



SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER COMMITMENT FOR PASTORAL MANAGEMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN EAST KALIMANTAN

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Abstract. Limited empirical research has examined how servant leadership shapes teacher commitment in the management of pastoral activities within Catholic elementary schools. This study aims to analyze the interaction between leadership coordination and teacher commitment in sustaining pastoral management in Catholic schools in East Kalimantan. A qualitative case study design was employed to explore leadership practices and teachers' experiences within their institutional context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and field observations with 16 informants, comprising three principals and 13 teachers from Catholic elementary schools under the People's Education and Teaching Development Foundation of the Archdiocese of Samarinda. The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings reveal four interconnected themes: structured coordination in pastoral planning; the affective, normative, and professional commitments of teachers; servant leadership as the core of pastoral management, characterized by empathy, empowerment, and shared responsibility; and adaptive pastoral innovation through the integration of digital practices. These themes demonstrate that servant leadership operates as a moral and managerial framework that strengthens collaboration and organizational coherence in pastoral programs. The study concludes that servant-oriented leadership strengthens teacher commitment and enables Catholic schools to sustain their pastoral identity through participatory, value-driven, and spiritually grounded educational leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership, a leadership model emphasizing service to others, has increasingly gained attention for its relevance in educational contexts, particularly in faith-based institutions such as Catholic schools. This leadership approach prioritizes the growth, well-being, and moral development of followers, fostering a school environment characterized by empathy, collaboration, and shared responsibility (Joo et al., 2018; Ruata & Tung, 2024; Waruwu, 2019). Previous studies confirm that servant leadership positively influences teachers' motivation, trust, and organizational commitment (Cerit, 2010; Miao et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2021). Within Catholic education, servant leadership resonates with the Christian ethos of humility, service, and community, positioning principals as moral stewards and spiritual guides who nurture both professional excellence and spiritual formation among teachers.

In this regard, servant leadership aligns with the mission of Catholic elementary schools, where pastoral care and faith formation form the core of educational practice. As Greenleaf (2005) and Spears (2010) highlight, servant leadership embodies listening, empathy, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of others, principles that mirror the pastoral mission of Catholic education. Teachers under servant-oriented leaders often experience increased empowerment, moral purpose, and professional commitment (Nurlaila et al., 2024; Villanueva, 2024). Empirical evidence shows that servant leadership contributes to teachers' sense of belonging and strengthens their affective, normative, and professional commitment (Koçak & Genç, 2022; Sukarno et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the role of servant leadership as a moral and organizational force sustaining both academic and spiritual goals.

Despite growing global literature, empirical studies focusing on servant leadership in the

specific domain of pastoral management remain scarce. Most existing research on Catholic education emphasizes administrative performance, institutional identity, or academic quality rather than the spiritual and pastoral dimensions that form the heart of Catholic schooling (Higgins, 2021; Poon, 2020; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014). Moreover, few studies explore how teacher commitment, a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional attachment, moral obligation, and professional responsibility (Allen & Meyer, 1993; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988) is shaped through servant leadership within the context of daily pastoral engagement. The lack of integrative frameworks combining Servant Leadership Theory (Greenleaf, 2005), Organizational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and Catholic Social Teaching (Grace, 2002; Walker & Kutsyuruba, 2023) leaves a theoretical gap that this study seeks to address.

In Indonesia, research on servant leadership has begun to expand across educational levels, including studies in Malang, Bandung, and Tomohon, yet the pastoral and spiritual implications remain underexplored (Dasrimin et al., 2023; Labuan & Pangemanan, 2024; Waruwu, 2019). In East Kalimantan, where Catholic schools operate as minority institutions amid cultural diversity, understanding how servant leadership enhances teacher commitment in managing pastoral activities is particularly relevant (Baso & Alwy, 2023; Budiyanto et al., 2025; Warman et al., 2022). The unique setting of Catholic elementary schools under the People's Education and Teaching Development Foundation (PETDF) of the Archdiocese of Samarinda, a Catholic educational foundation responsible for pastoral and academic development, provides a meaningful case for examining how servant leadership integrates faith, leadership, and pedagogical commitment in sustaining holistic Catholic education.

