012); Nielsen et al. (2010); Brown & Treviño (2006); Reave (2005); Galbraith & Galbraith (2004); Peterson & Seligman (2004); Walumbwa et al (2008)	Seeking feedback, modeling ethics, demonstrating accountability
Problem-Solving and Fairness (Chapters 3, 34, 36, 64, 72)	Consultation, conflict resolution, and equity	Yukl (2013); Gardner et al. (2011); Hoch et al. (2018); Neubert et al. (2009); Galbraith & Galbraith (2004); Colquitt (2001); Folger & Cropanzano (2001)	Consulting stakeholders, resolving conflicts, ensuring fairness

First, vision and purpose were recognized as one of the fundamental principles of Benedictine leadership, which requires leaders to define a certain direction, create high expectations, and align organizational efforts with the overall mission. As stated by Galbraith and Galbraith (2004), it is vital to select appropriate candidates and develop proper organizational norms to maintain mission congruence. The vision and purpose principle highlights the significance of creating clear visions, ensuring values-to-action alignment, and motivating followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). According to Grint (2010), it is essential to have a vision to navigate a complex environment and increase strategic coherence and legitimacy. Vision is seen as a driver of organizational change (Kotter, 2012), aside from alignment in organizations (Senge, 2006).

Empowerment and Growth is another key principle involving innovation, learning, and self-reliance of followers. As “Empowerers,” leaders inspire followers to act autonomously, think independently, and continuously learn. Empowerment is also associated with focusing on personal and professional development of followers that improves organizational performance (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). According to Galbraith and Galbraith (2004), empowering leaders helps create a creative, committed, and responsible work environment that allows organizations to stay flexible in the face of changing conditions. Deci & Ryan (2000), states that self-determination theory supports autonomy and motivation. And Kouzes & Posner (2017) idea of encouraging leadership development through enabling others jibes with the idea of empowerment and growth.

Culture and Community is the third principle emphasizing the importance of teamwork, rituals, and respect within the organization. The Benedictine leadership theory defines culture as a deliberate tool promoting collaboration and ethical behavior. Brown and Treviño (2006) and Neubert et al. (2009) state that ethics-focused leaders are those who demonstrate good examples and create trust and social pressure. Reave (2005) notes that spiritually oriented leaders tend to be ethically driven, thus contributing to organizational coherence. Strategic virtues, such as respect, are believed to be important for effective leaders by Vera and Rodriguez-Lopez (2004). In addition, Galbraith and Galbraith (2004) suggest that “Culture-Builder” plays a central part in promoting collaborative communities. Leaders who actively cultivate culture foster collaboration, trust, and long-term loyalty. Schein (2010) mentioned that organizational culture was shaped by shared assumptions and values. Edmondson (1999) has shared the unique reality that psychological safety is a key to team learning and collaboration.

Humility and integrity, the fourth principle, indicate the leaders’ focus on accountability, ethics, and receptivity towards criticism. According to Owens and Hekman (2012), humble leaders foster learning and cooperation,

establishing psychologically secure settings. Nielsen, Marrone, and Slay (2010) define humility as an inclusive character trait that improves relational parity and self-consciousness, whereas Brown and Treviño (2006) stress the necessity of ethical behavior for organizational validity. Reave (2005) ties ethical and spiritual conduct with effective leadership, and Galbraith and Galbraith (2004) emphasize that humility and integrity development are essential in shaping morality. Companies run by people characterized by humility and integrity enjoy increased trust, favorable ethical atmospheres, and high follower dedication. Peterson & Seligman (2004) had mentioned that virtue ethics framework emphasizes humility as a moral strength. While Walumbwa et al. (2008) asserted that authentic leadership highlights self-awareness and transparency.

The fifth principle, problem-solving and fairness, entails leaders engaging stakeholders, addressing conflicts objectively, and making clear decisions. This “Problem-Solver” element is described by Galbraith and Galbraith (2004) as focusing on consultative and deliberative decision-making. As demonstrated by Neubert et al. (2009), ethical leadership encourages perceptions of fairness and organizational justice. The participatory and ethical leadership strategies, identified by Yukl (2013) and Gardner et al. (2011), respectively, involve consultation and deliberation to achieve a balance between short-term efficiency and long-term sustainability. Hoch et al. (2018), this kind of leadership can help improve fairness and resolution strategies that surpass conventional leadership strategies. Leaders who adhere to this principle are instrumental in enhancing legitimacy, transparency, and sustainable decision-making processes. Colquitt (2001) upheld that organizational justice theory explains fairness in decision-making, particularly fairness in procedural and interactional justice (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001).

Organizational Implications of Benedictine Leadership Model and Relatedness to Leadership Theories

The above five principles make up an integrated framework that links Benedictine tradition with modern organizational principles. The first two principles offer direction in strategic management, empower and develop followers, whereas the other three promote cohesion and facilitate ethical and sustainable decision-making processes. The Benedictine leadership model resonates well with existing theories of leadership, such as servant, ethical, and authentic leadership models, although it goes beyond them.

