

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS
THE HUMANITIES
POLITICAL STUDIES
AND GOVERNANCE

**Examining the Role of Religion in Consolidating Leadership and Governance in
South Africa's Public Sector**

by

Harry Goliath

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Master's Degree qualification in Governance and Political Transformation
in the
Department of Governance and Political Studies
in the
Faculty of the Humanities
at the
University of the Free State.

Supervisor: Dr Halalisani V. Mlambo

Submission Date: November 2025

Declaration

I, Harry Goliath, declare that this dissertation, titled “Examining the Role of Religion in Consolidating Leadership and Governance in South Africa’s Public Sector”, is my original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All sources used or quoted have been duly acknowledged through complete references.

This dissertation is submitted to fulfil the requirements for the Master of Arts in Public Management at the University of the Free State.

I understand plagiarism constitutes a serious academic offence and confirm this work is free from academic dishonesty.

Harry Goliath

November 2025

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my support network, who have walked this long and challenging journey with me.

- My Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has steadily held my hand throughout my academic journey. Thank you, Lord, for giving me the strength to complete this project despite the numerous challenges I faced to get here.
- My wife, Rochelle Goliath, who always made a way and always had words of encouragement. Thank you for believing in me even when I had doubts. Your unwavering belief and trust helped me hold on to this day. I love you, and my accomplishments are not only mine, but your contributions made it all possible. Therefore, the glory of this project is for you also.
- My daughter, Charry-Leigh, and my son, Harry jr. Your support and understanding over the many years of my late arrivals at home and not always being available at school functions throughout my academic journey. I love you and hold you dear to my heart.
- My supervisor, Dr. Halalisani Mlambo, thank you for your patience, motivation, guidance, and the academic and emotional support during this time. Your insights and dedication have shaped the quality and direction of this work. Thank you!
- I want to thank Dr. Tania Coetzee, Dr. Ina Gouws, Mrs. Cathy de Lange and Mrs. Juanita Potgieter. Thank you for always going the extra mile.
- My colleague and good friend, Mr. Michael Tshehisi, thank you for always encouraging me to keep going. Your support was and remains invaluable.
- To all my friends who always enquired about my progress, thank you for your interest.
- Thank you to all the scholars and institutions whose work informed and enriched this study.
- Special thanks to the University of the Free State for awarding me bursaries for many years up to this level. Your contributions have helped me to reach my dreams.

To all, thank you!

Dedication

I dedicate this mini-dissertation to all who might doubt themselves, wonder if they 'ae good enough, and/or feel like the journey is too long or the mountain too high. This is for you. May this work serve as a reminder that you too, can achieve it. Keep going. Believe. Achieve!

This work is dedicated with love to my late father, Piet Goliath, whose strength, wisdom and quiet encouragement inspired me daily. Your faith in me laid the foundation for this journey. Thank you for the blessings and encouragement that are passing over to me.

Above all, to God be the glory for the vision, the endurance and the victory.

Abstract

This study investigated the potential role of religion in shaping South Africa's political landscape, particularly in addressing challenges related to poor governance, weak ethical leadership, and systemic corruption. It examines how these factors have contributed to the growth of political instability, social inequality, and public distrust in government institutions. Drawing on comparative international examples, the study examined how religious values and frameworks can be leveraged to promote ethical leadership, enhance service delivery, and support democratic accountability.

This study employed the South African Public Service (SAPUBS) as its unit of analysis, adopting a qualitative, interpretivist research paradigm. Data were generated through desktop research and analysed using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to extract thematic insights. In the post-apartheid era, persistent underperformance across all spheres of government remains a critical concern. Accordingly, this research sought to explore the potential role of religion in contributing to the stabilisation and transformation of the public service.

Integrating religious principles, such as ethical leadership, accountability and moral responsibility, into public sector governance, can enhance institutional performance and improve service delivery. The study thus highlighted the importance of constructive engagement between political leadership and religious institutions in fostering effective governance, strengthening administrative systems and promoting inclusive socio-economic development for all South Africans.

The study concluded that religion, if inclusively and responsibly integrated, has the potential to support governance and improve service delivery. Recommendations, among others, include forming interfaith advisory councils and fostering ethical leadership while upholding constitutional principles of religious freedom and neutrality.

Keywords: Religion, "Good" governance, Leadership, Consolidating, Corruption, Accountability, Good governance, Public participation.

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	x
Acronyms/Abbreviations	xi
CHAPTER 1 MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Motivation and Background.....	4
1.3 Historical Context Overview	8
1.4 Constitutional Framework.....	11
1.5 Does Religion Influence South African Political Leaders	13
1.6 Religious Leaders in the Anti-Apartheid Movement	15
1.6.1 Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Anglican).....	15
1.6.2 Alan Boesak (Reformed Church)	16
1.6.3 Pastor Ray McCauley (Evangelical).....	17
1.6.4 Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein.....	17
1.6.5 Reverend Frank Chikane (Pentecostal/Apostolic Faith Mission)	18
1.7 The Role of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs).....	19
1.7.1 All African Conference of Churches (AACC).....	19
1.7.2 South African Council of Churches (SACC)	19
1.7.3 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)	20
1.7.4 The Student Christian Movement (SCM)	21
1.7.5 The Young Christian Students (YCS).....	21
1.7.6 Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRLC).....	21
1.7.7 Religious Political Parties	22
1.7.7.1 African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	22
1.8 The Presence of Religion in the Public Sector	23
1.9 Institutionalisation of Religion in Governance	23
1.10 Theoretical Framework.....	25
1.10.1 Leadership Theories.....	25

1.10.2	(Religion) Functionalist Theory	26
1.10.3	Governance Theory	27
1.10.4	Rational Choice Theory	28
1.11	Problem Statement and Research Questions	28
1.12	Research Questions	30
1.13	Aim and Objectives of the Study	31
1.13.1	Aim of the Study	31
1.13.2	Objectives of the Study	31
1.14	Research Methodology	31
1.15	Literature Study	34
1.16	Value of the Research for Governance	37
1.17	Layout.....	39
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF RELIGION, GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND CORRUPTION		41
2.1	Definition of Theory	41
2.2	Theory Formation	43
2.3	Religion	44
2.4	Theoretical Framework of Religion.....	45
2.4.1	Conflict Theory	46
2.4.2	Symbolic Interactionism	47
2.4.3	Functionalist Theory	48
2.5	Theoretical Framework.....	50
2.6	Theoretical Framework of Governance	53
2.7	Conceptual Framework of Governance.....	55
2.7.1	Transparency	55
2.7.2	Rule of Law	55
2.7.3	Participation.....	56
2.7.4	Responsiveness	56
2.7.5	Equity	57
2.7.6	Efficiency and Effectiveness.....	57
2.7.7	Sustainability	58
2.7.8	Accountability	58
2.8	The Principles of Governance vs. the Principles of Religion.....	59
2.8.1	Bigger Considerations are Paramount	59
2.8.2	Understanding the Peculiar Aspects of Governance.....	60
2.8.3	Know Your Duties.....	61
2.8.4	Implement Best Practice Governance	62

2.9	The Role of the Constitution in Governance	63
2.10	The South African Constitution and Religion.....	64
2.11	Strategies for Sustainable Governance.....	65
2.12	Governance.....	66
2.12.1	Good Governance	67
2.12.2	Governance and Stakeholders	67
2.12.3	Governance and Performance	68
2.13	Leadership.....	69
2.14	Corruption.....	70
2.15	Conclusion.....	71
CHAPTER 3 SYNTHESIS OF RELIGION, POLITICS, AND GOVERNANCE		72
3.1	Introduction.....	72
3.2	Government Functions and Policy Formulation	73
3.3	The Place of Religion in Public Organisations	75
3.3.1	Ways for peaceful discussions	76
3.3.1.1	Value of democratic principles above politics and agendas	76
3.3.1.2	Recognise prevalent values	76
3.3.1.3	Listen with empathy to all sides	77
3.3.1.4	Commitment to civil debate	77
3.3.1.5	Acquire relevant information and share it frequently	77
3.3.2	Religion and Ethical Leadership	78
3.3.3	Religion as Social Factuality	79
3.3.4	The Influence of Ethical Leadership	79
3.4	Religion and Public Policy Formulation	80
3.4.1	Unified System of Beliefs	81
3.4.2	A System of Symbols	81
3.4.3	Set of Coherent Answers	81
3.4.4	Human Enterprise	81
3.5	Policy Formulation.....	82
3.6	Politicians' Approach to Religion in South Africa.....	84
3.7	Constitution: Separation of Church and State	85
3.8	Engagement of Politicians with Religion	87
3.9	The Influence of the Christian Religion	89
3.10	Religious Diversity: A Cause for Tension	90
3.11	Religion the Focus on National Healing	92
3.12	Religion and Policy Issues	93
3.13	The Balance Between Public and Private Faith	95

3.14	Public Leaders, Civil Servants, Political Office Bearers and Religion	96
3.15	Interplay of Religion and Organisation Culture.....	98
3.16	Society Involvement	98
3.16.1	Religious Diversity in the Workplace	99
3.16.2	Inclusive Policies	99
3.16.3	Religious Celebrations and Holidays.....	99
3.17	Collaboration for Combatting Corruption.....	99
3.18	Current Approaches to Understanding Corruption	101
3.19	The Place of Accountability	102
3.20	Responsiveness for Good Governance	103
3.21	Unifying Elements of Religion	104
3.21.1	Respect for Diversity	104
3.21.2	Shared Ethical Values	104
3.21.3	Social Justice	105
3.22	Conclusion.....	106
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		107
4.1	Introduction.....	107
4.1.1	Research Paradigm.....	107
4.1.2	Justification for Qualitative Desktop Research.....	107
4.1.3	Universe of Documents Analysed	109
4.2	Research Design.....	110
4.3	Research Approach.....	110
4.4	Data Collection Procedures.....	111
4.5	Data Analysis	111
4.6	Qualitative Content Analysis	112
4.7	Codebook: Religion, Leadership, and Governance in South Africa	113
4.8	Trustworthiness and Rigor	116
4.9	Ethical Considerations.....	117
4.10	Limitations of the Study	117
CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, TIMESCALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS		119
5.1	Introduction.....	119
5.2	Summary of Findings	119
5.2.1	Religious Ethics as a Catalyst for Ethical Leadership	119
5.2.2	Influence of Religious Values on Leadership Behaviour	120
5.2.3	Faith-Based Leadership as a Moral Compass	120
5.2.4	Public Perception and Expectations.....	121
5.2.5	Challenges of Religious Diversity and Secularism	121

5.2.6	Institutional Disconnect Between Religion and Governance	122
5.2.7	Institutional Support for Religious Engagement	123
5.2.8	Risks of Religious Exclusivity	123
5.2.9	Lack of a Clear Policy Framework in Governance	124
5.2.9.1	Lack of a Clear Strategy	124
5.2.9.2	Establishing an Ineffective Board	124
5.2.9.3	Conflicts of Interest.....	124
5.2.9.4	Succession Planning	124
5.2.9.5	Complexity in Compliance and Regulation	125
5.2.9.6	Synthesis of Findings	125
5.2.10	Thematic Synthesis of Findings.....	126
5.3	Findings on Research Questions and Research Objectives	129
5.3.1	Research Questions	129
5.3.1.1	Risks and lessons from international cases:	130
5.3.1.2	Key lessons for South Africa.....	130
5.3.2	Research Objectives	132
5.4	Transition to Conclusion and Recommendations.....	133
5.5	Conclusions.....	134
5.6	Recommended Interventions for Ethical Leadership and Governance	136
5.6.1	Institutionalise Value-Based Leadership Training	137
5.6.2	Establish Interfaith Governance Dialogues	137
5.6.3	Establish Interfaith Advisory Councils	137
5.6.4	Development of a Secular Ethical Charter for Governance	137
5.6.5	Foster Community-Centered Moral Engagement.....	137
5.6.6	Safeguard Religious Neutrality and Constitutional Adherence.....	138
5.7	Proposed Timescale.....	139
5.8	Limitations and Areas for Further Research.....	140
5.9	Final remarks.....	141
	Reference List	143

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Coding Book.....	114
Table 5.1: Proposed Timescale.....	139

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Eight key principles that underpin good governance (UNDP, 1997)	54
---	----

Acronyms/Abbreviations

AACC	All African Conference of Churches
ABRECSA	Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa
ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AG	Auditor General
AIC	African Independent Churches
ANC	African National Congress
BOSA	Build One South Africa
BPP	Batho Pele Principles
CAP	Community Active Protection
CC	Constitutional Court
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CRLC	Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities
DP	Deputy President
DRC	Dutch Reform Church
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EPEPPA	Eminent Persons Ecumenical Programme for Peace in Africa
FBOs	Faith-Based Organisations
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ID	Investigating Directorate
IFCC	International Fellowship of Christian Churches
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
NDP	National Development Plan
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
NICSA	National Interfaith Council of South Africa
NILC	National Interfaith Leadership Council
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRLCSA	National Religious Leaders Council of South Africa
NRLF	National Religious Leaders Forum
PCCA	Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PNURA	Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act
PSC	Public Service Commission
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
RBC	Rhema Bible Church
SA	South Africa
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACCYF	South African Council of Churches Youth Forum
SACPPRRF	South African Council for the Promotion and Protection of Religious Rights and Freedoms
SACRRF	South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms
SANAC	South African National Aids Council
SANARELA	South African Network of Religious Leaders Living With or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS
SAPS	South African Police Service
SAPUBS	South African Public Sector
SAPUSE	South African Public Service

SCM	Student Christian Movement
SCOPA	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SQ	Semantic Question
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UOSSA	Union of Orthodox Synagogues South Africa
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WARC	World Alliance Reformed Churches
YCS	Young Christian Students

CHAPTER 1

MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Religion and governance are concepts that one could easily dismiss as irrelevant in this day and age. After all, in a liberal state, religion and politics, which are inevitably intertwined with administrative actions, administrative decisions, governance, and leadership, should never be mixed (Callaway, 2025).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) explicitly states that South Africa is a secular state. This constitutional positioning, however, requires careful interpretation. As Leatt (2017:244) notes, secularism does not denote “no religion”. Secularism does not denote “no religion” but rather defines how the state positions itself in relation to religion. In this sense, secularism is a normative position that requires religion not to exercise authority over the state (Leatt, 2017). Furthermore, Leatt (2017) argues that after the Union of South Africa on May 31, 1910, and during Apartheid, it was impossible to have straight-out secularism, because religion was so intertwined with the state and was used in a manipulative way to serve the interests of white minority rule. Some characteristics of secularism include treating citizens equally, regardless of their individual religion and requiring, as a point of departure, the avoidance of preferential treatment, informed or encouraged by any citizen’s religious beliefs or affiliation.

According to Kibet and Fombad (2017), constitutionalism in the South African context shows a transition and offers an antidote for the failed protection of fundamental rights. Furthermore, during the transition in South Africa, constitutionalism and human rights fostered a moderate and tolerant atmosphere between the state and religion, eschewing a hardline anti-religious stance. Instead, the state, through the Constitution, protects all religious freedoms.

Although South Africa is regarded as a secular state, the country's entrenched political secularism provides a balanced space for religious activity, separate from the state (Anon, 2024:1; Eneji & Iwuagwu, 2021:389). This balance places a responsibility on the state to ensure that proposals seeking to incorporate religious principles into public

governance are carefully evaluated to prevent results that violate constitutional provisions.

In this regard, Leatt (2017) demonstrates that, while religious groups were influential during key transitional moments, particularly the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in November 1991 and subsequent multiparty negotiations, their role was ultimately subordinate to political authority in the consensus-building process. This highlights the constitutional prioritisation of political authority over religious influence in governance.

