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Research Article

Development and Initial Validation of the Benedictine Leadership Questionnaire

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ABSTRACT

To assess spiritual leadership empirically, this study developed and validated the Benedictine Leadership Questionnaire (BLQ). While contemporary organizational literature heavily emphasizes corporate strategy, monastic traditions—such as the Rule of St. Benedict—prioritize humility, stewardship, and community. Despite growing interest in these principles, they remain largely unquantified in empirical research. Following a deductive literature review, an initial pool of 108 items was generated and subsequently evaluated by expert psychometricians to establish content validity. The instrument was then administered to 244 university students in Manila, Philippines. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis via Principal Axis Factoring with Oblimin rotation, the survey was refined into a 54-item instrument across five distinct dimensions: The Visionary, The Empowerer, The Culture-Builder, The Humble Leader, and The Problem-Solver. Internal consistency across all subscales was exceptionally high, with Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients ranging from .93 to .97. Ultimately, the BLQ provides a psychometrically sound scale that effectively bridges ancient monastic traditions with modern organizational governance.

Keywords: *Benedictine leadership, Exploratory factor analysis, Psychometrics*

Background

Although leadership is often viewed through the lens of modern corporate strategy, ancient spiritual traditions may offer timeless frameworks for communal success that remain largely untapped by empirical research, and so literature reviews concerning spiritual leadership are deficient in research (Hariri et al., 2025). Winston and Patterson (2006) defined a leader as an individual who prepares and influences a diverse group of followers to align with an organization's mission. By providing the necessary tools and direction, the leader inspires followers to commit their full energy and skills towards achieving shared goals. Gandolfi (2016) argues that leadership consists of five

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essential elements that must function together. According to this definition, leadership requires the presence of at least one leader and a group of followers, and it must also be centered on taking action through a specific and legitimate process. Finally, the entire effort must be directed towards achieving clear goals and objectives.

Traditional leadership styles emphasize external task strategy management, but spiritual leadership directs attention inward to foster a sense of calling, belonging, and transcendent purpose with the business. Spiritual leadership is an advantageous endeavor to execute organizational strategy and sustainable development by addressing employees' spiritual needs, enhancing their intrinsic drive, sense of duty, and vocational calling in the workplace (Jiang et al., 2023). It is characterized as a leadership paradigm that inherently inspires followers to develop vision, hope, faith, and altruistic love, thus enhancing their psychological well-being (Hariri et al., 2025). Moreover, it incorporates spiritual ideals and concepts that emerged as a promising foundation for cultivating a healthy workplace culture and enhancing performance (Patil et al., 2023).

While spiritual leadership provides a broad framework of values and purpose, Benedictine leadership grounds those principles in a 1,500-year-old tradition defined by the Rule of St. Benedict, emphasizing stability, stewardship, and the leader as a humble listener within a community. Benedictine leadership that stems from the Western monastic tradition offers a view that extends the above considerations by putting an emphasis on process rather than product and focusing on what makes effective leaders effective. On the one hand, the idea of having a clearly stated vision is important; on the other hand, individuals should have a chance to develop and engage in initiatives that will allow them to make their contribution to achieving the common goal. Moreover, Benedictine leadership recognizes the importance of relations, as opposed to viewing organizations as entities focused only on completing tasks. As a result, Benedictine leadership stresses such aspects as trust, respect, and recognition of one's identity, which become integral parts of cooperation between individuals and affect how they perceive themselves and their colleagues. It also puts emphasis on ethical considerations by highlighting the importance of being humble, honest, and accountable. Finally, the principle of fairness is encouraged within Benedictine organizations through open communication and collaborative approaches to decision-making (Santander et al., 2026).

Since Benedictine principles offer a strong qualitative foundation for leadership, converting them into quantifiable data demands a sound psychometric approach. This gap is especially clear in light of Santander et al.'s (2026) recent scoping review, which found no existing tool to measure Benedictine leadership. Developing a valid new instrument grounded in established scientific standards is therefore essential to capture these core ideals effectively.