Table 2: Alignment of Benedictine Leadership Principles with Organizational Implications and Contemporary Leadership Theories

Benedictine Leadership Principle	Organizational Implications/Outcomes	Contemporary Leadership Theories
Vision and Purpose	Enhances strategic clarity, goal alignment, and organizational legitimacy; strengthens shared direction and long-term orientation	Authentic Leadership; Transformational Leadership
Empowerment and Growth	Promotes employee engagement, innovation, skill development, and adaptability in dynamic environments	Servant Leadership; Transformational Leadership
Culture and Community	Build trust, collaboration, organizational cohesion, and a strong ethical culture; improves employee commitment	Ethical Leadership; Relational Leadership; Servant Leadership
Humility and Integrity	Strengthens ethical climate, trust, accountability, and relational equity; supports moral credibility of leadership.	Ethical Leadership; Authentic Leadership; Humility-Based Leadership
Problem-Solving and Fairness	Ensures transparency, justice, stakeholder trust, and sustainable decision-making; enhances organizational legitimacy	Ethical Leadership; Participative Leadership; Authentic Leadership

Table 2., demonstrates how the Benedictine leadership model and its key principles converge with current leadership theories, thereby indicating the relevance and validity of the framework within the modern-day context. Unlike the purely theological perspective of Benedictine leadership, the framework can be considered an applicable model of leadership in contemporary organizations due to its alignment with current leadership theories.

On Vision and Purpose

According to the Benedictine leadership model, vision and purpose refer to the development of clear visions and standards, which allow leaders to establish direction within organizations. By setting goals and ensuring compliance with established standards, leaders can foster a sense of unity among individuals, thus improving organizational performance. This principle is closely related to authentic leadership, which is focused on moral behavior and value-driven actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Moreover, the principle is closely related to transformational leadership, as visions play a significant role in inspiring followers and motivating them to surpass expectations (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Within organizational settings, vision and purpose promote organizational legitimacy, especially in complex and uncertain situations (Grint, 2010).

On Empowerment and Growth

Empowerment and Growth is another leadership tenet that embodies an approach whereby leaders focus more on developing and allowing follower autonomy. This principle is closely related to servant leadership, which stresses follower development and well-being (Greenleaf, 1977). Indeed, numerous studies have empirically demonstrated how empowerment results in increased engagement, productivity, and organizational commitment (Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). It should be noted that there is a clear indication of transformational leadership in that intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration principles are at work here as well. Benedictine leadership embraces the concept of empowerment not only as a managerial tool but as a moral imperative, supporting the understanding that good leaders develop others' capabilities.

On Culture and Community

The Culture and Community principle is another illustration of how Benedictine leadership can be deeply relational. This principle emphasizes cooperation, ritual, and mutual respect. As such, the Culture and Community principle correlates with the concept of ethical leadership since it encourages normative behavior through example and reinforcement (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Moreover, this principle can be associated with relational leadership theories. Such concepts emphasize the significance of trust, cooperation, and social exchange in organizational contexts. Research suggests that relational leadership can improve organizational performance because leaders create a positive relational climate, increasing organizational members' cohesion, trust, and commitment (Neubert et al., 2009; Reave, 2005). The main feature that sets Benedictine leadership apart from other theories is its explicit focus on community as an important aspect of the leader's responsibilities.

On Humility and Integrity

Another similar concept is that of humility and integrity, which centers on issues of accountability, ethics, and receptivity to feedback. Humility and integrity have connections to concepts such as ethical leadership and authentic leadership, wherein leaders are required to be self-aware, transparent, and morally consistent (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Research into humble leadership indicates that humble leaders promote learning, teamwork, and psychological safety among the members of their team (Owens & Hekman, 2012; Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010). Humility in Benedictine leadership is not seen as a sign of weakness but of strength, as it helps a leader to stay grounded, open-minded, and accountable.

On Problem-Solving and Fairness

Lastly, problem-solving and fairness emphasize the need for consultation, fairness, and conflict management. Problem-solving and fairness are integral to participative leadership. Through consultation, leaders are better

placed to make sound decisions. Participation of the affected individuals in decision-making is vital in ensuring that positive outcomes are realized and commitment attained (Yukl, 2013). Furthermore, problem-solving and fairness are in line with ethical leadership through the promotion of fairness, justice, and transparency (Neubert et al., 2009). Current literature shows that fair leaders contribute positively to organizational justice, thus fostering trust and sustainability (Gardner et al., 2011; Hoch et al., 2018). From a Benedictine perspective, consultation makes decisions not only beneficial but also legitimate in terms of inclusiveness and morality.