Brynard (2013:80-81) notes that incorporating religious principles into governance must be lawful and aligned with the Constitution, promoting accountability and administrative justice. However, care is needed to avoid privileging one religion over others, which could marginalise diverse faiths in South Africa. Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021:395) emphasise the importance of interfaith mechanisms at national and community levels to manage religious interactions and safeguard the constitutional integrity of governance practices.

Abumoghli (2024:489-490) observes that while science and religion are sometimes seen as opposites, they share common values and can complement each other. Together, ethically guided religious principles and scientific evidence offer a comprehensive approach to sustainable development and behaviour-driven governance. This study, therefore, adopts the view that integrating science and religion can enhance solutions to governance challenges, particularly by advancing sustainable and ethical public-sector practices.

Nolte, Danjibo, and Oladeji (2009:3) observe that the Christian faith, Islam, and other religions provide adherents with distinct moral frameworks that shape how they voice societal demands and perceive the state's responsibilities. In practice, workplaces and public institutions comprise individuals from diverse religions, ethnicities, and social groups, whose faith-informed values influence their behaviour and decision-making. As Syed *et al.* (2018:2) note, these ideologies inevitably shape leadership approaches and governance practices. This study engages with these insights by highlighting that understanding and integrating the moral perspectives of diverse faiths can inform value-based leadership and inclusive governance, ensuring that policy and service delivery reflect both ethical integrity and societal pluralism.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the question is being asked about how social scientists view religion and think about religion and politics, as well as how it remains relevant in the modern era, characterised by plurality and yet individualism (Bevir, 2012:4-5). While religion and politics are often formally treated as separate spheres (Fox, 2018:1), in practice, political leaders and religious authorities remain mutually dependent, each significantly shaping the decisions of the other. This interdependence highlights the continuing relevance of religion in governance and public decision-making, even within secular frameworks.

In many countries, this status quo remains unchanged. Countries such as the United States (US), Nigeria, and South Africa, among others, support official religions. Still, in most cases, the institutions of religion and the state (politics) remain separate entities (Fox, 2018:1). South Africa faces many challenges and continues to be burdened by corruption, low morals, and general unethical behaviour among those entrusted with governing the country. Hence, the time has come for it to start appreciating the value of religious input to ensure equality, ethical practices, good governance, and effective and efficient service delivery for its citizens (Syed *et al.*, 2018:1).

The role of religion within political parties remains under-researched in South Africa. Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1077) argues that analysing the political landscape's orientation toward religion is essential to determine whether policies and practices are fundamentally religious or secular. Additionally, it is necessary to assess whether legal frameworks, institutional rules, and informal norms promote inclusiveness or exclusiveness, as these shape both the behaviour of individual leaders and the societies they represent. This study engages with these insights by emphasising that understanding the interplay between religion and politics is critical for value-driven, inclusive, and constitutionally aligned governance.

Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022) observes that the African National Congress (ANC), though founded on secular principles, increasingly employs religious rhetoric alongside secular legislation. This blurring of boundaries creates confusion in governance, as inconsistent practices—such as banning religious activities in schools while inviting religious leaders to public events—undermine clarity and accountability (van der Walt, 2011). Secular legislation and constitutional rules, in contrast, serve to moderate these religious influences, ensuring governance remains impartial and inclusive (Fourie, 2003).

1.2 Motivation and Background

Although religion plays a vital role in contemporary society, little research has been conducted to explore the convergence between public service and religion in a meaningful way (Tracy, 2012:87). Despite the growing consensus among members of the United Nations (UN), regarding the right to freedom of conscience and the necessity of a separation between church and state, the relationship between religion and politics remains a significant subject in political philosophy (Callaway, 2025).

This notion is echoed by Fox (2018:1), who states that throughout history, there has been a clear indication of an interconnected relationship between religion and politics. Despite this, Fox (2018) states that these entities have always been embodied as separate institutions. Callaway (2025) maintains that the significance of this subject lies in the fact that religions frequently assert their loyalty to individuals, and universal religions extend these assertions to all individuals, rather than being limited to a specific community. This notion is confirmed by Fox (2018:6), who reflects that religion is a social phenomenon and an institution that influences the behaviour of human beings, both as individuals and groups.

Religion and politics are inherently intertwined, requiring careful management to leverage shared values for societal development (Marshall, 2015). Religious obligations, such as prayer, charity, and ethical conduct, can positively shape public policy in areas like education and healthcare. Yet these obligations may conflict with political imperatives such as compliance with the law and secular governance, sometimes marginalising minority faiths or secular perspectives (Mda, n.d.). This tension underscores the need for governance frameworks that balance faith-inspired ethics with constitutional inclusivity and impartiality.

Van Coller (2020:60-75) argues that religions and their practices can meaningfully support politics and governance. De Freitas (2024:45-60) notes that the extent and structure of this influence are as important to political theory as the potential for conflict. Increasingly, scholarship highlights the rights of minority groups, including equal treatment under the law, political participation, representation, and language rights (UN, n.d.). Callaway (2025) emphasises that governance must account for the specific religious needs of minority communities, ensuring that their inclusion is guided by faith-based considerations rather than ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status..

Religions and their associated practices can both support and challenge governance (Van Coller, 2020:60-75; De Freitas, 2024:45-60). While faith can promote ethical conduct, social responsibility, and civic engagement, it can also conflict with secular requirements and marginalise minority views. Scholarship increasingly emphasises the rights of religious minority groups, including equal treatment, political representation, and participation in public life (UN, n.d.). Callaway (2025) argues that these considerations must be guided by faith-specific needs rather than ethnicity, gender, or wealth. Together, these perspectives suggest that governance in diverse societies requires a delicate balance: leveraging the positive ethical and social influence of religion while ensuring that political frameworks remain inclusive, secular, and protective of all citizens' rights.

Leadership in organisations can be exercised both formally and informally, guiding decisions and accountability (Latham, 2009:4). Religious leaders, under such systems, may engage with politics constructively, identifying obstacles to citizen participation without being co-opted by factional interests (Shadrach, 2023:62). In South Africa, however, the relationship between religion and political parties remains under-researched (Jeffery-Schwikkard, 2022:1077) and highly complex. While political parties may appeal to religious sentiments, they must balance these with secular and pragmatic considerations (Gherghina & Mişcoiu, 2022). South Africa exemplifies this tension: the population is highly religious, and parliamentarians often exhibit even stronger religiosity (Driessen, 2022), yet the political and legal framework remains firmly secular, prioritising equality, human rights, and separation of religion from state affairs (Fourie, 2003). This highlights the need for governance mechanisms that harness the ethical and civic potential of religious engagement while upholding constitutional secularism.

The scholarly examination of the correlation between political parties and religion remains limited in South Africa (Driessen, 2022). According to Ozzano (2022:241-242), two primary factors contribute to this phenomenon. Firstly, the prevalence of the secularisation paradigm, which posits that religion will eventually lose its significance in the public domain. Secondly, there is a lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework that enables a comparative analysis of how political parties interact with religion, governance, and politics.

The lack of scholarly attention to the relationship between religion and political parties is particularly pronounced in contexts beyond North America and Europe. However,

many studies have been conducted on political secularism in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (Driessen, 2022).

In South Africa, Coertzen (2014:127) commented that 79.8% of the population of about 65,926,392, as of Monday 6 May 2024, based on Worldometer estimates of the latest UN data, profess to follow the Christian religion, of which 0.2% are Jewish, 1.1% are followers of Islam, and 1.3% percent are Hindu religion followers. Thus, religion plays an integral part in the lives of the larger portion of South Africans, despite it being regarded as a secular state.

In contrast, Maina (2017:1) takes a different view in his article, published in the magazine, "The Conversation". He challenges the idea that South Africa, while constitutionally described as a secular state, maintains a strict separation between religion and governance. Referring to a High Court judgment, widely regarded as a turning point in the discourse on religion and education, Maina (2017) explains that the ruling affirms the state's responsibility to remain impartial toward all religions and worldviews. However, the Court also clarified that this impartiality does not amount to a complete separation or "divorce" between religion and the state. In other words, while the Constitution ensures freedom and fairness in matters of faith, it does not insist on the total exclusion of religion from public life in South Africa.

Based on the above, this study aimed to investigate how South Africa can benefit from the way political parties engage with religion to consolidate leadership and governance in the country. Religious people are required to be more ethical in their conduct, based on their beliefs that a supernatural being is monitoring their behaviour (Bin Badron, 2020:1). Good governance from the Bible, the Christian perspective, denotes a love for justice, judging people correctly, treating people in a fair manner, providing for the needy, and actively fighting the oppressors of the people, while upholding high moral standards, in line with God's Word (Holder, 2022:1).

Unfortunately, the South African Government is challenged on all fronts in providing essential public services, which clearly indicates poor governance. Hence, the motivation for this research was to investigate whether religion can repeat the vital role it played before and during Apartheid and alter the trajectory of poor governance by tapping into leaders' consciousness as part of their belief or religion to develop ethical

and honest behaviour in the execution of their duties (Masuku, 2019:117; Weisse & Anthonissen, 2004:27, 33).

Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa contains the principles relevant for effective governance. These principles are characterised by adherence to ethical and effective leadership that aims to achieve an ethical culture, good performance, effective control, and legitimacy. “Good” governance, however, is only possible with effective leadership (Institute of Directors Southern Africa, 2016:20).

Good governance should be characterized by ethical, moral, as well as just political and institutional processes and outcomes that are driven and maintained to uphold order in line with religious beliefs, divine justice, and the protection of God-given human rights. According to Ullrich (2019:254), this entails a basic set of first-generation rights. Thus, the actual and essential test of good governance is the degree to which it adheres to and delivers on the promise to uphold the above (Holder, 2022:1).

Ansell and Torfing (2016) provide the following workable definitions of governance, which are generally used in conjunction with a particular qualifying prefix, namely “good” governance. According to the authors, good governance entails assessing and measuring the quality of governing institutions or bodies in developing countries, specifically in terms of their accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, interaction, and adherence to the rule of law. In addition, good governance stems from selecting qualified individuals with the necessary abilities and capabilities to make informed business and political decisions.

However, Ansell and Torfing (2016) criticise these definitions as being either too open-ended or too restrictive. The authors prefer a definition that states that good governance is a vehicle for steering society and the economy by using collaborative means in line with common goals. Furthermore, good governance must create a pattern of ordered rule that clearly describes and prescribes what is governed and how it should be governed.

The King IV Report (2016:20) defines effective leadership as being result-driven, where strategic objectives and positive outcomes are achieved through the leader's efforts, ultimately leading to the goal of good governance. This result extends beyond what happens within the organisation and encompasses the impact on external stakeholders. According to Piper (2009:66), the recognition of the importance of religious leaders in

the political landscape is widely acknowledged across many countries worldwide. South Africa, with its Apartheid history, knows and understands this all too well, because the Church and religious rhetoric played an essential role in transitioning from Apartheid to the new democratic dispensation.

Piper (2009:68) postulates that faith-based organisations' (FBO) influence on politics and governance cannot be overemphasised, because, apart from the moral resource, which is the leaders' standing on the authority of a higher or supernatural being, they can, according to Marshall and Van Saanen (2009:23), "speak truth to power" to fight against corruption and promote ethical leadership. This notion, however, is not without its flaws.

Winnail (2023:24), in his article, "When the blind lead the blind," avers that a tragic misguidance is perpetrated by perverse religious leaders, who insist on misleading society with their questionable moral demeanour, displaying unacceptable behaviour. Despite this strong view, it is still important to acknowledge that history has shown that religious organisations, through their leaders, can be mobilising agents in the political sphere, as their interaction has contributed to increased mutual understanding, where dialogue has brought about positive change and development (Nolte *et al.*, 2009:4).

Purcell and Kinnie (2007:545) opine that organisational commitment and work satisfaction are best demonstrated in an environment with strong leadership. According to Schmidt (2010:12-13), society, through the vehicle of elections, appoints representatives to positions of leadership to manage and make decisions in line with societal wishes for better, affordable, and sustainable development, ensuring effective service delivery.

However, South Africa faces serious challenges due to ineffective leadership, often marked by a lack of ethics and morals. The biggest challenges are maladministration, racketeering, and corruption, which result in inadequate service delivery to the poor, while unethical and corrupt leaders are not held accountable for their transgressions (Mbandlwa, Dorasamy & Fagbadebo, 2020:1642).

1.3 Historical Context Overview

The word 'theocratic' comes to mind when the concept of freedom of religion comes under discussion. According to the Oxford Reference, theocracy literally means

“government by God.” Josephus coined the Greek term, which denotes the political organisation and leadership of the Jewish people. Josephus (*Against Apion*, 2.165) is credited with coining the term “theocracy” to describe the Jewish system where God is the sovereign ruler. In this community in particular, God was regarded as the supreme ruler over the Hebrews before the institution of kingship in Israel. God’s laws encompassed both religious and civil obligations and remained in force even after the king was elected, in which situation the king became vice-regent of God. When the monarchy disappeared, a more complete theocratic form of government emerged among the ancient people (Elazar, 1995).

Coertzen (2008:347) identifies six models of church–state relations, each reflecting varying degrees of religious freedom. These range from absolute theocracy, where one religion dominates, and no freedom exists, to an established religion granted a monopoly with limited toleration. Other models include state endorsement of a specific church, cooperation with financial or institutional support, mutual accommodation without such support, and rigid separation, in which religion is heavily restricted. Coertzen’s typology illustrates that the scope of religious freedom is closely linked to the nature of the church–state relationship, providing a framework for understanding how governance can balance ethical guidance from religion with constitutional secularism.

The focus of this discussion was on freedom of religion in South Africa before and after 1994. According to Coertzen (2008:345), freedom of religion was not a protected right under the Constitution. Despite this, one specific church, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) or Nederland’s Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), maintained strong political involvement with the State when it advanced a Neo-Calvinist ideological justification of apartheid. However, after many decades of relentless fighting and resistance against the status quo, in 1994 a new dispensation dawned, and freedom of religion received constitutional protection and was guaranteed as a basic human right. A new period of democracy arrived, albeit, it cannot simply be said that there was no freedom of religion in South Africa before 1994. It is important to understand the context of the notion: in other words, there must be an understanding of what freedom of religion meant before 1994. Furthermore, there must be an understanding of what the relationship between the Church and the State was before 1994 (Coertzen, 2008:345).

A full discussion on the aforementioned is a research topic for future research and will, as such, not receive more focused attention in this discussion.

Coertzen (2008) notes that South Africa's religious landscape evolved from a state church model (1652–1800) to growing religious pluralism, which sought to recognise multiple faiths. However, Apartheid disrupted this trajectory: between 1948 and 1978, the Dutch Reformed Church closely mirrored the State, reinforcing political domination (Coertzen, 2008:346). By 1980, the rapid growth of the African Independent Churches challenged this dominance, using religion to resist apartheid and raise awareness of God-given freedoms. Historically, the South African church-state relationship followed a theocratic model influenced by John Calvin, where church authorities dictated religion's societal role, often asserting dominance over political structures (Coertzen, 2008:349). This historical context underscores that religion in South Africa has both empowered ethical resistance and shaped governance norms, a duality that continues to influence contemporary leadership and public service.

Coertzen (2008:350-356) traces South Africa's church-state relations from 1652 to 1994, showing a gradual evolution from state-controlled religion to greater ecclesiastical independence. Initially, the political council oversaw spiritual care at the Cape, appointing elders and deacons, effectively controlling the church. The Batavian period (1804–1806) introduced ideals of equality and tolerance, but the State still dominated religious affairs. Ordinance 7 of 1843 increased church autonomy, yet the apartheid-era Nationalist Party (1948–1994) sought to co-opt the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), enforcing segregationist policies. By the 1980s, the Church began acknowledging its complicity and repositioned itself as a moral and unifying force, supporting resistance movements and advocating societal cohesion. These efforts, alongside persistent activism, contributed to the democratic transition and the 1996 Constitution, which enshrines freedom of religion as a fundamental right. This history illustrates that religion in South Africa has both enabled governance manipulation and fostered ethical accountability, highlighting its dual potential in shaping public leadership and societal values.