Conceptually, this study builds upon contemporary models that connect servant leadership to affective and behavioral outcomes in organizational settings. Previous research has shown that servant leadership nurtures gratitude, strengthens prosocial behavior, and reduces negative workplace attitudes (Jiwen Song et al., 2024). Adapting these insights to the educational context, this study examines how servant leadership fosters teacher commitment, pastoral collaboration, and spiritual resilience in Catholic elementary schools. The conceptual foundation is further informed by the multidimensional model of teacher leadership proposed by Zhang et al. (2025), which identifies several domains of teachers' professional engagement, including curriculum work, coordination and management, community involvement, contributions to the profession, participation in school change, professional growth of colleagues, and pre-service teacher education. As illustrated in Figure 1, these dimensions demonstrate how teacher leadership extends beyond classroom instruction and contributes to broader organizational development. In the context of Catholic schools, these domains provide an analytical lens for understanding how teachers' commitment and leadership roles support pastoral management and institutional mission.

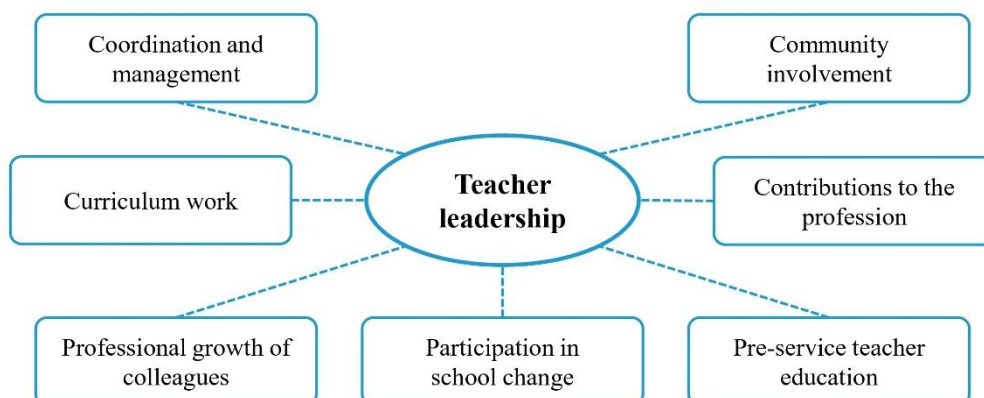


Figure 1. Dimensions of Teacher Leadership (Zhang et al., 2025)

Over the past decade, scholarly attention has increasingly focused on servant leadership in Catholic educational institutions, particularly the role of principals in shaping schools' spiritual identity and communal ethos (Lydon, 2024; Sobon et al., 2025). However, the intersection

between servant leadership and teachers' pastoral commitment remains insufficiently examined, especially at the elementary level in culturally diverse and minority regions such as East Kalimantan. Addressing this gap, the present study explores how principals' servant leadership nurtures teachers' affective, normative, and professional commitment in organizing and sustaining pastoral programs that reflect the mission and identity of Catholic education. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating servant leadership theory with organizational commitment and Catholic educational leadership to develop an empirical understanding of pastoral management in Catholic schools. In practice, the study provides Catholic school leaders with insights into how servant-oriented leadership can strengthen teacher commitment and sustain pastoral programs across diverse educational contexts. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to identify how servant leadership principles are manifested in the pastoral management of Catholic elementary schools; (2) to analyze the dimensions of teacher commitment that contribute to the sustainability of pastoral activities; and (3) to construct an empirical model explaining the interaction between leadership coordination and teacher commitment in strengthening pastoral identity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of the interaction between leadership coordination and teacher commitment in managing pastoral activities within Catholic elementary schools. According to [Phelan \(2011\)](#), a case study design enables researchers to investigate complex social phenomena in real-life contexts, while [Creswell \(2013\)](#) emphasizes that this approach is well-suited to exploring multiple perspectives within bounded systems. The qualitative design was chosen to capture the contextual realities, lived experiences, and meanings participants construct within their institutional and cultural environments. As [Lim \(2025\)](#) notes, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand meaning from participants' perspectives in their natural settings, prioritizing interpretation over measurement.