From the above discussion and relationships in Table 2, it can be seen clearly that Benedictine leadership complements and extends the existing leadership theories in the world today. Contemporary theories tend to emphasize aspects of leadership, such as vision, ethics, and relationships, among others. However, Benedictine leadership combines all the various components of leadership and puts them together to form an integrated and coherent model of leadership. This model places emphasis on vision, human development, ethics, community development, and making sound decisions.

The integration aspect of the Benedictine leadership model is truly relevant and valuable for modern organizations. Currently, leaders must contend with multiple pressures like efficiency, innovation, and ethical concerns, among other issues. With its focus on timeless values, yet adaptable to present situations, the Benedictine leadership model offers a framework that is both theoretically valid and relevant to modern organization. The framework implies that organizational success can only be sustained when leadership practices are consistently integrated.

Limitations and Contextual Considerations of Benedictine Leadership

In spite of all the positive aspects and the contemporary applicability that Benedictine leadership possesses, implementing this leadership theory in diverse organizational settings is far from an easy process. Firstly, because it is founded on monastic spirituality and religion, its main concepts may not resonate with those who find themselves in a secular or multicultural environment, for instance. Humility, community, and moral responsibility are important values and must not be overlooked; however, since their perception can vary among individuals based on the background, they require special consideration. Secondly, one should consider that Benedictine leadership relies on such practices as consultations, reflections, and reaching a consensus, all of which involve spending quite a lot of time. As it was mentioned earlier, not all companies have the luxury of taking that long to reach decisions, especially since speed and efficiency may be required.

In addition, qualities like humility or community consciousness may not be easy to measure as behavior, especially in performance-driven environments where individuals' contributions matter. Cultural differences can complicate matters further by affecting how people view leadership, inclusiveness, and participation. A certain leadership style that may appear inclusive in one place might not mean the same thing in another because of the differences in expectations of the parties concerned. Consistency, which involves not only preaching but also practicing the qualities in question in all aspects of organizational life, is yet another problem. Therefore, although Benedictine leadership is a comprehensive model of leadership that deserves consideration, it should be used with caution, taking into account the peculiarities of each case.

A consideration that also must be taken into account is the fact that embracing a form of Benedictine leadership may involve a greater sense of commitment compared to other leadership theories. This is because Benedictine leadership is more than just an array of skills or tools; it involves a certain mind-set that requires considerable effort and development before becoming part of one's leadership style. This can be difficult especially in settings where quick and immediate results are valued. The risk here is that the principles behind Benedictine leadership could only be seen and used at a superficial level as something purely theoretical, rather than as something that is incorporated in one's regular activities and interactions. This means that in order to become successful, there should be sufficient commitment on the part of individuals involved to make the principles of community, justice, and integrity relevant.

CONCLUSION

Taking all things into consideration, the conclusion drawn from reviewing literature is that Benedictine Leadership not only exists within the historical and religious context but is still a powerful tool for the development of contemporary leadership practices. All principles of Benedictine leadership, vision and purpose, empowerment and growth, culture and community, humility and integrity, problem solving and fairness, together create an integrated concept of leadership which is concerned about both its performance and responsibility. All the principles mentioned above have unique qualities. Having an unobstructed vision of goals and purposes helps organizations stay on the right track, particularly in an unpredictable environment. Empowerment stimulates employees to develop themselves and be more proactive in their work. At the same time, culture, and community stress that organizations do not consist of mechanical components, but of humans whose relationships depend on mutual respect and trust. Principles such as humility and integrity pay attention to a leader's personal characteristics and emphasize the fact that leaders should be conscious of their actions and accountable for them. Finally, problem-solving and fairness stress the significance of consultation and decision-making.

The unique quality of Benedictine leadership can be described by its comprehensive nature. Instead of addressing ethical considerations, relationships, and strategy separately, Benedictine leadership combines them all within a single concept, thereby reflecting a style of leadership that feels quite timely in the current context, when results are supposed to be coupled with accountability, power is linked with trust, and so on. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that such a leadership model originates from the monastic tradition, meaning that it requires some adjustments to become more applicable to modern and diverse business organizations. Another issue related to Benedictine leadership is that more research is required to assess the applicability of the above-mentioned principles in practice. Nonetheless, despite the possible flaws in this model, it still offers an interesting approach to leadership and can become helpful for contemporary leaders. It can be used as a tool to shape and maintain an environment where employees operate in accordance with their personal values, thus contributing to better performance and organizational success.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the literature reviewed, it is recommended that modern organizations integrate the principles of Benedictine leadership to foster a more holistic and ethically grounded management culture. By combining strategic vision with core values like humility, empowerment, and community, this model offers a comprehensive framework that balances performance with social responsibility. However, to transition this monastic tradition into diverse corporate settings effectively, future research should focus on developing an objective, standardized measure to evaluate its practical impact. Establishing such a metric would allow scholars and practitioners to empirically validate how these integrated principles influence organizational success and employee well-being in the contemporary business landscape.

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