The 1996 Constitution of South Africa enshrines freedom of religion as a fundamental right, clearly distinguishing between state institutions and civil society while promoting unity in diversity (Coertzen, 2008:358-359). Although Christianity remains the majority religion, comprising over 94% of the population, the government maintains religious

neutrality, recognising the plurality of faiths and their shared purpose of guiding humanity toward ethical and communal values (Coertzen, 2008:360-361). Historically, South African churches played a critical role in resisting apartheid and providing pastoral care (Kim, 2017:3), and post-1994, they continue to navigate their responsibilities in a democratic context, contributing to reconciliation, social development, and the ethical governance of society (Kim, 2017:4). This illustrates how religion can both shape moral leadership and support governance, provided its influence aligns with constitutional principles and inclusivity.

Chipkin and Leatt (2011:39-40) note that early predictions of religion's decline due to industrialisation, urbanisation, and secularisation proved unfounded. In South Africa, religion remained deeply embedded in society, shaping moral consciousness and guiding anti-apartheid activism, particularly among Christians advocating for justice beyond racial and social divides. Secularisation did not diminish religion's influence on societal norms or political engagement. The transition to democracy, unlike violent transitions elsewhere, was achieved largely through negotiated settlements and dialogue, spearheaded by the TRC (Simpson, 1998:3). Chipkin and Leatt (2011:41) highlight how religion, especially liberation theology, informed the TRC and political rhetoric, ensuring ethical leadership and moral accountability in reconciliation processes. Simpson (1998:5) emphasises that leaders' religious grounding played a critical role in shaping frameworks for reparative justice and sustaining the moral integrity of democratic governance.

1.4 Constitutional Framework

Chipkin and Leatt (2011:41) assert that the Constitution of 1996 contains an inalienable affirmation of the right to freedom of religion, furthermore, the guarantee that religion in state institutions is protected under conditions of fairness, non-partisanship and strong objectivity.

Sachs (1990:120) avers that the Constitution inherently does not instantaneously eradicate the debilitating inequalities created by Apartheid and its consequences. In contrast, the Constitution, characterised by its democratic aims and purposes, creates an environment that enables the creation of structures of equality on political and

societal levels, and the protection of political rights that ensures that the injustices of the past are addressed under the law.

Following the report of Ullrich (2024), it is stated that during the period from 1980 to the middle of the 1990s, South Africa experienced an atmosphere of constitutionalism and the awakening of human rights. The State began to show more tolerance of the influences of religion in contrast to uncompromising anti-religious sentiments. The intense multiparty negotiations of the time led to the beginning of constitutionally enshrined protection of religious freedoms for all South Africans. Ullrich (2024) attests that though South Africa effectively became a secular State, it consciously opened up equal space for religious groups and their activities, maintaining a stance of non-preferential treatment of any religion, thus creating a space where all religions are acknowledged and protected by the Constitution and the law.

With broad religious freedom comes the responsibility of the State to prevent abuses. In 2017, the South African government introduced the “hate crimes” and “hate speech” bills to regulate religious practices and identify legitimate religious communities, aiming to safeguard human rights (Foster, 2018). However, civil society raised concerns that these measures contradicted Section 15(1)(2) of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion. Requirements such as theological qualifications for leaders, minister registration, and formal recognition of religious communities sparked fears that the State was overstepping its role, potentially restricting religious freedom and threatening democratic principles (Foster, 2018). This case illustrates the delicate balance between ensuring public safety and protecting constitutional religious freedoms.

De Freitas (2022) argues that the South African Judiciary upholds the self-determination of religious associations while deliberately refraining from interfering with essential doctrines. Critics contend that this can shield religious practices from constitutional scrutiny; however, De Freitas maintains that it reflects a constitutional commitment to protect fundamental beliefs and promote diversity. Rosenfeld (2020) and Usturali (2015) emphasise that liberal constitutionalism requires tolerance of religion alongside secularism, acknowledging religion’s enduring societal influence. Gangopadhyay (2023:29) notes that the relationship between religion and government is complex and evolving, necessitating careful management to safeguard both freedom of religion and cultural practices. Central to this legitimacy, Usturali (2015) asserts, is recognising

citizens' autonomy, as every rational individual must be able to exercise informed choice in a constitutional democracy.

1.5 Does Religion Influence South African Political Leaders

The research does not yield a definitive answer, as religion's influence on South African public sector leaders is nuanced and context-dependent. Kondlo and Ejiogu (2011:47) note that leadership in the public sector is shaped by a complex interplay of personal beliefs, institutional culture, and constitutional norms. Courts have, at times, shown reluctance to override religious constitutions, reflecting this tension. Koopman (2010:407) observes that religious discourse continues to guide political leaders, particularly in addressing moral and ethical challenges in governance. While the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, many leaders openly acknowledge that their faith informs their approach to leadership, morality, and service delivery, demonstrating the ongoing, though sometimes informal, interplay between religion and public administration.

South African leaders have consistently recognised religion as a moral compass in governance. Mandela (1999) credited religious institutions for mobilising resistance; Mbeki (1996) highlighted Christian and African traditional influences on heritage and unity; Zuma (2009) called for national prayers; and Ramaphosa (2018) urged the Church to guide ethical leadership. Across these speeches, leaders affirm constitutional freedom of religion, respect for religious diversity, and the role of religious institutions in holding politicians accountable and promoting societal cohesion (Bentley, 2013:2).

Recent statements from South African political leaders illustrate the continuing influence of religion on public leadership, governance, and service delivery (Ferreira & Nyati, 2025). Deputy President Paul Mashatile highlights the Church's historic role in social upliftment and the contribution of liberation theology to the struggle against Apartheid, framing faith as both a moral and social guide. Similarly, Ministers Ronald Lamola, Ashor Sarupen, Mmamaloko Kubayi, Dean McPherson, and Siviwe Gwarube acknowledge that their Christian faith sustains ethical decision-making, humility, justice, and compassion, shaping their leadership in policy and public service.

Musi Maimane and Bantu Holomisa emphasise faith as a grounding principle that informs equality, integrity, and resilience, while Julius Malema argues that religious

values underpin justice, solidarity, and the upliftment of marginalized communities, extending beyond a single tradition to encompass universal principles. Ministers Peter Groenewald and Chrispin Phiri reinforce the idea that faith offers guidance, moral purpose, and an ethical compass, encouraging leaders to act in the public interest while recognising humanity's interconnectedness.

Critically, these examples highlight both the opportunities and tensions in integrating religion into governance. Leaders draw on faith to promote ethical conduct, social justice, and compassionate service, directly addressing the research objectives of understanding religion's influence on leadership ethics and service delivery. However, reliance on personal religious conviction raises questions about inclusivity and constitutional neutrality, particularly in a pluralistic society where secular law and diverse faiths coexist. These insights suggest that religion continues to shape leadership practices in South Africa, yet its integration into governance requires careful balance to uphold democratic values, equality, and accountability.

Although South Africa is constitutionally secular, guaranteeing freedom of religion and separating State and religion, the preceding discussion shows that politicians openly draw on personal faith to guide ethical conduct and purpose in public service. Many leaders link their religious convictions to inclusive, morally grounded policies that align with constitutional principles, while others treat faith as a private matter (Sullivan, 2005). This illustrates that religion can shape personal ethics and decision-making, yet institutional leadership remains firmly guided by the Constitution rather than any specific religion. As Leatt (2007:22) observes, public governance must uphold secularism, ensuring no single faith is privileged, even as individual leaders derive personal moral and ethical direction from their beliefs. It is evident, according to Sullivan (2005) and Leatt (2007), that while South African political leaders may draw personal ethical and moral guidance from religion, the functioning of public institutions remains constitutionally secular, illustrating the nuanced interplay between personal faith, leadership, and governance in promoting ethical public service (Sullivan, 2005; Leatt, 2007:22).

1.6 Religious Leaders in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Religious leaders played a pivotal role in challenging racial oppression during Apartheid, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. Figures such as Archbishop Denis Hurley, Dr. Beyers Naudé, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu consistently condemned systemic injustice and government neglect, highlighting the moral responsibilities of leadership (Pollitt, 2022). The Catholic Church, for example, publicly denounced leaders' preoccupation with self-interest amid widespread poverty and unemployment, reflecting a broader trend of faith-based advocacy for social justice. In 1988, following the suppression of 17 opposition organisations, members of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) convened an emergency meeting to draft a petition signed by Tutu, Frank Chikane, Stephen Naidoo, Peter Storey, and Allan Boesak, outlining grievances and proposing reforms in church–state relations (Vosloo, 2008:1-2). These actions demonstrate how religious leaders shaped ethical discourse, mobilized civic engagement, and influenced governance, offering insights into the enduring interplay between faith, moral authority, and leadership in South Africa.

1.6.1 Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Anglican)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, affectionately called “The Arch,” exemplifies the intersection of faith and ethical leadership in South Africa (Kumar, 2021). Influenced early by Father Trevor Huddleston, Tutu pursued theological studies after leaving teaching under the oppressive Bantu education system and was ordained in 1960, later becoming the first black dean of Saint Mary’s Cathedral in Johannesburg in 1975. His leadership during the anti-apartheid struggle illustrates how religious convictions can inform public action, ethical courage, and advocacy for social justice, which are core concerns of this study. Tutu’s confrontations with Prime Minister John Vorster and active engagement following the Soweto uprising and Steve Biko’s death demonstrate how faith-inspired values guided his moral judgment and commitment to the oppressed (Kumar, 2021).

Despite harassment, threats, and passport revocation, Tutu’s steadfastness, recognised globally with the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, shows how religiously grounded leadership can sustain ethical governance under extreme adversity. Post-1994, Tutu continued to model accountability and moral oversight, notably through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which provided a platform for justice, reconciliation, and healing, and through his critique of political leaders’ misuse of power, such as the 2017

protest against President Zuma's removal of Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan (Kumar, 2021).

Tutu's example directly informs the research objectives by illustrating: (1) how religion can shape personal ethics and leadership decisions in governance; (2) the capacity of faith-based values to promote justice, accountability, and social cohesion; and (3) the potential of religious leadership to influence societal expectations of governance. His life demonstrates that, even within a secular constitutional framework, religious principles can underpin ethical public service without compromising the State's pluralistic and constitutional obligations.

1.6.2 Alan Boesak (Reformed Church)

Allan Aubrey Boesak, born in Kakamas to Christian parents, emerged as a prominent voice against Apartheid, linking faith with ethical and political activism (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). He began theological studies at UWC at 17 and was ordained in 1968 in the Coloured branch of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church under Beyers Naudé. From early in his ministry, Boesak combined preaching with political activism, challenging the oppressive policies of the South African Government. His influence extended globally, persuading the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to declare Apartheid a heresy and suspend complicit white South African churches, serving as WARC president from 1982 to 1991 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

Boesak co-founded the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983, an umbrella body uniting some 700 organizations and about two million South Africans, positioning the UDF as the largest domestic opposition to Apartheid. He also led the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA) from 1981, promoting Christian integrity through active resistance and rejecting the use of religion to justify racial or cultural oppression (Anon, 2011). His advocacy reflected a belief that moral and ethical leadership requires engagement in societal justice, demonstrating that religion can provide both a personal ethical compass and a framework for collective action against injustice.

Boesak's life illustrates the research objectives by showing: (1) how religious convictions can guide leadership ethics in highly challenging political contexts; (2) the role of faith in mobilizing social movements for governance reforms; and (3) the potential

for religious leadership to influence institutional and societal norms while reinforcing moral accountability. His integration of faith and political activism exemplifies the impact of religion on leadership and governance in South Africa, directly addressing this study's inquiry into how religion shapes ethical decision-making and societal transformation.

1.6.3 Pastor Ray McCauley (Evangelical)

Ray McCauley, a charismatic and at times controversial pastor, founded the Rhema Bible Church (RBC) in 1979 and became a leading white neo-Pentecostal figure in Southern Africa, serving as co-chair of the National Interfaith Council of South Africa (NICSA) (O'Hara, 2024). Educated at Bible college in 1978–79, McCauley engaged his congregation in politics shortly before Apartheid ended. In 1990, he and 96 other church leaders signed the Rustenburg Declaration, publicly apologising for their earlier silence on Apartheid and committing to support its peaceful dismantling (O'Hara, 2024).

McCauley's leadership illustrates the intersection of religion and governance: his church became a platform for political engagement, contributing to democratic transition, while navigating controversy, such as inviting Jacob Zuma to speak in 2009, a move criticised as political bias. That same year, he co-founded the interfaith NILC, later merged into NICSA, which publicly defended the government during Zuma's presidency (O'Hara, 2024). Peters (2024) notes that McCauley, alongside leaders like Desmond Tutu and Frank Chikane, played a pivotal role in South Africa's transition to democracy, highlighting how religious leaders can influence governance, reconciliation, and moral accountability in public life.

From this research perspective, McCauley exemplifies how religious leadership can indirectly shape political discourse and policy, bridging moral authority with civic engagement and demonstrating the dual potential of religion to promote societal cohesion while also risking perceptions of partisanship. His example is critical to understanding how religion informs ethical leadership and governance in a secular constitutional state.

1.6.4 Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein, Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa since 2005, integrates religious leadership with legal expertise to influence civic and political discourse (Horev, n.d.). A member of the National Religious Leaders Council of South Africa, Rabbi Goldstein co-founded the community-based anti-crime

initiative, Community Active Protection (CAP), and has been a vocal advocate for moral responsibility, justice, and social cohesion (Anon, n.d.).

Goldstein's initiatives, such as the Bill of Responsibility, codify ethical obligations alongside legal rights, promoting respect, compassion, and civic accountability in schools and directly linking religiously informed values with public policy (Horev, n.d.). He has also engaged internationally, using his legal and religious authority to challenge government positions, such as South Africa's stance on Israel, reframing foreign policy debates through moral and religious reasoning (RSA, 2025; Goldstein, 2025).

From a research perspective, Rabbi Goldstein demonstrates that religious leaders in South Africa can move beyond personal faith to actively shape governance, legislation, and civic culture. His work exemplifies how religion can serve as a public resource for ethical guidance, accountability, and social cohesion, directly addressing the study's objectives of exploring the role of faith in leadership and governance within the public sector.

1.6.5 Reverend Frank Chikane (Pentecostal/Apostolic Faith Mission)

Reverend Frank Chikane has been a pivotal figure in South Africa for over five decades, combining religious conviction with political activism and governance (Wabwile, 2025). As a leader in the anti-apartheid movement, Vice President of the UDF (Transvaal Region), and later Head of the SACC, Chikane mobilised religious communities against oppression and advocated for justice, reconciliation, and human rights (Hitchen, 2018). He survived political persecution, including arrest and a poison attack, yet continued his activism, exemplifying moral courage and ethical leadership.

Post-1994, Chikane served as Director General under Presidents Mandela and Mbeki, leveraging his faith-informed principles to influence governance and policy implementation (Wabwile, 2025). His chairmanship of the ANC Integrity Commission reflects a commitment to ethical accountability, restoring the party's moral compass, and embedding religiously inspired values into public service standards.

From a research perspective, Chikane illustrates how religious leaders can actively shape governance, reinforce ethical norms, and guide political structures. His career demonstrates the intersection of faith, leadership, and public accountability, directly addressing the study's objectives of exploring religion's role in consolidating moral and ethical leadership in South Africa's public sector.