The study was conducted in three Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. These schools were purposively selected for their active pastoral programs and organizational cohesion within the PETDF network. Purposeful sampling, as described by [Patton \(2015\)](#), enables the selection of information-rich cases that provide deep insight into the study's central issues. Participants consisted of sixteen informants, including three principals and thirteen Catholic religion teachers who were directly involved in planning, coordinating, and implementing pastoral activities. This participant composition enabled the data to capture diverse perspectives on leadership coordination, teacher commitment, and servant-oriented pastoral practices within the institutional framework. The researcher acted as the primary instrument throughout the data collection process, maintaining a participatory yet neutral stance. As an academic and practitioner in Catholic educational management, the researcher ensured reflexivity by critically examining personal assumptions and maintaining analytical distance during data interpretation.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: (1) in-depth interviews with principals and Catholic religion teachers to explore experiences, coordination mechanisms, and expressions of teacher commitment in pastoral activities; (2) document analysis, which involved reviewing school pastoral plans, liturgical calendars, and activity reports to identify managerial patterns; and (3) non-participant observation during pastoral events such as liturgical celebrations, prayer gatherings, teacher devotional meetings, and religious formation sessions. These techniques were designed to generate triangulated data that reveal both procedural and experiential dimensions of pastoral management. Interview guidelines were semi-structured to allow flexibility in exploring emerging themes while maintaining consistency across schools. Observational notes and documentary evidence were systematically coded. The research process followed ethical procedures, including informed consent, confidentiality assurance, and data anonymization. Fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period, from February to April 2025.

Data were analyzed using the reflexive thematic analysis approach developed by [Braun &](#)



Clarke (2023), which involved six recursive phases: familiarizing with the data through repeated readings of interview transcripts, observation notes, and school documents; generating initial codes that captured salient features of leadership coordination and teacher commitment; searching for potential themes by clustering related codes across cases; reviewing themes for coherence and consistency; defining and naming themes to represent central meanings; and producing an integrative analytic narrative linking empirical findings with theoretical perspectives. Themes emerged inductively from participants' lived experiences and were subsequently interpreted deductively through the lenses of servant leadership and teacher commitment theories. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance to acknowledge subjective engagement in meaning-making. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed: credibility was established through data triangulation and member checking with participants; dependability was supported by maintaining an audit trail of field notes, transcripts, and coding procedures; confirmability was achieved through reflective journaling and peer debriefing; and transferability was strengthened by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participant backgrounds (Lim, 2025). These measures ensured that methodological rigor aligned with the standards of qualitative educational research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of interview transcripts, school documents, and observational records yielded four major themes that describe the interaction between leadership coordination and teacher commitment in pastoral management. These themes capture the patterns emerging across the three participating schools and illustrate how servant leadership practices shape pastoral activities and teacher engagement. The summary of these themes and their corresponding subthemes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Coordination of Leadership and Teacher Commitment in School Pastoral Management