To ensure that instruments are effective for clinical, educational, or research purposes, they must demonstrate core measurement properties such as validity, reliability, utility, and fairness (Brown et al., 2019; Nieva, 2023; Quilon & Kurniawan, 2023; Rada & Nieva, 2024). This requirement for scientific rigor is central to the present study, as the development of the Benedictine Leadership Questionnaire (BLQ) follows these strict methodological standards to ensure accurate outcomes and support sound conclusions regarding the scale's performance (Echevaria-Guanilo et al., 2017; Nieva, 2024; Nieva et al., 2025). By adhering to these established psychometric principles, this research aims to maximize the practical utility and reliability of the BLQ as a new tool for measuring leadership.

The Benedictine tradition, characterized by its unique balance of discipline, humility, and stewardship, provides a profound model for guiding others, yet there is currently no standardized instrument to measure these specific qualities in a leadership context. This study addresses that significant gap by developing and validating a standardized scale on Benedictine leadership. By bridging the divide between centuries-old values and modern psychometric evaluation, this research provides the first for-

mal tool to quantify and assess the effectiveness of leadership rooted in the Benedictine way of life.

Methods

Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional, descriptive quantitative design to collect data at a single point in time. Rather than testing cause-and-effect relationships, this design focuses on accurately describing variables and their interactions. Specifically, it serves as measurement research to evaluate a scale's psychometric properties, assessing its validity, reliability, and structural performance (Christensen et al., 2020).

Participants

A total of 244 college students (113 females, 46.3%; 131 males, 53.7%) participated in the study via convenience sampling. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 26 years (M=21.61, SD=1.13) and were enrolled in a Catholic university in Manila, Philippines. Recruited from attendees at a seminar, participants accessed the survey link via an on-screen presentation and provided electronic informed consent through the online form prior to completing the questionnaire.

Measure

The Benedictine Leadership Questionnaire (BLQ) was developed through a systematic process of item generation and expert validation, following the best practices for scale development outlined by DeVellis (2017). The initial scale items were derived from an extensive literature review to ensure a strong theoretical foundation, a method categorized as a deductive approach to item generation (Hinkin, 1998). Specifically, the second author, a professor of theology, drafted an initial pool of 108 items rooted in Benedictine principles. As recommended by Morgado et al. (2017), these items then underwent a rigorous content analysis by the first and third authors; acting as expert judges in psychometrics, they evaluated the items for clarity, relevance, and measurement quality to ensure content adequacy (Schriesheim et al., 1993). Participants recorded their responses using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree), including intermediate options such as somewhat agree, a little agree, neither agree nor disagree, a little disagree, and somewhat disagree, a format recommended for capturing higher levels of variance in behavioral research (Boateng et al., 2018).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using JASP (Version 0.19.3) through a phased approach. First, descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation, were computed, and then skewness and kurtosis were determined to check the normality of the data. The data suitability was confirmed by an overall KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Then, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF). The number of retained factors was determined via parallel analysis, and an Oblimin rotation was applied to allow for correlations between latent constructs. Finally, the internal consistency of the resulting factor structure was verified using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega.

Result and Discussion

Before performing the exploratory factor analysis, a descriptive analysis was conducted on the 108 items to assess the normality of the data. This ensured that the statistical assumptions required for factor extraction were met. Across all items, the mean scores were consistently low, generally ranging from 1.46 to 1.91. This indicates that participants primarily selected lower-value responses on the 7-point scale. Standard deviations were relatively stable, typically falling between 0.80 and 1.05, which suggests a moderate level of agreement among the 244 participants. The results confirm that the data distribution satisfies the requisite normality assumptions for a robust exploratory factor analysis, establishing a solid basis for the eventual identification of the five Benedictine leadership dimensions.