1.7 The Role of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)

South Africa's diversity of people, culture, and beliefs brings both vibrancy and deep socio-economic challenges, including violence, poor service delivery, and high unemployment (Mark, 2023). These conditions underscore the critical role of faith-based organisations (FBOs), which have historically and continue to advocate for social development, ethical leadership, education, healthcare, and political accountability. FBOs, embedded in communities, act where government delivery falls short, promoting moral reconstruction and grassroots social change (Swart, 2006:59). Their proximity to society allows them to influence ethical leadership and governance, aligning with the study's focus on religion's role in shaping public-sector morality and accountability.

1.7.1 All African Conference of Churches (AACC)

The All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) represents over 200 million Christians across 43 African countries, spanning diverse denominations and institutions (RSA, 2025). Through initiatives such as the Eminent Persons Ecumenical Programme for Peace in Africa (EPEPPA), the AACC advances peace, justice, equality, and socio-political stability, emphasizing leaders' responsibility to uphold these values. Historically, the AACC supported liberation movements in South Africa, aligning with the anti-apartheid struggle (Anon, 2025). Today, its work includes peacebuilding, conflict resolution, interfaith dialogue, climate action, gender justice, and the promotion of ethical leadership and accountable governance. South African churches, particularly SACC members, remain active participants, underscoring how FBOs continue to shape public morality and governance, in line with the study's focus on religion's role in ethical and accountable leadership.

1.7.2 South African Council of Churches (SACC)

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) has long served as a unifying and prophetic voice, advocating for social justice, human rights, and ethical governance (Anon, n.d.; Kgatle, 2018). Focused on faith and mission, health, justice, peace and reconciliation, and poverty eradication, the SACC has historically influenced policy, notably in HIV/AIDS treatment, where its advocacy contributed to the rollout of South Africa's largest free treatment campaign (Joseph, 2005:18; Koopman & Vorster, 2017). By engaging with government, civil society, and youth through initiatives such as the SACC Youth Forum (SACCYF), the organisation has promoted reconciliation, social

cohesion, and moral accountability (Vorster in Welker, Koopman & Vorster, 2017:132; Klaasen & Solomons, 2019).

The SACC's role extends beyond Christianity, fostering interfaith dialogue and collaboration to address societal challenges, including gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality (Mark, 2023). Its engagement with the Government of National Unity demonstrates the recognition of FBOs as critical partners in governance and policy implementation, covering topics from crime and corruption to national development and global engagement (RSA, 2025). This enduring influence underscores the alignment between religiously informed moral leadership and public sector objectives, confirming that faith-based organisations like the SACC are vital actors in shaping ethical governance, social transformation, and inclusive policy in South Africa.

1.7.3 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established through the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, was central to South Africa's transitional justice process following the first democratic elections (Stein *et al.*, 2011). Its mandate was to uncover human rights violations under Apartheid, encourage confession and forgiveness, and facilitate national reconciliation. Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC promoted restorative justice, prioritising acknowledgment of victims' experiences and reparations over punitive measures (Tutu *et al.*, 1998).

The Commission scrutinised key Apartheid laws, including the Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act, Bantu Education Act, and Separate Amenities Act, which institutionalised racial oppression and provided the legal framework for gross human rights violations (TRC, 1998). By publicly exposing state-sanctioned atrocities, the TRC reinforced moral accountability and ethical governance, demonstrating the critical role of truth-telling and principled leadership in societal reconstruction (Tutu, 1999).

Koska (2016) highlights the TRC's relevance to transitional and corporate justice, noting that restorative mechanisms can address human rights violations by both state and economic actors. The TRC examined corporate complicity, including exploitative practices in the mining sector, and linked economic power to structural oppression. This underscores the broader significance of transitional justice in embedding accountability, ethical governance, and protection of human dignity in post-conflict societies. Overall,

the TRC exemplifies how principled, faith-informed leadership, alongside institutional mechanisms, can foster moral reconstruction, reconciliation, and inclusive governance.

1.7.4 The Student Christian Movement (SCM)

Macqueen (2013) observes that South African church hierarchies often moved slowly on social justice issues, leaving students to take the lead. Student organisations, such as the World Student Christian Federation, YMCA, and the Student Volunteer Movement, emerged to champion justice, unity, and moral accountability. John R. Mott (1895) notes that these movements began as revivalist initiatives in American schools and developed into ecumenical platforms advocating for church unity and social justice.

The Student Christian Movement (SCM) emphasizes that all people are created equal before God, celebrating diversity as central to human dignity and ethical responsibility (Anon, n.d.). This commitment to equality, social justice, and moral leadership illustrates how faith-based initiatives can cultivate ethical consciousness and civic responsibility, reinforcing the research focus on religion's role in shaping leadership and governance in South Africa.

1.7.5 The Young Christian Students (YCS)

Morar (2023) highlights that the Young Christian Students (YCS) was an autonomous, intellectual organisation that played a key role in South Africa's liberation struggle. By uniting students across academic levels, the YCS campaigned for free and equal education and raised awareness of Apartheid's injustices. Many of its leaders later assumed significant roles in the post-1994 government, addressing societal challenges inherited from colonialism and Apartheid. Morar (2023) notes that the YCS aimed to equip students, "children of light", with knowledge of societal injustices, "children of darkness", so they could act ethically and responsibly for the common good.

This underscores how faith-based student movements contributed to moral leadership, civic responsibility, and the shaping of governance, directly aligning with the study's focus on religion's influence on leadership and public service in South Africa.

1.7.6 Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRLC)

The 1996 South African Constitution established the Commission for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRLR) as

a constitutional body tasked with strengthening constitutional democracy by protecting and promoting cultural, religious, and linguistic rights. The CRLC was created to ensure that diverse communities are recognised and accommodated within a unified constitutional order, thereby affirming pluralism without undermining social cohesion (Becker, 2015:455).

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission seeks to foster mutual respect, protect historically marginalised cultural and religious identities, and promote peace, tolerance, and national unity on the basis of equity and non-discrimination. As Mabe (2013:146) notes, the CRLC's role illustrates how the South African state institutionally manages religious and cultural diversity within a secular constitutional framework. This is directly relevant to the study's objectives, as it demonstrates how religion is acknowledged and safeguarded at an institutional level while governance remains guided by constitutional principles rather than religious authority.

1.7.7 Religious Political Parties

1.7.7.1 *African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)*

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) defines itself as a Christian-based political party grounded in biblical principles and the belief that civil government is ultimately subject to divine authority. Its founding ideology emphasises Christian moral values, grassroots empowerment and ethical governance, and is framed within a federal vision that seeks to promote social cohesion and economic participation (de Waal, 2014:285-287).

While explicitly religious in orientation, the ACDP simultaneously acknowledges South Africa's cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity and positions itself as an advocate for an inclusive society in which constitutional freedoms of religion, conscience, and expression are protected. The party frames moral regeneration and national unity as responses to South Africa's history of division, arguing that ethical leadership informed by Christian values can contribute to good governance without undermining constitutional democracy (Anon, 2023). This case is significant for the study, as it illustrates the tension between faith-based political identity and constitutional pluralism, thereby highlighting how religion continues to shape leadership discourse and governance debates in the democratic era.

1.8 The Presence of Religion in the Public Sector

Scholars consistently emphasise the delicate balance South Africa maintains between constitutional neutrality and the social significance of religion. While the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, belief, and opinion, it simultaneously requires the State to remain impartial and avoid privileging any single faith within public institutions (Leatt, 2017). South Africa is therefore best understood not as a strictly secular state, but as a religiously neutral one, where religion is neither endorsed nor excluded from public life (Van der Vyver, 2007).

This constitutional model allows for the accommodation of religious expression, provided such practices do not infringe upon the rights of others or compromise institutional impartiality. As Van Coller (2020) argues, neutrality entails equal recognition rather than the suppression of religious diversity. Constitutional Court jurisprudence reinforces this approach, affirming that religious expression in public institutions is permissible when it is voluntary, non-coercive, and consistent with constitutional values. Landmark cases, including *Pillay, Organisasie vir Godsdiens-onderrig*, and *Freedom of Religion South Africa*, illustrate how the courts balance religious accommodation with the protection of human dignity, equality and children's rights.

These legal and policy developments directly address the study's research objectives by demonstrating how religion continues to influence governance and leadership practices within constitutional limits. Ongoing debates in education, policymaking and public administration further underscore the practical challenges of maintaining neutrality while recognising religion's moral and social role in a pluralistic society (De Waal et al., 2010; Du Plessis, 2017). Collectively, this framework highlights that religion remains a legitimate, though carefully regulated, presence in South Africa's public sphere, shaping leadership ethics and governance without undermining constitutional democracy.

1.9 Institutionalisation of Religion in Governance

The role of religion in South African governance reflects a complex interaction between historical entanglement, constitutional neutrality, and contemporary societal expectations. Classical distinctions between personal and institutional religion, articulated by William James and reaffirmed by RSA (2025), remain instructive in

understanding this dynamic. While institutional religion provides structured belief systems and collective identity, the post-1994 constitutional order deliberately excludes religion from formal governance structures, affirming equality among faiths and preventing the State from establishing religion. Consequently, religion's influence is largely informal and personal, shaping leaders' ethical orientations and conduct rather than policy mandates (Du Plessis, 2017).

Historically, religion was deeply implicated in legitimising apartheid governance, with Christian theology employed to justify racial hierarchy and exclusion (Leatt, 2017). In response, the democratic Constitution instituted a secular, rights-based framework that limits religious authority in governance while safeguarding freedom of belief. Yet this constitutional distancing has not led to the exclusion of religion from public life. Instead, religion continues to intersect with governance through multi-faith chaplaincy services, collaboration with faith-based organisations on social development, and consultative policy processes that acknowledge religious diversity (Masango & Mkhathini, 2016). While the State has accrued greater authority and institutional power in a secular democracy, public trust patterns complicate a purely privatised view of religion. Foster (2022) demonstrates that religious leaders and communities continue to command significant moral authority, often exceeding that of political institutions. This suggests that religious actors retain an indirect but meaningful capacity to influence governance by shaping societal values and public legitimacy. However, such influence must remain non-coercive and constitutionally bounded to avoid undermining fundamental rights and democratic pluralism.

This analysis directly addresses the study's objectives by illustrating that religion in South Africa neither governs the State nor retreats entirely into the private sphere. Rather, it functions as a moral and social resource that can contribute to ethical leadership and accountability, provided a balanced relationship is maintained. Safeguarding democracy, therefore, requires a clear delineation of roles: the State as a neutral guarantor of rights, and religious institutions as ethical contributors to the common good, without disproportionate influence over legislation or public policy (Foster, 2022).

1.10 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for this study's examination of the role of religion in leadership and governance within South Africa's public sector. It frames the assumptions, concepts, and relationships through which the research questions are explored, and the study's objectives are addressed. By functioning as an analytical roadmap, the framework assists in organising data, interpreting findings, and drawing conclusions relevant to governance practices (Sreekumar, 2023:1).

Theories emerge from paradigms, which reflect a researcher's underlying beliefs about knowledge, social reality, and meaning-making (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2016:19). In line with the objectives of this study, theory is used to clarify key concepts such as religion, leadership, ethics and governance, and to examine how these interact within a constitutional and secular state. As Phokontsi (2021:25) notes, theoretical perspectives provide direction in understanding governance by defining assumptions, relationships, and propositions that give meaning to empirical data. Accordingly, this framework enables a systematic analysis of whether, how, and to what extent religion influences leadership conduct and governance outcomes in the South African public sector.

1.10.1 Leadership Theories

Swanepoel, Erasmus, and Schenk. (2009:341) postulate that there are leadership theory paradigms that represent a shared mindset, encompassing fundamental ways of thought, perception, studying, researching, and understanding leadership. Leadership today is significantly different from what it was in the industrial school of leadership. Today, leadership aims to encompass broader aspects than simply highlighting peripheral traits and aspects that indicate certain levels of embracing inclusive, context-sensitive, and mature leadership practices. Hence, Van der Westhuizen and Hewitt (2021) suggest that modern leadership should go beyond the rigid, traditional models of the past. They emphasize the importance of developing leaders who are inclusive, aware of their unique contexts, and mature in their approach, drawing on both Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives to create more balanced and relevant leadership practices. Furthermore, leadership should evolve to be more integrative in an attempt to combine, among others, traits, behaviours, personalities, and abilities,

which can be found in leadership theory paradigms, such as charismatic, transformational, and transactional leadership (Swanepoel *et al.*, 2008:349-352).

However, Naidoo (2005:156) posits that transformational leadership extends beyond transactional leadership theories and approaches, as it encompasses a range of leadership models that focus on exchanges between leaders and their followers. It is essential to note that leadership theories significantly contributed to this study by providing a solid theoretical foundation that highlights the influence of religious values, coupled with leadership behaviour and decision-making, on achieving positive governance outcomes.

Leadership theories are important for providing models to interpret how leaders operate in religion-influenced public sector environments (Holritz, 2009). The usage of leadership theories is helpful in that it aids the researcher in exploring how religious values can shape leadership approaches and governance-oriented leadership. Furthermore, leadership theories have helped identify real-life public leaders against established leadership models (Nkomo, 2011).

1.10.2 (Religion) Functionalist Theory

Nickerson (2024:1) explains religion from a functionalist perspective of sociological theory, and postulates that it is an integrative force in society, due to its ability to structure the behaviour of society by shaping individual and collective beliefs, creating a sense of collectiveness in beliefs, and establishing a sense of belonging and religious coercion for the creation of a well-functioning society. According to Webber (n.d.), in his work on the sociology of religion theory, religion is described by looking at how it supports and influences other social institutions, such as the economy and the law.

This study drew on a combination of Nickerson's and Webber's theoretical frameworks to examine how religion can influence societal beliefs and foster a collective sense of belonging. Such a sense of unity encourages individuals to collaborate, thereby strengthening governance and enhancing service delivery. By shaping both individual and collective values, this process aims to enhance governance effectiveness, promote accountability, and have a positive impact on other social institutions. In confirming the afore said statement, Nanthambwe (2025) argues that religious institutions in African contexts bolster social cohesion, serve as trusted mediators between state and citizens, and through shared moral values promote transparent, inclusive governance. Thus,

religion functions as a system of values and behavioural norms that influence both individual behaviour and institutional delivery of public goods and services.

Nkomo (2011) also postulates that in African contexts, leadership is more than just what one person does; it is deeply connected to the social and cultural values of the community, especially spirituality and religion. These values guide how leaders interact with the people they serve, fostering a shared sense of belonging and responsibility. This close connection between leadership, society, and social institutions shapes how governance is carried out and how services are delivered effectively.

The functionalist theory helped socialists, researchers, policymakers, and educators see religion as a force that fosters and promotes social cohesion, shared values and unity. This theory supports the idea that religion helps in the endeavour to legitimate leadership and authority by emphasising moral order. The functionalist theory suggests that religion supports leadership and governance by promoting social unity, shared values, and moral order. In the South African public sector (SAPUBS), religion, for those who subscribe to it, often shapes leaders' ethical conduct and builds public trust. When norms, such as integrity and service are entrenched, viewed through the functionalist lens, religion plays a stabilising role that enhances leadership effectiveness and governance (Law, 2013).

1.10.3 Governance Theory

Ansell and Torfing (2016:1) argue that research on governance has evolved into a paradigm that necessitates increased attention, due to its reorientation and the fact that it has become the most frequently utilized social science concept. The authors postulate that theories of governance serve multiple purposes and, as a result, act as analytic lenses that aid in the conceptualisation of the world today. Furthermore, Ansell and Torfing (2016:1) state that the governance theory is an interdisciplinary field that overlaps with political science, public administration, sociology, law, economics, and other applied fields.