No	Theme	Subthemes	Description
1.	Structured Coordination in Pastoral Planning	1.1 Integration of pastoral programs into annual school plans. 1.2 Joint scheduling and communication mechanisms. 1.3 Role differentiation between principals and religion teachers	Coordination is formalized through structured planning sessions, aligned calendars, and clearly defined responsibilities, ensuring coherence between academic and pastoral goals.
2.	Affective, Normative, and Professional Commitment of Teachers	2.1 Emotional attachment and intrinsic motivation. 2.2 Moral obligation rooted in religious vocation. 2.3 Professional accountability in pastoral execution	Teachers' affective, normative, and professional commitments drive sustained pastoral engagement and fidelity to implementation.
3.	Servant Leadership as the Core of Pastoral Management	3.1 Empowerment and participatory decision-making 3.2 Relational trust and empathy in leadership 3.3 Shared responsibility and mutual service	Principals enact servant leadership by empowering teachers, fostering relational trust and empathy, and building shared responsibility for pastoral goals.
4.	Adaptive Pastoral Innovation through Digital Transformation	4.1 Transition to digital pastoral practices. 4.2 Teacher creativity in online catechesis and liturgy. 4.3 Sustaining spiritual engagement under crisis.	Schools maintained pastoral continuity through digital adaptation and teacher innovation during the pandemic, reinforcing institutional resilience.

Table 1 presents the thematic structure derived from the analysis of interview transcripts, school documents, and observational records. The table summarizes the four major themes and their corresponding subthemes, describing how leadership coordination and teacher commitment interact in the management of pastoral activities within Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF of the Archdiocese of Samarinda. Each theme represents a recurring pattern identified

across the data sources and reflects key aspects of pastoral management practices observed in the participating schools. The themes are subsequently elaborated in the following sections to explain how structured coordination, teacher commitment, servant leadership practices, and adaptive pastoral innovation contribute to sustaining the pastoral identity and mission of Catholic education.

1. Structured Coordination in Pastoral Planning

Findings revealed that pastoral management in Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF of the Archdiocese of Samarinda is characterized by a structured coordination system that ensures alignment between managerial and spiritual goals. Evidence of this coordination emerged from multiple data sources, including in-depth interviews with principals and religion teachers, analysis of institutional documents, and field observations of pastoral activities. Principals and religion teachers collaboratively integrate pastoral programs into the schools' annual work plans, embedding spiritual formation activities alongside academic objectives. Document analysis of annual school plans, school academic calendars, and activity reports confirmed that pastoral programs are formally incorporated into institutional planning structures rather than treated as additional activities. Observations conducted during coordination meetings and school liturgical preparations also indicated that planning processes involve regular consultation between school leaders and pastoral teams to synchronize schedules, responsibilities, and program objectives.

As one principal emphasized, *"Every semester, we sit together to design both academic and pastoral schedules. The pastoral plan is not something we add later; it is part of the school's annual strategy. I coordinate the timeline and budget, while the religion teacher develops the liturgical themes and activities. This way, everything moves in harmony toward the same mission"* (Principal 2). Moreover, coordination extends beyond administrative alignment toward communicative and relational coherence among stakeholders. Regular meetings between school leaders and pastoral teams foster shared understanding and collective accountability in program implementation. Field observations further revealed that principals often facilitate collaborative discussions in which teachers contribute ideas on liturgical themes, spiritual formation activities, and student participation. This division of roles allows principals to provide managerial oversight and institutional support, while religion teachers function as pastoral coordinators and spiritual animators. Such structured collaboration creates a management culture in which pastoral planning is organized, participatory, and aligned with the school's broader educational mission.

These findings indicate that structured coordination functions as a foundational mechanism for integrating pastoral objectives within school management systems. The coordination practices observed in this study reflect what [Bush & Glover \(2014\)](#) describe as the moral architecture of leadership in faith-based institutions, in which organizational structures align with institutional values and mission. In Catholic education, such coordination enables leaders to translate spiritual vision into concrete managerial practices that guide daily school activities. [Grace \(2002\)](#) similarly argues that Catholic schools require forms of strategic spirituality in which pastoral formation is embedded within formal organizational planning rather than separated from academic administration.