Regarding the shape of the data, all items exhibited positive skewness, with many values exceeding 2.0. For example, item 20 and item 99 showed significant skewness at 2.96 and 2.79, respectively. Furthermore, the kurtosis values were notably high across the set, with

several items exceeding 10.0. These results indicate a leptokurtic distribution where responses are heavily concentrated at the lower end of the measurement scale. Given that the data significantly deviates from a normal distribution, Principal Axis Factoring is the appropriate extraction method for the subsequent exploratory factor analysis because it does not require the assumption of multivariate normality.

Before conducting the extraction, the dataset was evaluated for factorability. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy yielded an overall value of 0.954, which is well above the recommended threshold of 0.70. Individually, all items (e.g., item 7 at 0.980, item 24 at 0.975) showed excellent Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) values, indicating the data are highly suitable for factor analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1431) = 14928.49$, $p < .001$), allowing us to reject the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. This confirms that there are sufficient inter-item correlations to proceed with factor extraction.

Table 1. Factor Loadings and Uniqueness from Exploratory Factor Analysis with Oblimin Rotation

Factor Loadings						
	Factor 1 *The Visionary*	Factor 2 *The Empowerer*	Factor 3 *The Culture-Builder*	Factor 4 *The Humble Leader*	Factor 5 *The Problem-Solver*	Uniqueness
item 2	0.863					0.262
item 3	0.849					0.319
item 6	0.846					0.215
item 5	0.834					0.250
item 12	0.803					0.233
item 1	0.775					0.411
item 4	0.774					0.258
item 9	0.749					0.258
item 14	0.708					0.237
item 13	0.692					0.292
item 8	0.688					0.318
item 7	0.670					0.284
item 10	0.605					0.361
item 18	0.471					0.374
item 11	0.438					0.439
item 102	0.429					0.330
item 26		0.782				0.239
item 28		0.737				0.293
item 27		0.727				0.239
item 30		0.668				0.281
item 43		0.653				0.312
item 25		0.647				0.270
item 29		0.640				0.346
item 44		0.606				0.318
item 32		0.594				0.279
item 21		0.589				0.309
item 22		0.574				0.276
item 24		0.515				0.307
item 16		0.515				0.393
item 61			0.826			0.197
item 59			0.800			0.246

Factor Loadings					
	Factor 1 *The Visionary*	Factor 2 *The Empowerer*	Factor 3 *The Culture-Builder*	Factor 4 *The Humble Leader*	Factor 5 *The Problem-Solver*	Unique-ness
item 57			0.790			0.416
item 58			0.778			0.253
item 54			0.772			0.266
item 60			0.711			0.276
item 51			0.706			0.344
item 62			0.692			0.245
item 56			0.674			0.325
item 55			0.653			0.457
item 53			0.648			0.509
item 99				0.746		0.226
item 101				0.658		0.316
item 98				0.611		0.247
item 97				0.578		0.297
item 93				0.528		0.484
item 103				0.495		0.341
item 94				0.481		0.397
item 90				0.420		0.350
item 74					0.558	0.223
item 73					0.553	0.286
item 72					0.541	0.191
item 82					0.532	0.231
item 85					0.525	0.315
item 86					0.464	0.345

Note. Applied rotation method is oblimin. The item numbering in this table corresponds to the original 108 items.

Based on Parallel Analysis (PA), five factors were retained for the final model. This method is considered more robust than the traditional Kaiser Criterion (1 eigenvalue > 1) because it compares real data eigenvalues against simulated random data to ensure factors are not simply the result of sampling error. Consequently, Factor 1 explained the largest portion of the variance at 53.6% (unrotated). While the fifth factor yielded a real eigenvalue slightly below 1 (0.964), it was retained because it exceeded the simulated eigenvalue of 0.767, confirming its statistical significance. Ultimately, this five-factor solution accounts for 69.5% of the cumulative variance, representing a substantial portion of the underlying latent construct.