The governance theory provides a framework for this study, assessing how leadership practices align with principles of accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct. These principles are often reinforced by religious values, suggesting that religion can play a constructive role in strengthening governance and sustainable governance systems (Malik, 2013). In the context of the South African public sector, which was the

subject of this study, governance theory helps examine whether religion positively influences leadership behaviour and supports the development of responsible and ethical institutions (Sindane, 2011).

1.10.4 Rational Choice Theory

The rational choice theory is relevant to consider for this study. According to Bevir (2010:1, 4), the rational choice theory is an approach that influences the understanding and practice of governance. This theory is based on the premise that there must be an understanding of an organising perspective that builds models of how people will act when following a preferred and formal structure. In essence, this approach highlights that politics is often unpredictable, that maintaining commitment can be challenging, that relationships between principals and agents carry inherent risks, and that conflicts naturally arise within democracies (Dowding, and John, (2003).

This research study used this theory to assess the level of understanding in the public service to create new models that can be applied for the purpose of better service delivery, underpinned by good governance. Therefore, South African leaders can begin to create the appropriate perspective for the country's problems by reframing the narrative away from one of crisis-driven to one of possibility and accountability. Leaders can start by leading with transparency and integrity, while fostering inclusive collaboration and teamwork. Furthermore, leaders can start by prioritising education and critical thinking with a specific focus on a long-term vision and not short-term wins. All the dilemmas can be identified, and different tools can be devised to create the desired change and build on the individual and organisational values. This will positively contribute to the process of shaping a new South Africa, where the Government effectively delivers on its mandate to provide services to society (Ndevu, 2019).

1.11 Problem Statement and Research Questions

Maree, Creswell, Ebersöhn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, and Plano Clark (2022:2) remark that the research question is the main determinant of the success or failure of the research project. Furthermore, the authors comment that the research question should demonstrate originality, be clear, and remain focused on reflecting the integration of multiple literature sources. According to McCombes and George (2023:1), in concurring and expanding on Maree *et al.* (2022), the problem

statement should be concise and concrete, clearly showing the research problem. Therefore, the researcher should contextualise the problem by showing what is already known.

The problem statement should clearly outline the specific issues the research study will address, indicating what is still unknown. It is also, according to the authors, important to show the reader the relevance of the problem. In other words, there should be a clear understanding in the mind of the reader as to why there should be knowledge about the research problem. Finally, the researcher must clearly outline the objectives of the research, highlighting the steps that will be taken to find out more about the problem.

In an article written by George (2024:1), “South African economy stalls under ANC rule”, the author mentions a report by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2023) confirming that South Africa barely avoided a technical recession at 0.1% growth in the fourth quarter of 2023, resulting in its citizens becoming poorer. According to George (2024), even with a growth rate of 0.8% for 2023, which was very low, it turned out to be too optimistic and overstated, thus confirming that less money would be available for crucial expenditure on service delivery and social support. A continued surge in crime and corruption, mismanagement on an industrial scale, an inefficient public procurement framework, the energy crisis, and deployment of cadres continue to cripple the South African economy.

The South African Government is facing a crisis of poor governance and ineffective leadership. There is a general lack of effective, moral, and ethical leadership. Although Mbandlwa *et al.* (2020:1642) are specifically focused on the local government sphere in their discourse, their observations can equally be extended to the provincial and the national spheres of government, where maladministration and corruption are as rife as in local government. Mbandlwa *et al.* (2020:1644) express the view that the chronic lack of ethics has led many people, including ordinary workers, managers and leaders, to behave in a manner that inculcates and perpetuates a culture of stealing from the state, thus stealing from the poor and marginalised. Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng (2014:3) argues that there is resistance to allowing even the legal content to be influenced by religion, and this notion can likely also apply to ethical governance. Religion, according to Mogoeng (2014), has the potential to bring about rich treasures (only found in religion) to shape a peaceful and prosperous society. The judge stated that if only South Africans

had the desire to become better people and adhere to the precepts provided by religion, South Africa could become a better place for all.

Marshall and Van Saanen (2009:9) in their discourse affirm that, despite the state of the economy of a country, there is always some form of corruption as people are not deterred from stealing even if they are witnessing the weakening of the economy. Instead of trying to contribute positively, they would rather look for ways to circumvent rules and to enrich themselves in the process. The authors identify factors, such as bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, abuse of power, conflict of interest, and favouritism that all have the potential to erode the moral fibre of society and ultimately result in poor service delivery, poverty, stifling of development and the demise of state institutions

Mogoeng (2014:4) concurs with Marshall and Van Saanen that the alarming levels of maladministration, crime, dishonesty, injustice, and corruption, portraying the low levels of morality displayed by government functionaries when doing their jobs, have penetrated all levels of society. Chief Justice Moegoeng (2014) is convinced that if religion were to be factored into law-making and governance, there could be a radical turnaround in South Africa.

1.12 Research Questions

The aim of this study was to answer the following research questions:

- How does religion interact with politics, leadership, and governance within the South African public service?
- What insights can be drawn from international case studies where religion has influenced the conduct of government officials in fulfilling their constitutional mandates?
- What is the nature of the relationship between religion and politics, particularly in the context of governance and service delivery?
- What practical measures can be implemented to effectively integrate religious values into public sector governance and service delivery?

1.13 Aim and Objectives of the Study

1.13.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in South Africa's public sector.

1.13.2 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to examine the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in South Africa's public sector, focussing on the following specific objectives:

- Research Objective 1 **(RO1)**: To explore through careful analysis whether public leaders, civil servants, and political office-bearers adhere to any form of religion, and to what extent such religious affiliation influences their leadership and governance practices.
- Research Objective 2 **(RO2)**: To critically evaluate whether the successes observed in countries that have incorporated religious influences into their governance structures can be effectively adapted, adopted, and implemented in the South African context.
- Research Objective 3 **(RO3)**: To conduct a critical analysis of the relationship between politics and religion, with the aim of determining whether their synthesis can promote good governance, ethical leadership, and enhance public service delivery.
- Research Objective 4 **(RO4)**: To develop informed recommendations on how religious principles, when applied by public office-bearers, can be leveraged to streamline leadership practices and consolidate governance, with specific consideration for achieving effective and ethical service delivery.

1.14 Research Methodology

According to Seate (2016:24), a research methodology can be described as the techniques and research methods used by the researcher to collect data through the use of tools, such as questionnaires and surveys, which can be either structured or unstructured, in order to facilitate participant engagement. Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*

(2016:289) hold the view that it is the researcher's paramount responsibility to address how data will be collected and how the researcher will analyse the collected data.

This research used a literature review as a method of collecting data, which falls under a qualitative research approach to build on the interpretation of ideas, words and settings. Furthermore, it proved appropriate, because it entails a real-world setting where religious leaders will interact with leaders in government and the corporate world. The data was evaluated to assess the development of the problem of corruption and poor service delivery from a viewpoint of how religion can influence governance.

Evidence gathered from existing literature was used to determine what role religion can play in developing ethical leadership and good governance in the South African context. A desktop data collection process was applied, and this was complemented by relevant books and journals in order to assist in creating a deeper understanding of the subject of this study (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2016:290).

The use of questionnaires and surveys was not selected due to the nature of the topic. Most of the required information is available online, in scholarly and media articles, and is easily accessible through the use of the Internet and other media-related sources. This study used the interpretive paradigm to orient the reader by providing a framework to explore both the epistemological, (philosophical study of knowledge), and ontological, (the nature of existence/reality), positions related and applicable to the research study.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2022:58), a paradigm is that which indicates the perception someone holds about the world; though unconfirmed, this includes actions taken by someone enquiring about something and cannot take place without referring to applicable paradigms. The Interpretive Phenomenological (IPA) data analysis method was used in analysing the data to form an understanding of experiences by leaders in the public service, leaders in the religious community and community members, with regard to corruption, governance and service delivery, infusing it with the influence religion has on these groups of people (Yardly, 2025; Grad Coach, 2024).

According to Streefkerk, (2019) inductive and deductive approaches differ in the way the researcher shifts between data. Inductive approaches tend to develop or yield concepts and theory development, whereas deductive approaches yield definitions by testing existing theories. This study followed a deductive approach because the aim

was to establish the importance of the study, as it has a bearing on the kinds of leaders we need to turn around the dire state the Government finds itself in.

The nature of this study required a deliberate and broad approach in the way the sample was chosen (Seate, 2016:25; Yin, 2011). This, according to Yin (2011:88), is what is termed as purposive sampling, since the aim is to gather the most relevant and available data, even including participants, who are suspected to be holding different views to the topic under research to ensure that there are no bias in the result yielded.

The population for this research comprised literature gathered on writings by religious leaders from the Christian and Islamic communities in Cape Town and the Free State, as well as leaders from the Mangaung Municipal Municipality, Department of Human Settlement, Eskom, and other relevant institutions, such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the South African Network of Religious Leaders Living With or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (SANARELA).

According to Ebersöhn, Eloff, and Ferreira (2022:156-157), action research is a collaborative means of conducting an enquiry, seeking solutions to challenges. The aim was to create knowledge that would be beneficial for practice when solutions are planned and implemented, and results are reported in a way that stimulates further research. This study, therefore, may also contribute to action research, because it will contribute to knowledge creation while improving practice. Importantly, action research has a participatory characteristic, which is required since different role-players are required to work together to create solutions to existing problems (Ebersöhn *et al.*, 2022:156). Therefore, one of this study's focus points was to integrate action research as a tool to investigate practical problems, in order to find usable solutions applicable in practice.

Maree and Pietersen (2022:191) distinguish between two types of validities that need to be satisfied, in order to inspire confidence and trust that the causal relationship under investigation is trustworthy and free from influences by other factors or variables. These are the internal and external validities, which will yield results that can be applied generally to, among others, situations and groups, etc., and as such, require high levels of reliability.

Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt, and Wagner (2014:102) explain that there is always a possibility of rival or contradicting explanations

for results in research; it is thus important for the researcher to ensure that control groups and random assignment of subjects are in place alongside the experimental group, as this will ensure the elimination of such explanations. Despite having high internal validity and successfully mitigating the competing explanations, Bryman *et al.* (2014:102-103) maintain that, although research may be deemed internally valid, there is still no guarantee that it may not be questioned.

Reliability is the next important concept after validity because it is the extent to which measurements used in one research study are found to be repeatable when different people perform the measurement on different occasions, under different conditions, and these measurements would still yield consistent and dependable results. The aim of this study was to yield reliable results because it also aimed to stimulate discussion and further research on the topic (Kubai, 2019:1-2).

1.15 Literature Study

Durkheim (1995) explains that religion supports governance by promoting social unity, shared values, and moral order. In South Africa, religious values have shaped ethical public leadership, fostering accountability and social cohesion, especially in the post-apartheid era, where personal spirituality and job satisfaction are found to be related (Nkomo, 2011; Van der Walt, 2008). According to Van der Walt, spirituality plays a significant role in the workplace context and, as such, influences leadership styles and ultimately governance. In contrast, Nigeria, while equally religious, faces challenges due to its sharp Christian/Muslim divide. Religion there, often becomes politicised, at times fuelling division and weakening governance. While both countries show religion's influence on leadership, South Africa reflects a more cohesive integration of faith and governance, whereas Nigeria highlights the difficulties of managing religious diversity within a unified national structure.

According to Umeanolue (2020:139), religion remains a dominant force in Nigeria. Despite differing views among the population, its influence on social and political life is undeniable. This has attracted the attention of scholars, who generally agree that religion and politics, when working together, lead to the growth, development, and flourishing of the Nigerian economy. Umeanolue (2020:148) maintains that religion has

positive, as well as negative implications. On the positive side, the interaction enhances national development, which is important for the general well-being of the society.

Religious individuals are more likely to adhere to ethical teachings, which in turn fosters good leadership and governance. Though there are limitations to what religion can achieve, its influence on political decisions cannot be underestimated. The example of Nigeria is something that South Africa cannot overlook, especially since South Africa is also a religious country, and its leaders need the ethics and morals that flow from a religious inclination.

Cleveland and Luyckx (1999:74) are of the opinion that governance involves decisions about public policy where multiple organisations and public, as well as private role-players interact. In this same setup, religion, organised or not, plays a role in influencing how public policy is formulated. The authors argue that religion plays a more significant role than it is often given credit for. It is organised spirituality that interplays with governance; individual spirituality is becoming an indispensable element of leadership that will have a positive bearing on governance issues.

The discussion by Marshall and Van Saanen (2009:9) shows a general consensus among those writers who form opinions about the role of religion in the welfare of governments and the attitudes that potentially could become part of leaders' makeup when it comes to governance. The authors postulate that religious leaders are taking an increasing interest in being part of the development agenda, where issues, such as health, education, the law, governance, and many other fields, are being explored. Ethical leadership is beginning to take center stage.

Marshall and Van Saanen (2009:9) are of the opinion that the establishment of high governance standards creates opportunities for religious leaders to demonstrate interest beyond their traditional roles by focusing on personal and community values. Throughout history, religious leaders have been among the first effective voices to speak out against corruption and promote good governance. However, the big question now is how often this is happening today.

There is significant potential through FBOs to build active citizenship, while as a positive consequence, enhancing a culture of participation in a liberal-democratic trajectory for economic growth. Most South Africans are religiously inclined, and there is generally a

large number of existing FBOs, hence the potential of significant social influence by religious leaders (Piper, 2009:64-65).

Piper argues that religion(s), through leaders, are rudders that can be used to guide individuals to conform to ethical and moral behaviour. These individuals are part of social organisations, whose power to organise socio-economic and political purposes is often overlooked. Thus, it is no surprise that religion is increasingly being recognised in the post-colonial era around the world for its significance and importance in ethical leadership and governance (Piper, 2009:66).

Notwithstanding the views by Piper (2009) and Noor (2008:63) there are unfortunately serious challenges experienced by society, namely the lack of ethics that strongly emphasises that the choice between good and bad remains a human dilemma. Even with so many South Africans being religious, the choices made by individuals and groups in different situations reflect that they do not necessarily conform to the “good” advocated by their religions (Nell, 2016).

Human beings, almost unsurprisingly, remain unpredictable, despite their religious inclinations. Thus, governance, being a human activity that is, in itself, dynamic, normative in nature, and at times a qualitative expression of administration, fails dismally in the production of positive results, especially in developing countries where poverty and lack of economic growth are the order of the day.

Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobatón (1999) postulate that several studies affirm the aforementioned and indicate that governance, especially in developing countries, often fails to deliver meaningful outcomes, due to systemic weaknesses. As a dynamic and normative human activity, governance is shaped by political culture, institutional quality, and ethical leadership. In many African states, persistent issues, such as corruption, weak accountability mechanisms, and politicised institutions, hinder development progress (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999).

The authors further state that these governance failures exacerbate poverty and economic stagnation, particularly in areas where governance quality falls below the threshold necessary to stimulate growth and public trust. Consequently, without strong institutions and a value-driven administrative culture, governance continues to fall short of producing positive results. Noor (2008:71) maintains that because there is no universal standard for ethical behaviour, different individuals and even different groups

have divergent perceptions of what constitutes ethical leadership and, consequently, what constitutes good governance.

There are many religions, but they do not necessarily share the same beliefs. What is paramount about religion is that it shapes how individuals respond to the circumstances and environments in which they find themselves (Davis, 2019). However, what different individuals believe, based on their particular religions, is of no consequence if not examined objectively in an appropriate social and cultural context. What remains important is how religion influences social change and what its effect is on social institutions, such as political, educational, and legal institutions (McGivern, 2014).

1.16 Value of the Research for Governance

According to Wolfensohn (2016), former president of the World Bank, faith institutions possess deep trust and local presence: qualities that can humanise development and foster inclusive accountability. Hence, this study focused on religion as a catalyst for changing the negative narrative regarding governance and leadership. Religion in this context is something that is not extensively interrogated and has the potential to add an important contextual dimension to the discussion of ethical leadership and good governance, as explained by the World Bank and others.