Furthermore, the collaborative planning process between principals and religion teachers demonstrates how leadership coordination fosters collective responsibility for pastoral programs. This pattern resonates with [Harris's \(2013\)](#) concept of distributed leadership, which emphasizes shared participation among organizational members in decision making and program implementation. Research on servant leadership in educational contexts also suggests that leaders who promote participatory coordination and open dialogue strengthen teachers' sense of ownership and commitment to institutional goals ([Cerit, 2010](#); [Miao et al., 2014](#)). Within Catholic elementary schools, such coordination not only improves managerial efficiency but also reinforces the communal dimension of pastoral education, ensuring that spiritual formation becomes an integrated and sustained component of the school's educational mission. This collaborative coordination also reflects the principles of servant leadership, where leaders prioritize participation, shared responsibility, and the growth of others within the organizational community ([Greenleaf, 2005](#); [Spears, 2010](#)).



2. Affective, Normative, and Professional Commitment of Teachers

Teachers' affective, normative, and professional commitment forms the emotional and ethical foundation that sustains the pastoral life of Catholic elementary schools. Evidence of these dimensions emerged through triangulation of data sources, including in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, analysis of institutional documents, and observations of pastoral activities within the participating schools. Interview data revealed that many teachers perceive their involvement in pastoral programs as a personal calling that integrates faith, vocation, and professional responsibility. Document analysis of pastoral activity reports and program schedules also indicated that teachers consistently participate in spiritual formation programs, liturgical celebrations, and catechetical activities beyond their formal teaching duties. Observations during morning prayers, school liturgies, and devotional gatherings further demonstrated teachers' active presence in guiding students' spiritual practices and nurturing a supportive faith community.

As one religion teacher reflected: *"When I accompany students during their morning prayer or liturgy, it is not only about teaching religion, it's about sharing life values. I feel personally fulfilled when I see them learning to pray with sincerity. That moment reminds me why I chose to become a Catholic teacher, it gives meaning to my vocation"* (Teacher 2). Normative commitment emerges as a moral imperative rooted in teachers' sense of duty and loyalty to the Catholic educational mission. Teachers perceive pastoral engagement as an ethical responsibility to preserve the spiritual identity and values of the school community. Evidence from school documents and activity logs indicates that teachers regularly assume responsibilities in organizing liturgical celebrations, preparing catechetical materials, and facilitating student participation in pastoral programs. Field observations also revealed that teachers voluntarily assist in coordinating prayer sessions, sacramental preparations, and religious celebrations. As one principal emphasized, *"Our teachers never treat pastoral programs as optional. They plan, prepare, and evaluate them with the same seriousness as academic teaching. It shows their strong professional conscience. Their loyalty to the school's Catholic spirit keeps the pastoral work alive and relevant for our students"* (Principal 3).

This triadic pattern of commitment resonates strongly with the organizational commitment framework proposed by Meyer & Allen (1991) and further elaborated by Allen & Meyer (1993), which identifies three dimensions of organizational commitment: affective, normative, and continuance. In the context of Catholic elementary schools, these dimensions are reflected in teachers' emotional attachment to pastoral service, their moral obligation to sustain the school's spiritual mission, and their professional dedication to organizing and implementing pastoral programs. This alignment between empirical findings and theoretical models indicates that teacher commitment within faith-based educational institutions extends beyond contractual responsibilities and incorporates deeper ethical and spiritual motivations.

Previous studies on servant leadership and teacher commitment support these findings. Cerit (2010) found that leadership practices emphasizing service, trust, and empowerment significantly strengthen teachers' organizational commitment in educational settings. Similarly, Koçak & Genç (2022) demonstrate that supportive leadership behaviors are associated with higher levels of teacher motivation and professional dedication. Research conducted in Catholic educational contexts also shows that servant-oriented leadership fosters teachers' sense of belonging and reinforces their commitment to spiritual formation activities within the school community (Joo et al., 2018; Ruata & Tung, 2024). These studies indicate that leadership practices grounded in service and relational trust encourage teachers to perceive their professional roles as part of a broader educational and spiritual mission.