An Oblimin (oblique) rotation was applied using principal axis factoring, as this method accounts for the theoretical assumption that the underlying latent constructs are likely to be correlated rather than independent (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The initial 108 items of the BLQ were reduced to 54 items following the analysis. The resulting factor loadings, as presented in Table 1, revealed a clean and simple structure. Items were retained based on three criteria: (1) a primary factor loading of at least 0.40 (Hair et al., 2019); (2) the absence of significant cross-loadings, defined as secondary loadings within 0.20 of the primary loading (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019); and (3) uniqueness values below 0.60, indicating sufficient shared variance (Costello & Osborne, 2005). All items in the final 5-factor structure met these criteria. Factor 1 was heavily dominated by items 2, 3, 6, and 5, all of which showed loadings exceeding 0.80, while Factor 2 was clearlydefined by items 26, 28, and 27 with loadings above 0.70. Factor 3 was distinguished by items

61, 59, and 57, which maintained strong loadings greater than 0.79. Factor 4 was primarily led by item 99 (0.746) and item 101 (0.658), and Factor 5 was defined by items 74, 73, and 72 with loadings above 0.54. Furthermore, the uniqueness values for most items remained relatively low, suggesting that the extracted five-factor solution explains a significant majority of each individual item's variance.

The Factor Correlation Matrix demonstrated moderate to strong positive correlations between the factors, most notably between Factor 1 and Factor 2 (r = 0.649), which justifies the decision to utilize an oblique rotation. Furthermore, the internal consistency for each factor was found to be exceptionally high across all metrics. Specifically, Factor 1 yielded an α = 0.969 and ω = 0.970, while Factor 2 followed closely with α = 0.964 and ω = 0.964. Factor 3 reported an α = 0.949 and ω = 0.947, Factor 4 showed an α = 0.936 and ω = 0.936, and Factor 5 resulted in an α = 0.939 and ω = 0.939. Taken together, these robust values indicate that the items within each factor are highly reliable and consistently measure their respective latent constructs.

Table 2. Inter-Factor Correlation Matrix for the Five-Factor Solution

Factor Correlations					
	Factor 1 *The Visionary*	Factor 2 *The Empowerer*	Factor 3 *The Culture-Builder*	Factor 4 *The Humble Leader*	Factor 5 *The Problem-Solver*
Factor 1: *The Visionary*	1.000	0.649	0.502	0.400	0.440
Factor 2: *The Empowerer*	0.649	1.000	0.466	0.426	0.327
Factor 3: *The Culture-Builder*	0.502	0.466	1.000	0.483	0.461
Factor 4: *The Humble Leader*	0.400	0.426	0.483	1.000	0.324
Factor 5: *The Problem-Solver*	0.440	0.327	0.461	0.324	1.000

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) resulted in a five-factor solution, with items grouped according to their thematic commonalities. Factor 1, labeled The Visionary (n=16), accounted for the largest portion of the variance and focused on structural and long-term leadership aspects, such as maintaining organizational standards, rigorous selection processes, and alignment with the institution's mission. Factor 2, identified as The Empowerer (n=13), captured developmental behaviors specifically associated with fostering innovation, encouraging professional growth, and granting staff autonomy. This was followed by Factor 3, The Culture-Builder (n=11), which reflected a focus on the social fabric of the university through an emphasis on teamwork, institutional rituals, and mutual respect. Factor 4, The Humble Leader (n=8), centered on character and humility, particularly regarding accountability, the active pursuit of feedback, and personal integrity. Finally, Factor 5, The Problem-Solver (n=6), addressed practical, day-to-day interventions, including staff consultation, fairness in decision-making, and conflict resolution. The specific item statements for the BLQ are provided in the Appendix.

The emergence of these five factors suggests that leadership within this Catholic university is a multi-dimensional construct that balances administrative rigor with ethical, person-centered engagement. The dominance of The Visionary as the primary factor indicates that, within this specific academic context, the foundational role of a leader is to act as a guardian of the institutional mission and standards. This aligns with the nature of Catholic higher education, where mission-driven selection and institutional identity are paramount. However, the presence of The Empowerer and The Culture-Builder suggests that mission alignment alone is insufficient; leaders must also cultivate an environment that supports professional growth and communal belonging.