This research has the potential to add valuable information, as it could highlight areas of collaboration and may very well suggest areas of integrated approaches, even operationalising the existing weak applied strategies that could enhance approaches to governance and general accountability. Furthermore, this study looked at religion as a contextual and moral influence that can be integrated with conventional governance approaches. When combined, these elements can support ethical leadership, improve accountability and contribute to the growing recognition, even by institutions, such as the World Bank, of the role faith can play in strengthening development and governance outcomes (Marshall & Van Saanen, 2007).

Due to the complexity of governance, it is important to explore different ways that will change the manner in which leaders approach this “management” tool, and for it to become a useful concept for measuring growth and ultimate success. When “good” governance is achieved, South Africa’s public sector can significantly contribute to better workplaces, better job opportunities, better service delivery, and ultimately reduce

the levels of poverty and unemployment in the country. The principles of “good” governance, such as accountability, transparency, responsibility, etc., could potentially become the norm (Cloete, 2014).

Governance can be a theoretical concept and may highlight the steering role that the state plays in policy direction and service delivery (Katsamunskas, 2016:134). According to Murthy (2016), for governance to become a meaningful tool that will contribute to political science, economic development, ethical leadership, lawmaking, social policies, and international relations, influencing factors, such as religion, are needed to highlight how religious beliefs can provide for moral and ethical frameworks that will serve to guide and influence political decision-making and public policy.

Murthy (2016) continues to posit that religion needs to become part of the discourse because of its potential to influence the behaviour of those who generally adhere to the precepts of religion. Religion can affect political participation by encouraging or discouraging engagement. Governing practices can be observed by looking at the contingent meanings and beliefs of those who are the actors in the socio-economic landscape, in line with religious beliefs.

Governance can be a cultural practice, as it is a contingent and dynamic activity informed by holistic webs, created by historic traditions. In addition, Murthy (2016) opines that religious groups can mobilise supporters around political ideas while leveraging collective identity to influence public opinion. Governance should be an answer or response to the crisis of the state, where it is clear that all state institutions are failing and experiencing a leadership crisis, manifesting in poor governance and poor service delivery.

There is a need for public sector reform, and one of the tools to effect the necessary change is a new level of improved and ethical governance. According to Makhanya (2024), the reform of public service is a given and simply requires the passing of time, when the end of corruption will be seen. South Africa is not without values for effective governance; Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa makes adequate provision. What is needed is ethical leadership by leaders who take their governance role and mandate seriously, and by doing so, ensure that they deliver on the public sector mandate.

1.17 Layout

Chapter 1: Motivation and Background.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of Religion, Governance, Leadership, and Corruption.

Chapter 3: Synthesis of Religion, Politics, and Governance.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusion, Timescale, and Recommendations.

1.17 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the study by outlining the background, rationale, research problem, and objectives underpinning the investigation into the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in South Africa's public sector. It has been demonstrated that religion continues to occupy a complex and contested space within South Africa's democratic order, neither formally embedded in governance structures nor absent from public life. While the Constitution establishes the State as neutral and non-discriminatory in matters of religion, religious beliefs, institutions, and leaders continue to influence ethical orientations, leadership conduct, and societal expectations in subtle yet significant ways.

The chapter further highlighted the historical entanglement of religion and governance during colonialism and apartheid, which necessitated the post-1994 constitutional shift towards secular governance and equal recognition of all faiths. At the same time, contemporary realities, including public trust in religious institutions and the ongoing engagement between the State and faith-based organisations, suggest that religion remains a relevant moral and social resource in the public sphere. This tension forms the central problem this study explores: how religion can contribute positively to ethical leadership and good governance without undermining constitutional principles of neutrality, inclusivity, and human rights.

By presenting the theoretical framework, clarifying key concepts, and situating the study within the broader scholarly discourse, this chapter has established the foundation for the empirical and analytical chapters that follow. The next chapter builds on this foundation by reviewing relevant literature to further explore how religion, leadership,

and governance intersect in theory and practice, both within South Africa and in comparative contexts.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF RELIGION, GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND CORRUPTION

2.1 Definition of Theory

Scholars define theory from different theoretical perspectives because developing an exact definition requires a logical identification of what constitutes theory in each field, thereby facilitating a scientific demonstration of its purpose. Furthermore, academia provides a plethora of definitions, obtained from many different angles and at different levels. Hansan (2024), as an example, defines theory as a structured explanation of phenomena derived from observations, experimentation, and logical reasoning. Hansan continues and includes in the definition that theory serves as a framework for interpreting complex ideas and anticipating future outcomes or behaviours. Another factor in the author's definition is that theory plays a vital role in academic fields, forming the basis for research, analysis, and practical application. Stewart and Klein (2016) define theory as "looking at"," being aware of". The Oxford English Dictionary (2015) defines theory as an explanation of a phenomenon, based on analysis of facts and commonly accepted principles, describing its essential nature. Theory is understood in diverse ways, reflecting its contextual and disciplinary nuances. Hanson (2024) describes it as a structured explanation that interprets phenomena and anticipates outcomes, while Stewart and Klein (2016) highlight its reflective, cognitive dimension. In the context of religion and governance, theory provides both a framework to examine how ethical and moral values shape leadership, and a lens to critically assess their potential to strengthen accountability, integrity, and public sector governance.

Having explored the complexity surrounding the definition of theory, it becomes evident that similar challenges arise when defining religion. Hence, Lawrence-Hart and Deeza (2023:17), postulate that there are many different definitions of religion, but no one clear and acceptable definition. According to the authors, religion is more than a fact: it is an idea that refers to a variety of human behaviours in an experimental and theoretical setting. Although there is no clear, universally accepted definition, it remains important, in the context of this study, to attempt a definition workable for this study.

Lawrence-Hart and Deeza (2023:18) argue that there are different ways to attempt a definition of religion. The first is a substantial definition, which attempts to show the characteristics of what religion is and what it is not. Secondly, there is a functional definition that aims to define religion by what it does and how it functions in society. The third way of defining religion is to follow the family resemblance model, which highlights a series of commonly shared attributes. Theory and religion are both complex and context-sensitive. Theory provides a structured lens to interpret phenomena and anticipate outcomes (Hanson, 2024; Stewart & Klein, 2016), while religion is understood here as a dynamic force shaping leadership ethics and governance through beliefs and practices (Lawrence-Hart and Deeza, 2023). Together, they offer a critical framework for examining how religious values inform ethical decision-making, influence leadership behaviour, and reinforce accountability within South Africa's public sector.

The diversity in defining religion reflects a broader academic challenge, concepts in the social sciences rarely lend themselves to a single, universally accepted definition. This complexity also applies to theory, which, much like religion, can be understood and interpreted in different ways. An example of a definition of theory covering the important basics of theory is that a theory can be a well-substantiated statement that explains a testable relationship between variables of the natural world or phenomenon. According to Abend (2008:174-176), when theory is to be understood, a basic question of the semantics of the theory must be interrogated. In answering the semantic question of the theory, the reader does not have to think about metaphysics, reality, etc. Furthermore, the reader does not need to focus on the predicate "good" in good theory, nor does the reader need to fully understand the nature and aim of the study. The Semantic Question (SQ) will ensure that a basic understanding of the language is established and will prevent any misunderstandings and ambiguities, while encouraging communication. The theoretical statement needs to encourage some belief, but the belief can only be real if the meaning is clear and understood for its basic language meaning. From this discussion, it follows that although no universally accepted definition exists, it remains important for this study to formulate and adopt a definition workable and relevant to the research study's context.

Hence, for the purpose of this study, the definition by Abend (2008:177-179) seems to cover what is required. According to Abend (2008:177-179), theory is a general proposition that establishes a relationship between variables that can be a statement of

a distinct social phenomenon or occurrence, covering something, while explaining the meaning of an empirical happening in the social world, thus providing an original interpretation of the empirical world. For this study, Abend's (2008:177-179) definition of theory is useful because it frames theory as a proposition linking variables to explain social phenomena and interpret empirical events. This enables systematic analysis of how religious values shape leadership ethics and governance practices.

2.2 Theory Formation

Nell and Nell (2014:32) suggest that there are two phases involved in the formation of a theory of social identity. Callaway (2025) maintains that the significance of the subject, across the phases, lies in the fact that religions often affirm their loyalty to individuals and that universal religions extend these affirmations to all individuals, rather than being limited to a specific community. Fox (2018:6) concurs that religion is a social phenomenon and an institution that influences human behaviour, both as individuals and as groups. Thus, the first phase, identified by Nell and Nell (2014:32-33), known as positive distinctiveness, highlights that human beings accept a group-specific identity based on their subjective self-definition. They are likely to describe their own group in a favourable way and, in doing so, particularly distinguish their group from other groups, focusing on their own values.

The second phase, identified by the authors Nell and Nell (2014) as self-categorisation or self-definition, is a more significant marker in group attendance. Individuals will participate in group activities to the extent that they conform to being part of "us," highlighting the group dynamic and denouncing an individualistic stance. Furthermore, self-categorisation theory emphasises psychological transition, in which an individual's behaviour shifts from an individualistic to a more inclusive social identity.

From the discussion, it follows that forming a theory in the context of social identity happens sequentially. The first phase, positive distinctiveness, shows how people identify with their group and see it as distinct from others. The second phase, self-categorisation or self-definition, builds on this and show how individuals become part of the group, participate in shared activities, and develop a sense of collective identity. Together, these phases show that theory formation is not a one-step process but a gradual journey, where unique group traits are recognised and a shared social identity

is established. Therefore, developing a theory involves both observing and describing phenomena and bringing these observations together into a coherent framework that explains and predicts social behaviour (Jetten, Russell, Spears, and Manstead 1996; Trepte 2017).

While the two-phase model of theory formation clarifies how individuals internalise group norms and develop collective identity, it tends to emphasise cohesion over conflict and underplays the role of individual agency. In pluralistic and multi-faith contexts, such as South African public leadership, tensions, dissent, and ethical decision-making may challenge group norms. Therefore, applying this model requires careful contextualisation to account for diversity, power dynamics, and the nuanced ways religious values influence leadership and governance.

2.3 Religion

Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021:390) assert that religion is a social phenomenon that has an important role in society, because it deals with beliefs and practices. Religion encourages individual world views and is often connected and characterised by relationships horizontally, between humans, and vertically, between humans and a Supreme Being. According to Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021:390), the word 'religion' is derived from the Latin word "*religare*," which, when translated, means 'to bind together,' thus indicating that the concept has to do with group(s) or fellowships. Therefore, religious fellowship denotes a coming together of individuals under the same norms, practices, and, importantly, faith. It is crucial, however, to understand that all religions, to a greater or lesser degree, deviate in their understanding and practices of their faiths and, as such, do not necessarily share the same set of beliefs (ASCD, 2024). Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021) highlight religion's social and relational dimensions, binding individuals through shared beliefs and practices. Critically, while this fellowship fosters ethical norms and collective identity, variations across religions mean these values are not uniform. For governance and leadership, this implies that religious influence is both unifying and pluralistic, requiring careful consideration of how diverse faith-based principles can inform ethical decision-making without privileging any single tradition.

Ekene (n.d.), in the published work "Theories of Religion," postulates that religion is a belief system, as well as a social institution. As a belief system, it is responsible for

forming an individual's worldview, and as an institution, religion interrogates human existence by looking at patterns of social actions, inspired by developed beliefs, practices, and faith constructs. The author was interested mainly in how religion relates to social factors, such as race, age, gender, and education, institutional organisation, social change, as well as the influence on social institutions. In the context of this study, the focus is mainly on how religion relates to individual interactions in the public sector, how leadership views its role to influence the people in the workplace, and how religion can have an influence on governance policies and principles. Furthermore, the focus was on how religion can serve as a catalyst for consolidating leadership and governance in the public sector. Ekene (n.d.) positions religion as both a belief system and a social institution, shaping individual worldviews and guiding social behaviour. Analytically, this dual role suggests that religion can influence not only personal ethics but also organisational culture and governance practices. In the public sector, this implies that religious values have the potential to reinforce ethical leadership and inform policy decisions, but their impact depends on how these values are applied inclusively and balanced with constitutional principles.

2.4 Theoretical Framework of Religion

Researchers in religion often make use of one of the three major theoretical perspectives when considering religion and understanding society. These are the functionalist theory, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism (Lumen Learning 2025).

Religion, according to Gaitanos (2019:19), in his lecture on Introduction to Religious Studies, is the human endeavour to understand the world. According to the author, religion marks a move away from magic, in which spells and rituals are replaced by appeals and prayers to gods. To examine and form an understanding of the role of religion and how it can be a catalyst in consolidating leadership and governance in South Africa, one should understand that “magic” is not the answer; it will not work. What is needed is a religion approached intellectually. This will ensure that an understanding is formed, showing that researchers in this modern age have fused religion and science.

Science brings to the table systematic approaches that will yield more reliable interpretations, derived from observations and experimentation (Gaitanos, 2019:20).

Religion, on the other hand, brings to the table a system of symbols that establishes strong, permeating, and continuing dispositions, motivations, as well as a strong, structured social life in society. Furthermore, religion brings to the table the general order of existence and unified, shared norms, as well as values that guide and mould society and individuals (Lawrence-Hart & Deeza, 2023:20-24). Critically, while science offers structured and verifiable methods for understanding phenomena, religion provides normative frameworks that shape values, motivations, and social cohesion. Synthesising these perspectives suggests that in contexts like public leadership, ethical governance may benefit from a dialogue between empirical reasoning and value-driven guidance, ensuring decisions are both rational and morally grounded.

According to Kanaris (n.d.), for many scholars, the study of religion has become a speculative matter, and they argue that the theory and methods of religion do not contribute to the advancement of knowledge. However, mere silence on theoretical assumptions does not mean that they do not exist, and it should be evident that these methods and theories are part of the creative work of scholars. The author explicitly states that the study of religion is, in fact, the study of theories and methodologies, and can serve as a tool that assists us in surviving and transforming ourselves and our contexts.

2.4.1 Conflict Theory

Obiefuna (2011:140) states that it is not true to think that phenomena such as conflict and violence do not have an important role in understanding society's dynamics. Although the contemporary world shows signs of religious decline, scholars like Berger (1999) argue that traditional social functions of religion, such as moral guidance, community cohesion, and public trust, continue to persist and even grow in many parts of the world. Conflict has two aspects: a psychological and a social side. Both aspects constitute the essential, mutual and expressive nature in humans and how they navigate conflict, according to theorists (Obiefuna, 2011:141). Building on Obiefuna's discourse, Schneewind (2015:861-865) posits that conflict is an inevitable reality in social groups, because of the competing needs and interests in the reality of incompatibility within groups and individuals. At the core is always the imbalance of power, especially where the power interplays with the lives and the resources, influencing the underprivileged, where their needs and interests are ignored. Hence, religion is important as a vehicle to help the mobilisation of society, as well as the workplace society at large. Religion,

coupled with leadership, will consolidate leadership and governance in the public sector, while managing the power imbalances for the greater good of society in South Africa (Mpofu, 2021). While conflict is an inevitable aspect of social life, religion provides normative and moral frameworks that can mediate power imbalances and guide ethical behaviour. Synthesising Obiefuna (2011) and Mpofu's (2021) perspectives suggests that in the public sector, integrating religiously informed values with leadership practices can strengthen governance, promote social cohesion, and ensure that ethical decision-making addresses both individual and collective interests.