Within Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF of the Archdiocese of Samarinda, the integration of affective, normative, and professional commitment creates a dynamic synergy that sustains pastoral education. Teachers do not merely implement pastoral activities as institutional obligations but actively participate as collaborators in the spiritual formation of students. Leadership support from school principals also plays an important role in strengthening teachers' professional dedication. Previous research demonstrates that principals who perform managerial functions through planning, supervision, and collaborative professional development



can significantly enhance teacher professionalism and commitment within the school environment (Purwati et al., 2025). Such leadership practices encourage teachers to perceive their professional responsibilities not only as instructional duties but also as contributions to the broader educational mission of the institution.

3. Servant Leadership as the Core of Pastoral Management

Servant leadership emerges as the central axis of pastoral management in Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF of the Archdiocese of Samarinda. Evidence of this leadership pattern was identified through triangulation of data sources, including in-depth interviews with principals and teachers, analysis of institutional documents, and field observations of pastoral activities. Interview data revealed that principals consistently prioritize listening, dialogue, and teacher participation when planning pastoral programs. Document analysis of school pastoral plans and coordination records also shows that teachers are actively involved in designing liturgical activities, spiritual formation programs, and student faith development initiatives. Observations during pastoral meetings and liturgical preparations further demonstrated that decision-making is collaborative, with teachers, principals, and sometimes students contributing ideas on pastoral priorities and program implementation. This pattern indicates that leadership within these schools is not exercised through hierarchical authority but through relational coordination and shared responsibility.

The principals' reflections vividly capture this collaborative ethos. As one principal noted, *"When we plan pastoral programs, I always ask the teachers first what they see as the students' real needs. My role is to listen and to support. Leadership here means walking together, not deciding alone. When teachers feel heard, they serve with greater joy and commitment"* (Principal 1). Another principal reinforced this understanding, *"Service is at the heart of our leadership. I believe leadership means creating space for others to lead. When teachers and students take initiative, it shows that our shared mission is alive. My task is to make sure every voice contributes to that mission"* (Principal 2).

These findings reflect the core principles of servant leadership as articulated by Greenleaf (2005), who emphasizes that authentic leadership begins with a commitment to serve others before exercising authority. Spears (2010) further identifies listening, empathy, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of others as key characteristics of servant leaders. The leadership practices observed in this study demonstrate these characteristics through participatory planning, relational trust, and the empowerment of teachers in pastoral decision-making. Within Catholic educational settings, such leadership also resonates with the concept of accompaniment, in which leaders guide communities through dialogue, shared discernment, and mutual service rather than through directive control (Lydon, 2024).

Empirical studies on servant leadership in educational contexts support these findings. Research by Joo et al. (2018) shows that servant leadership strengthens commitment and participatory behaviors within religious organizations by fostering relational trust and shared purpose. Similarly, Waruwu (2019) and Labuan & Pangemanan (2024) demonstrate that servant-oriented leadership in Catholic schools encourages teacher engagement, collaborative work culture, and professional dedication. Recent studies also indicate that humility and self-sacrifice, as core elements of servant leadership, significantly enhance leadership effectiveness within Catholic educational institutions (Sobon et al., 2025). These findings suggest that servant leadership does not merely function as a managerial style but operates as a moral and relational framework that shapes institutional culture.

Within Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF of the Archdiocese of Samarinda, servant leadership fosters an environment where teachers and students actively participate in pastoral life and decision-making. Leadership becomes a form of shared ministry in which principals empower teachers to contribute their ideas, talents, and spiritual insights in the development of pastoral programs. Such collaborative leadership strengthens institutional cohesion and reinforces the communal identity of Catholic education. Through empathy, empowerment, and shared responsibility, servant leadership sustains both the organizational effectiveness and the spiritual mission of pastoral management within the school community.