Furthermore, the identification of The Humble Leader and The Problem-Solver highlights the importance of the leader's personal disposition and tactical competence. These factors suggest that trust is maintained not just through grand visions but through the leader's

willingness to be held accountable and their ability to resolve workplace issues fairly. Collectively, these results imply that effective leadership in this setting requires a synthesis of strategic visionary roles and relational empowering behaviors, grounded in the humility and practical wisdom necessary to navigate complex university dynamics.

Conclusion

The Benedictine Leadership Questionnaire (BLQ) was developed and validated, providing a psychometrically sound instrument to assess leadership based on spiritual heritage. The exploratory factor analysis reduced the original 108 questions to a 54-item scale with five different dimensions namely: The Visionary, The Empowerer, The Culture-Builder, The Humble Leader, and The Problem-Solver. These factors indicate a relatively high degree of internal consistency and cumulative variance, confirming that Benedictine leadership is a complex and multi-faceted construct that balances strategic vision with the necessary humility and communal stewardship for contemporary governance. The BLQ is a valid measure of leadership that is ethical, people-centered, and does not compromise the productivity of the business. It provides a nice bridge between theory and practice. The outcomes of this study thus offer a legitimate and reliable tool to evaluate leadership in an academic context with strategic vision, humility and communal stewardship.

The present work presents a basic structure for the BLQ, however several recommendations are made for future research. First, future research should use Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using a new, independent sample to test the stability of the five-factor structure and evaluate the goodness-of-fit of the model. Second, the data in this study were collected cross-sectionally at one point in time, so the predictive power is limited. Therefore, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to determine the predictive validity of the BLQ, specifically analyzing the correlation between high scores in the Benedictine aspects and long-term organizational outcomes, including staff retention, organizational climate, and ethical resilience. Third, future data collecting should span the hospital, nonprofit, and corporate sectors as a way to test the generalizability of the Benedictine model across professional settings. Finally, further development of the scale may be required to enhance its psychometric rigor.

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Appendix

Benedictine Leadership Questionnaire (BLQ)

Factor 1: The Visionary	*Factor 3: The Culture-Builder*
2. facilitates the vision-mission of the organization.	61. values cooperation.
3. promotes unity among members.	59. builds a culture of respect.
6. supports programs that are beneficial to the organization.	57. pays attention to the contribution of each member.
5. hears everybody out and then take action.	58. encourages teamwork.
12. trains members of the mentor team.	54. maintains the ceremonies on track with the mission.
1. conforms to the common interest of the organization.	60. encourages collective accountability.
4. promotes team decision-making.	51. introduces significant practices.
9. demonstrates dedication that motivates.	62. motivates members by providing support.
14. promotes knowledge and development.	56. preserves cultures that enhance culture.
13. considers potential then allocate duties.	55. indulges in successes on a periodic basis.
8. maintains high standards.	53. avoids meaningless rituals.
7. identifies a great personality.	
10. chooses individuals based on the criteria of competence.	*Factor 4: The Humble Leader*
18. rewards performance and commitment.	99. learns from criticism.
11. selects individuals through integrity.	101. treats all members equally.
102. stands firm in decisions.	98. accepts feedback.
	97. admits when lacking an answer.
Factor 2: The Empowerer	93. accepts responsibility for mistakes.
26. promotes innovation in small units.	103. upholds core values.
28. rewards individual input.	94. uses authority with humility.
27. gives teams power of responsibility.	90. demonstrates responsibility for decisions.
30. maintains a clear vision.	
43. shows an example of appropriate ethical conduct.	*Factor 5: The Problem-Solver*
25. contributes to the growth of the organization.	74. considers everything.
29. observes progress without interference.	73. involves the right people.
44. provides a healthy workplace.	72. observes consultations before making decisions.
32. promotes creative ideas.	82. solves problems when they are small.
21. provides opportunities for promotion.	85. reacts to complaints effectively.
22. promotes lifelong learning.	86. leads by example.
24. gives teams independence.	
16. identifies talent among all members.	