2.4.2 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a social theoretical framework with a perspective that highlights society as the product of shared symbols, such as language, culture, beliefs, etc. From this perspective, the social world is made up of the meanings that individuals attach to events and social interactions, focusing on self, thus calculating the effects of individual actions (Nickerson, 2023). However, there are some criticisms levelled against symbolic interactionism because it ignores the emotional side of the self. This theory assumes people's reaction to aspects of their environments in terms of the personalised meanings they attach to those aspects. This explains Francis and Adams' (2019) position, when they clarify that the theory fundamentally asserts that people interpret and respond to their environments based on the personal meanings they attach to social interactions. Nickerson (2023) postulates that religion has the ability to shape the perspective of self and, as such, can mould the methods and modes of communicating.

Subjective viewpoints are highlighted, and meaning becomes apparent in making sense of the world from a unique and individual perspective. It was thus the aim of this research to show that the place of religion is far from being redundant, merely because Damyanov (2023:1) points out that symbolic interactionism, being a social theoretical framework, is a theory that shows society is the effect produced from human interaction. For this reason, governance occurs in a social setting called the workplace, where interactions can help form relevant and acceptable meanings that benefit and promote the growth of the people working in this social setup, known as the public sector.

Grek (2020:139-166) makes mention of the concept "symbolic governance," which denotes the possible standards that could function as governing tools for dealing with

policy problems, while providing, at the same time, workable solutions. This could enhance the governance approaches to dealing with systemic, political, and leadership challenges in the public sector. To win the challenge of governance, leadership and service delivery on a symbolic level, actors in the public sector need to act in public and aim to combine the strengths of economic, epistemic, cultural and other relevant resources to construct new ideas and realities by making public declarations and delivering on them (Mpofu 2021).

2.4.3 Functionalist Theory

The functionalist theory is part of the important theoretical perspectives, and its focus is on the macro-level structure of society, because it looks into how social order can be achieved and how to ensure stability within communities. Crossman (2024:1) posits that a community is made up of many different parts that work independently, but together, as they cannot function alone in the process of creating stability for the whole. Equally so, the public sector is made up of many different parts that work independently but remain dependent on other indispensable parts of the whole government machinery. These parts within the public sector need to work together to create stability and development for the communities. The desired flow of services and prosperity for the community can only be achieved if these many parts work in unison and in harmony, for delivering the needed services to the community through effective consolidation of leadership, underscored by religious principles. This streamlining will be greatly enhanced by proper and good governance principles that should work together for the benefit of the community. It is therefore essential to find ways that encourage consolidated leadership across the various parts that work together to create a robust governance environment, enabling the public sector to make a positive contribution to society's well-being (Crossman, 2024:1).

According to Crossman (2024:1), the functionalist theory encompasses social institutions, each designed to provide various needs of the community. These components include, amongst others, family, religion, government, economy, education, media, etc. In terms of the functionalist theory, an institution is only valid to the degree to which it provides for the functioning of the society. Therefore, as communities are evolving and new needs transpire and existing institutions do not answer to the new demands, such institutions will become obsolete and die, while new institutions will be established to meet the new needs. Hence, the functionalist theory highlights the

consensus required in society. For the purpose of this research, consensus of the public sector should be attained by consolidating leadership and governance approaches for the growth and benefit of society (Simply Psychology, 2025).

Despite its order-creating function, the functionalist theory has been subject to some critique for its apparent neglect of the negative implications of social order. Crossman (2024:2), however, asserts that functionalism does not encourage people to take ownership of changing their social environment. This is the tendency, despite the fact that people could be benefiting from actively taking part in changing their social environment. It will thus be important for leaders in the public sector to resist this tendency. Leaders in their different spheres of influence should want to encourage leaders amongst their own ranks not to be complacent, but find ways to change the status quo, doing things differently, and ensuring their efforts are consolidated, while governance projections are met and even exceeded. All this needs to take place for the growth and effective delivery of services to the communities they, as leaders, represent.

Nickerson (2024:1) postulates that functionalists begin with the premise that there is a social structure, independent of the individuals who are part of certain norms and values, which is responsible for shaping the individual. These norms and values are important for shaping, integrating, and regulating individuals for the benefit of the collective. According to Nickerson (2024), functionalism is consensus-oriented and seeks to ensure that society works together to maintain social cohesion and stability. These factors are also important within the public sector because leadership must work together utilising governance principles that will benefit the public sector itself and the communities it serves.

Furthermore, Nickerson (2024) highlights value consensus as the vehicle for ensuring that there is agreement amongst society members based on the agreed-upon values and norms. There is thus a need for formal social control in public sector governance and principles that underpin good leadership, ensuring a public sector that adheres to institutional values and norms shared by the majority.

Nickerson (2024:1) highlights four basic needs of a society that can be equated with those of the public sector. The first basic need is to attain the laid-down goals. This is only possible if there are common standards within society and the public sector, which can be established through sound governance and effective leadership. There should

be collective goals, with acceptable means for achieving those goals. Secondly, there should be provision for the needs of the people working in the public sector, to ensure that the institution survives. This calls for conscious decision-making for adaptation as needs arise. Thirdly, there should be exceeding and more than adequate integration to prevent conflict through prompt leadership and sound governance policies that will ensure education and programmes are designed and implemented, aimed at creating a culture of belonging. Fourthly, there should be a latency for dealing with unstated results of human action. A specific value consensus must be in place to encourage socialisation and also to manage and release any tension that might arise from social interactions.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Explicit statements or theses are the results of theoretical frameworks, and they serve as a guide to the reader to evaluate the content of such statements in a critical fashion. From the framework, the researcher is able to connect to existing knowledge, which would form the basis for the perspectives contained in the thesis. It addresses the questions of “why” and “how,” thus steering away from mere describing and generalising of concepts and perspectives. Furthermore, a framework delineates the limits of a thesis, while highlighting the necessity of examining phenomena guided by different frameworks and perspectives (Sautu, Guinjoan, & Lomnitz, 2005). Theoretical frameworks do more than organise knowledge. They enable the researcher to interrogate phenomena, identify underlying patterns, and justify interpretations. Synthesising this perspective, a well-constructed framework not only guides analysis but also positions the thesis within broader scholarly debates, allowing for nuanced arguments that move beyond description to explain causality, context, and implications.

Every discipline is built and grounded on a unique set of theories that provides the broader framework and orientation for interpreting facts or data. Furthermore, theory is a set of uniquely stated propositions that elucidate the nature of society, culture, human behaviour, and social relationships. In elementary terms, one may say that theory is statements of various concepts and ideas to explain social phenomena through a limited set of central and important thought categories (Lawrence-Hart & Deeza, 2023:48).

Religion, being a particularly complex phenomenon, can be confusing and, as such, requires guiding tools for organising new information. There is thus a requirement, according to Smart (1996), for theories or sets of ideas to explain something, to approach, understand and process information, pertaining to religion. The author states that religious studies must go beyond mere description to interpret and organise religious experience, using structured theoretical frameworks. Hence, the viewpoint that there is a need for a theoretical framework to help in the process of interpreting, analysing, and organising information gathered from a theory. This will explain why and how religious beliefs and practices emerge, enabling researchers to construct meaningful analyses, grounded in the existing scholarship and limiting the scope of inquiry to specific interpretive lenses (Smart, 1996).

According to Hossain (2024:1), a theoretical framework is the basic building block for research, and the concepts derived from it are abstract ideas presented as objects, events, or phenomena in a general way. Furthermore, a theoretical framework contains measurable and observable characteristics that can be manipulated or measured as identified variables for testing hypotheses. In addition, Hossain (2024:1) postulates that another component of a theoretical framework is assumptions that the researcher might at first take for granted; however, the assumptions are the very starting points for developing hypotheses. Hypotheses, according to Hossain (2004), are the provable projections, the guiding formula for collecting and analysing data for the purpose of the research undertaken. Propositions, as components of the theoretical framework, serve to explain the relationships between relevant variables and concepts.

According to Gough, Oliver, and Thomas, (2023) the provision of the framework follows a systematic review process where a literature review is out, using explicit and rigorous search and inclusion criteria that incorporate internet publications and articles. The systematic review approach allows for analysing publications and articles as primary data, where the gathered data highlight assumptions and encourage specific framing in the research. The research aimed to make the following contributions: develop a framework for analysing the role of religion, based on how it can consolidate leadership and governance. It demonstrates how political parties in their manifestos employ religious rhetoric, while in fact supporting secular policies. It suggests a paradox of leadership undertakings and the lived experiences of the communities that are owed a

service. It contributes to a relatively neglected field for research (Jeffery-Schwikkard, 2023).

According to Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021:390), religion is about beliefs and practices that reflect the opinions of the mind, which in turn determine the actions of the individual, guided by the practical side of life. The authors postulate that religion, furthermore, becomes a unified system of beliefs and practices, not just for the individual, but unites a moral community. The concept of religion has a spiritual and material side to it. The spiritual side firstly points to supernatural realities, thus the idea of transcendence. Secondly, it denotes a system of language and practice for organising the “world.” Thirdly, it points to the ultimate conditions of existence. The material side, which was important for this study, serves as motivation for individuals and groups alike to direct their actions in a way that delivers social and political goals (Eneji & Iwuagwu, 2021:391). The authors suggest that material principles of religion are responsible for guiding actions and decisions of a social, political, and economic nature. This is important for leadership and governance. Thus, consolidating leadership and governance from a material principal perspective of religion could have positive results for the public sector in South Africa. Public leaders can make life-changing advances in communities by adhering to established principles of good governance and effective service delivery through their actions and decision-making, informed by the fundamental principles of religion. It is thus important, according to Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021:391), to understand that religion is not the same in all theological perspectives, as its plurality encompasses many worldviews and perspectives. If poorly managed, society is bound to suffer the consequences.

Notwithstanding the research on religion and politics, there are no comparative frameworks on the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in the public sector. According to Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1079), there is a conceptual framework on religious-secular cleavages with its focus on party systems instead of political parties. In contrast, according to the author, there is an analysis typology of political parties that gives little to no attention to religion. This leaves a significant gap in the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in the public sector, particularly where political parties interact. Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1079) postulates that existing frameworks focus narrowly on defining religious parties. Noor (2008:63) suggests that governance, as explained by the Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary,

means simply “the way in which a country is governed. Hence, governance may be explained as the activities or processes implemented by public officials to manage public affairs. Furthermore, Noor (2008) argues that governance denotes a qualitative expression and is a normative theory.

While Smart (1996) emphasises the interpretive role of theoretical frameworks in organising religious experience, Hossain (2024) focuses on their empirical and measurable components for testing hypotheses, and Gough, Oliver, and Thomas (2023) highlight systematic review as a way to structure knowledge. Eneji and Iwuagwu (2021) extend this by showing that religion’s material and social dimensions can guide individual and collective action, linking beliefs to governance outcomes. Synthesising these views, it becomes evident that a robust framework for this study must integrate interpretive, empirical, and practical perspectives, allowing religion to be analysed as both a normative and operational influence on leadership and governance in South Africa’s public sector.

2.6 Theoretical Framework of Governance

According to UNODC (2025) governance refers to a strategy utilised by the state or an organisation to exert authority over political, economic and social resources of the state or organisation with the aim of effecting development. In the presence of governance, principles characterised by respect for the rule of law can largely prevent corruption and abuse.

South Africa can be described as a state that follows democratic governance principles, which is distinguished by the participation of the general public in the administration of government matters (Ali, 2022:1675). The author’s explanation of what a bureaucracy is accurately explains the South African situation, which is a system whereby control takes place by a large number of employees, who are responsible for carefully managing all affairs of the state, following laid-down rules and regulations. These rules and regulations are implemented and enforced by those designated as directors, managers, supervisors, section leaders, etc., at all the different levels, which this study regards as the leaders of the public service. According to Ali (2022:1675), public servants are usually called bureaucrats, who are responsible for the work in government departments, execute government plans and policies to run the government.

Good governance, a term coined by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 1998), is always the aim and focus of public service provision to the people of the country. The bureaucracy and bureaucratic leadership are responsible for effective and equitable public service delivery. Although the service delivery is intended for the South African population, the laws, professional standards, and values are those of the public in the process of providing service delivery based on good governance as a foundation for the provision of services to the populace.

Governance in South Africa is shaped by a combination of good governance theory, transformational leadership, and African communitarian values, such as Ubuntu. Key principles, such as accountability, transparency, participation and service delivery are embedded in policy instruments, like the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and Batho Pele Principles (BPP). The good governance theory emphasises ethical and effective public administration, while the transformational leadership theory supports visionary, value-based leadership. This is crucial in combating corruption and inefficiencies. Together, these frameworks provide a lens for analysing how religious leadership can influence governance by reinforcing ethical standards, promoting civic accountability, and challenging maladministration within the public sector (Nzimakwe, 2014; Mokgolo, Modiba & Mokgolo, 2012; Mofolo & Smit, 2009).

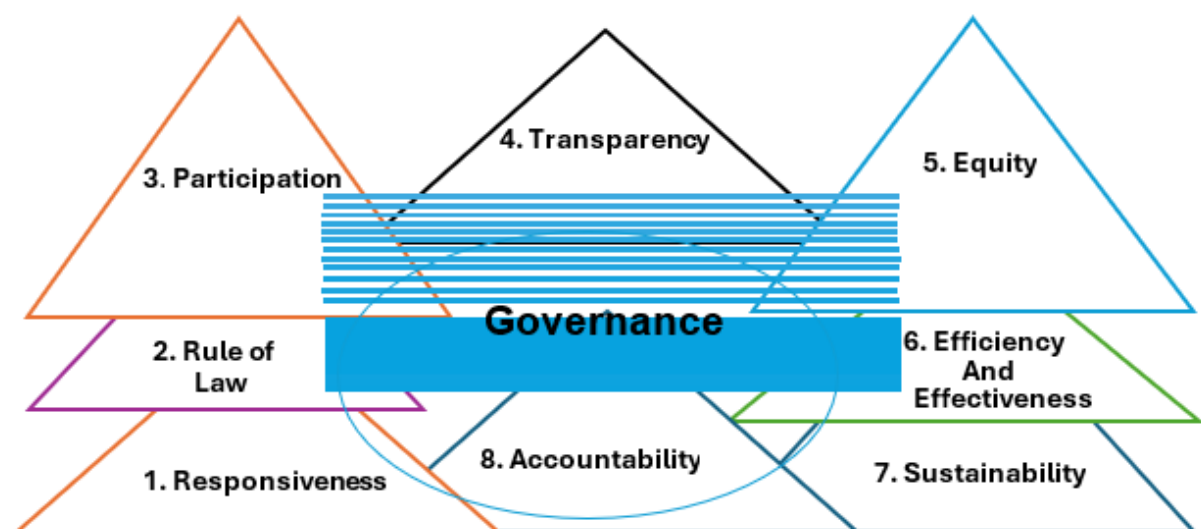


Figure 2.1: Eight key principles that underpin good governance (UNDP, 1997)

2.7 Conceptual Framework of Governance

2.7.1 Transparency

Transparency is an important principle to have when dealing with governance matters. This principle ensures that when decisions are made, they are carried out in a way that is compliant with laid-down laws, rules, and regulations. This requires that sufficient information be made available and is accessible in formats and platforms that are simple to understand (Ali, 2022:1677). It is thus relevant to intertwine religion in the workplace with the spotlight on transparency because there is a real potential benefit derived from incorporating faith-based practices in the workplace, as it can provide employees with a sense of meaning and purpose, creating an environment of inclusivity and respect. This stance of things is not just beneficial for personnel one to another, but also for the rules and regulations of the organisation, thus for the organisation.