4. Adaptive Pastoral Innovation through Digital Transformation

Adaptive pastoral innovation through digital transformation emerged as an important dimension of pastoral management within Catholic elementary schools under the PETDF of the Archdiocese of Samarinda. Evidence of this innovation was identified through triangulation of data sources, including in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, analysis of school documents, and field observations of pastoral activities. Interview data revealed that teachers and principals collaboratively redesigned catechetical instruction and pastoral activities by utilizing digital platforms such as video recordings, virtual prayer meetings, and online learning environments. Document analysis of pastoral activity reports and school communication records also indicated that digital media became an important tool for maintaining communication with students and families during periods when conventional gatherings were limited. Observations of online prayer sessions and digital catechetical activities further demonstrated how teachers creatively integrated technology into spiritual formation programs to sustain students' engagement with school-based faith practices.

One teacher described this transition toward digital pastoral practices as both challenging and meaningful. *"During the pandemic, we had to rethink everything. I prepared short video reflections and sent them to students so they could still feel connected to the school's prayer life. Even though we were separated by screens, the spirit of togetherness remained strong"* (Teacher 9). A principal added a complementary perspective, emphasizing the resilience and creativity of her staff, *"Our pastoral activities never stopped, only changed form. Teachers showed great innovation in organizing online rosaries, virtual Masses, and digital catechism lessons. It was not easy, but their creativity kept the students' faith alive during a very difficult time"* (Principal 3).

These findings demonstrate how pastoral innovation was sustained through collaborative leadership and technological adaptation. The integration of digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp enabled teachers to redesign catechetical activities, prayer meetings, and spiritual reflections in ways that maintained students' participation in the school's pastoral life. Observational data also showed that teachers encouraged students to participate in family-based prayer practices and online liturgical celebrations, reinforcing the connection between school and home in the process of faith formation. Such innovations illustrate how pastoral management can remain flexible and responsive to changing educational environments while preserving its spiritual objectives.

From a theoretical perspective, this adaptive approach reflects the capacity of servant-oriented leadership to foster creativity, trust, and collaborative problem-solving within educational organizations. Servant leadership emphasizes empowering followers and creating supportive environments where individuals are encouraged to contribute ideas and innovations for the benefit of the community (Greenleaf, 2005; Spears, 2010). When leaders prioritize service and participation, teachers are more likely to experiment with new practices and develop creative solutions to emerging challenges. In faith-based educational institutions, this leadership approach also reinforces the communal dimension of spiritual formation by encouraging teachers and students to actively participate in the school's shared mission.

Empirical studies on educational leadership and innovation further support these findings. Research on servant leadership indicates that leaders who cultivate trust and psychological safety within organizations promote higher levels of creativity, collaboration, and prosocial behavior among employees (Jiwen Song et al., 2024; Miao et al., 2014). Within educational settings, such leadership practices encourage teachers to explore innovative pedagogical approaches and adapt instructional methods to changing circumstances. In the context of Catholic schools, digital pastoral practices can therefore function not only as technological adaptations but also as expressions of servant leadership that sustain spiritual engagement, community connection, and institutional resilience.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that servant leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the moral,



spiritual, and professional life of Catholic elementary schools. The findings indicate that leadership rooted in service strengthens structured coordination, nurtures teachers' affective, normative, and professional commitment, and fosters a collaborative culture that sustains the pastoral identity of Catholic education. Through empathy, participation, and shared responsibility, principals enact servant leadership as both a managerial and ethical framework that integrates academic and pastoral missions within the school environment. In this context, servant leadership functions not only as a managerial approach but also as a transformative leadership framework that strengthens teacher commitment and supports the continuity of pastoral programs in Catholic educational institutions.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the theoretical enrichment of educational leadership, particularly within faith-based contexts, by integrating Servant Leadership Theory, Organizational Commitment Theory, and Catholic Social Teaching. Future research is encouraged to further develop this framework through broader empirical validation, cross-regional comparisons, or mixed-method approaches to examine how servant leadership can foster sustainable educational transformation. Practically, Catholic educational leaders are advised to institutionalize servant leadership as a guiding ethos in policy and formation programs, ensuring that pastoral management remains spiritually grounded, contextually adaptive, and pedagogically transformative.

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