According to Ahmed (2011:35), transparency is one of the principles in the religion of Islam, called *khalifah*. It represents accountability, transparency, and trustworthiness. In the *khalifah*, an individual's rights and responsibilities are laid out with reference to the individual's self and other individuals. According to the author, this includes the person's status and the role the person has. Ahmed (2011:35) opines that though the *khalifah* refers to the individual, it indirectly relates to the organisation, because the person's true honesty, their moral conduct, as well as their integrity when they exercise transparency, is vital for the organisation and, as such, benefits the society. Thus, the link between governance in a corporate setting and Islamic law takes effect by virtue of disclosure. Similarly, the Bible also requires those who do business to do so with honesty and integrity in order to be known as "good servant(s)." Thus, the Christian religion also links religion to governance and require transparent, honest, and ethical conduct by those who profess to be christian.

2.7.2 Rule of Law

The rule of law, according to Ali (2022:1676), denotes that no one is above the law; instead, everybody should be treated and regarded as equal before the law. The creation of laws in the South African context is only subject to the Constitution of South Africa and can only be changed if in conflict with the constitutional stipulations, where every citizen is declared equal before the law and should not be subject to any form of discrimination on any of the grounds indicated by the Constitution.

According to Aroney (2018), the importance of religion is highlighted in that, political office bearers are not only required to exercise their powers in line with the law, but also to take a religious oath or solemn affirmation. Thus, the oath introduces the important relationship in showing the significance of religious convictions, personal fidelity, moral principles, and political power. It serves as a guarantee that official duties will be performed and scrutinised, as well as subjected to external judgment.

2.7.3 Participation

It is the vision of the South African Parliament to build a people's representative Parliament, and as such, it prioritises and actively seeks engagement with the public to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of the people. Public participation is the vehicle used to promote representative participation that will enable South Africans from all communities to contribute meaningfully and also to influence the decisions made by government that affect their lives (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019). Therefore, participation is widely inclusive and include, among others, religious participation, which in simple terms, refers to an established institution consisting of a number of individuals, who identify and participate as active members. True religion is always about community and participation by individuals who form a collective. This principle is important and can be regarded as the cornerstone of the religious institution's growth. Hence, participation has a governance connotation to it, be it in a religious or secular context, and should be incorporated as an important factor for the purpose of governance (Nanthambwe, 2025).

2.7.4 Responsiveness

According to UNESCAP (2009), there can be no discussion of good governance without the presence of responsiveness, as this is one of the key components of good governance. Responsiveness is that component of governance that sensitises government officials to the needs and the views of the citizens and, furthermore, diligently seeks to provide for their needs and aims to meet demands, resolve grievances, and deliver on promises within reasonable time limits. Responsiveness works at its best in a decentralised governance system because it brings government into closer contact with its citizens. Local representatives are best placed to know and understand the exact nature of local constituency needs, and how they can be met in a cost-effective way. A responsive government needs to put in place forums of

consultation, debates, advisory bodies, public meetings, and ensure that on all these platforms, freedom of speech is not impeded in any way or form (Pierre & Peters, 2000:100-101).

2.7.5 Equity

According to Steytler (2005), the perception of fairness regarding policies, rules, delivery of services, applying the rule of law, allocation of resources, etc., matters substantially, because it has a significant bearing on inducing better societal cooperation. The concept of fairness itself is no simple and straightforward matter, as it involves some dimensions related to outcomes and others related to process. With this in mind, equity is incidental and related to fairness as far as outcomes are concerned. Furthermore, equity is important when it comes to opportunities for individual pursuits that do not qualify individuals based on ethnicity, race, gender, location, or other factors beyond their control. What is of importance, though, is that society cares about prosperity and how prosperity is shared. Thus, a satisfactory outcome requires, according to Mokgoro (2002), a sensitive and sensible approach and application to principles related to equity, which include, amongst others, recognition and respect for rights, identities, knowledge systems, values, and institutions. Furthermore, equity requires an explicit understanding and adherence to procedures, characterised by inclusiveness of rules and decision-making, transparency, accountability, access to justice, as well as efficient and effective dispute resolution. In addition, equity requires equitable distribution in the sharing of costs and the benefits of the different stakeholders.

2.7.6 Efficiency and Effectiveness

According to Van der Waldt (2012) effectiveness and efficiency play a crucial role in attaining “good governance.” These concepts firstly imply that specific values are at play, values that reflect the wishes of the citizens. In addition, there needs to be values that increase the individual's potential to achieve personal goals of independence. Furthermore, there should be values that underpin sustainable development, and strive to establish social justice and many more relevant values. Secondly, those who are tasked with carrying out the different functions and duties of government achieve the objectives set in an efficient and effective manner. Achieving goals and objectives requires the optimisation of the principles of efficiency and effectiveness, where

performance of duties and tasks takes place as expected in line with strategic plans that are rational and measurable, based on the important needs identified of the community (van der Waldt, 2014).

2.7.7 Sustainability

Sustainability inevitably alludes to sustainable development, which is characterised by its multidimensional nature. There needs to be a delicate balance between environmental and development concerns. In addition, there needs to be an interrogation into the achievability of the broadening general rights and obligations of the government, especially in the South African context, where the Government must balance its responsibilities and obligations with regard to the rich and the poor, and where there are big economic disparities between the rich and the poor. Sustainability needs to develop as a three-legged table: firstly, there must be economic sustainability, secondly, there must be social sustainability, and thirdly, environmental sustainability (Safdar, Khan & Andlib 2022).

2.7.8 Accountability

Thornhill (2005) emphasises that accountability is a broad and complex concept in public administration, and its attainment is a crucial objective for public sector reform. Traditionally, this concept focused on monitoring and regulating the exercise of power. However, with the continuous change in the dynamics within the workplace, this concept is now broadened to include all activities of public officials that will ensure that transactions and performance are within the parameters of the rule of law and that they meet the highest standards and expectations of all stakeholders. Central to accountability is the obligation on all public officials to provide information, give explanations, and provide justification for their actions and or lack thereof, the decisions they make, the performance of their duties, and importantly, the finances of the public.

Accountability and transparency are intricately linked because, in order to be accountable, there must be a great deal of transparency. In addition, there must be access to information, openness about policies, and many other relevant factors. These, in turn, will ensure that the elected are held accountable for their actions, existing resources are likely to be better utilised, allocations of funds and services can be more equitable, and it will keep in check that public funds are not diverted for private use.

Ultimately, citizen ownership and commitment to government programmes will increase as the value of good governance is increasingly attained (Ndevu & Muller, 2018).

According to Ahmed (2011:36), Islamic law requires that every Muslim account for their actions in the world. This is a universal requirement because this notion is equally paramount in the Christian faith, as well as in many other religions. However, despite this call to account in religious quarters, the question remains: are people really held accountable? The truth is that human nature and self-opportunism are inevitable and are responsible for the erosion of the very fibre of these principles. Hence the notion by Mkhize and Nel-Sanders (2025) that self-interested and opportunistic behaviour has become embedded within governance structures in South Africa, leading to the erosion of ethical and institutional principles that sustain good governance.

2.8 The Principles of Governance vs. the Principles of Religion

2.8.1 Bigger Considerations are Paramount

Unlike ordinary organisations, FBOs, which basically fall under the band of religion, include many different faiths and belief systems. FBOs are founded on quite a different thought pattern or model compared to organisations, such as companies. FBOs focus on something much bigger than results in the way it is operated, and in the way their entities, in a legal sense, are described. All of this does not even begin to touch on the spiritual side of what FBOs stand for and really represent. It is, therefore, particularly important to realise that there are bigger considerations to bear in mind, as these considerations are important and relevant to defining the structure and explicit purpose of the religious organisation (Duncan, 2018).

Similar to FBOs, companies also have a unique approach to governance. Companies identify major characteristics of good governance, and the point of departure is to keep bigger considerations in mind. Companies have principles, such as participation, consensus-orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, equity, rule of law, as well as demonstrate a strategic vision as apparent considerations. However, the bigger picture is not just to abide by these principles; there are more crucial objectives to achieve, such as profit, shareholder dividends, provision of services and goods, etc., in a sustainable and cost-effective way. Hence, effective and efficient control of a company, while ensuring adherence to good governance,

requires a robust governance framework and a well-developed strategic plan (Tricker, 2019). The system must work together to encourage team members to be aware, to be clear, and to make sure that the organisation develops in the right direction. Such a governance system needs to be clear, simple, and well understood.

2.8.2 Understanding the Peculiar Aspects of Governance

It is important to understand that governance for religious organisations is somewhat unique compared to other entities. The main purpose of religious organisations is to focus on advancing religion and activities aligned with religion. It becomes inevitable that these organisations, more often than not, get involved in activities other than those with which they are aligned to for their original purpose. It is thus important for those involved in governance to be able to differentiate whether they are still in the remit of the main purpose or whether they should affect a shift through them revising the purpose of the organisation, or alternatively, the religious organisation needs to set up a separate entity that could perform the new activities (Smith, 2010).

Similarly, it is, therefore, important for organisations other than religious organisations to have a main purpose for their existence, and it is the responsibility of board members, according to Mander (2022), to ensure that there is clarity about the purpose of the organisation, and thus make sure that all levels within the organisation are enabled to work towards that purpose. Hence, the board needs to ensure that the right people are deployed in the right positions, adequate resources are made available, and work relationships are maintained at healthy levels. Mander (2022), furthermore, opines that good governance is the cornerstone that should be used by organisations to achieve success ethically, using best practices and adhering to legal norms.

Anderson (2024) states that having a clear and compelling organisational purpose is critical because it serves as a compass guiding a company's strategy, decisions, and establishes a common goal that is more than just profit-focused. Furthermore, it serves to unite employees on all levels, while creating a connection that strikes a chord with customers, suppliers, and the community. Aligning an organisation with a meaningful and strong purpose, creates a strong corporate culture, builds a strong brand reputation and encourages sustainable development (Anderson, 2024).

2.8.3 Know Your Duties

In religious organisations, those appointed often act on “heart” motivations or out of a sense of duty, not realising that their actions may lead to some liability associated with the position. Therefore, it is essential that these individuals receive proper education to prevent any misunderstandings. The importance of this is that there may be a trust, and these trusts come with mandatory duties and default duties, i.e., a board member must know the terms of the trust, act honestly and in good faith, powers must be exercised for a proper purpose, actions must be for the benefit of the beneficiaries, and to further the purpose of the trust, etc. The default duties are similar to what is expected in organisations, such as companies. Board members must have, and exercise, reasonable skill and care when investing; they must do so in a prudent manner, should never use trustee power for personal gain, not profit inappropriately from their position, be careful in exercising their power, etc. ((National Center for Family Philanthropy, 2010). Therefore, this principle underscores the vital intersection between religious stewardship and public-sector governance, as ethical accountability and duty of care within religious organisations mirror the same leadership standards required to strengthen governance and integrity in South Africa’s public institutions (Jonck 2024).

According to Mander (2022), a paramount and important factor for good governance in an organisation is the responsibility of the board members to continuously learn. They need to understand that the business world is dynamic and undergoes change on a constant basis. Furthermore, understanding the things they do not have control over, resulting from outcomes, based on their actions, requires constant personal learning. Because boards are dealing with internal and external stakeholders, who will inevitably react differently to their decisions, it is important that they are equipped through continuous learning to effectively deal with the resulting effects of their decisions. Thus, continuous learning assists in how they respond to these diverse reactions, stemming from their decisions. Muringa and Shava, (2025) state that in the context of this study, the principle of continuous learning within boards of religious organisations illustrates how faith-based institutions can model adaptive and responsible leadership. By embracing ongoing education and reflection, religious leaders not only enhance the governance of their own institutions but also provide a framework for ethical, accountable, and responsive leadership that can inform and consolidate governance practices within South Africa’s public sector.

Bowman (2022) states that board members, in line with their strategic plans and governance models, are the ones to make choices that create the future for the organisation and the communities they serve. Hence, it is important to know that the future they create requires an awareness of their duties and responsibilities, as well as an awareness of what is happening in the industry, of what is happening in the strategic environment. This comes back to the issue of learning, because when they are knowledgeable about relevant factors in their work, they can focus on things that are likely going to have an effect on the company and they are enabled to modify where needed, create or discontinue when they become aware of as obsolete, or introduce new strategies as required, continuously repeating the process for the benefit of the organisation they serve.

2.8.4 Implement Best Practice Governance

It is important that religious institutions, including any other organisation, follow best practices for governance. Articulation of purpose should be clear, simple, and concise. There needs to be clear strategic plans, and the route to their achievement must be well communicated. The rules must be read and understood. The right people in the right positions must be employed. Risk management should be regarded as important and managed effectively. Teamwork and collective responsibility must be fostered. Governance is a journey with many twists and turns, and as such, it requires continuous upskilling. Leaders cannot lead perpetually; there must be a strong emphasis on succession, especially grooming from within to foster loyalty and satisfaction (Siambi 2022).

In the context of this study religion should be regarded as a transcendent force that may be used and has been used in countries, such as South Africa and Pakistan as a political ideology. Hence, it could very well be used as a force to influence public organisation leaders pertaining to governance, because religion informs public and private behaviour and puts in place a scope for voluntary action and a formalised discourse. Good governance coupled with religion could be a roadmap to establish good governance within organisations (Waseem & Mufti, 2009:10-11).

2.9 The Role of the Constitution in Governance

Van Wyk (2007) affirms that South Africa's status as a constitutional state places the Constitution at the centre of governance. Hence, South Africa, as a constitutional state, suggests that the Constitution is supreme. It underpins the foundational values of South Africa, which are aimed at the achievement of a good and coherent society. Furthermore, the Constitution outlines specific values and principles that should guide public administration and governance. For this purpose, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is mandated by the Constitution 1996 in terms of Sections 195 and 196 and may investigate, monitor and evaluate the public service organisation, administration and performance (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Louw (2001) explains that values are the fundamental belief systems individuals hold, and in the context of this work, a country subscribes to. These values serve as moral codes that inform behaviour, acting as a moral compass to distinguish between right and wrong. Values prompt individuals to act instinctively without having to think, as these values are part of an individual's consciousness.

Principles originate from value systems. Values are individually internalised beliefs, while principles are those outward instructions in the form of rules and laws. Hence, good governance principles, when underpinned by a good value system, become easier to follow. There is thus a link between constitutional values and good governance principles, and in the South African context, these are the Batho Pele Principles (BPP). The Constitutional values inform BPP, which are, in essence, principles similar to those of good governance. These constitutional values encompass social justice and equity, openness characterised by transparency and accountability, human dignity, freedom, equality, rule of law, reconciliation, respect and many others (Public Service Commission, 2008).

In the South African context, it can be said that the Constitution outlines the powers, functions, and responsibilities of the spheres of government, thus governance. The regulatory function trickles down to all the different departments of the public service. The Constitution serves to protect democratic principles, the rights of people and those of workers (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

2.10 The South African Constitution and Religion

Coertzen (2014:128-129) writes that the place of religion within the South African community received an important place after the South African Constitution was adopted in 1996. It contains a Bill of Rights and clearly outlines that it is a constitution for every citizen of the country. All religions are regarded as sovereign and receive guaranteed protection under the Constitution, pertaining to their rights and freedoms of religion(s). To strengthen the position of the Constitution on religious rights, the South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms (SACREF) was formulated. Signatories to the adoption of this charter included representatives from religious, academic, legal and human rights groups in South Africa, including international advisors, who all endorsed the Charter. There are representatives from the Jewish religion; representatives from Christian denominations; the Muslim Judicial Council; the Ismaeli Community; the Jami'atul 'Ulama (the Council of Muslim Theologians); the Hindu faith (the Arya SamaySA, the Hindu Co-ordinating Council, the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Council, the Tamil Federation); the National Spiritual Council of the Baha'is of South Africa; as well as African traditional religion. Furthermore, there are African Independent Churches (AIC); the National Commission for Culture, Language and Religion; the education desk of the Dutch Reformed Church; the Griekwa National Council; the Griekwa Independent Church; the Commission for Religious Freedom of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa; the Evangelical Alliance of Southern Africa; Trans World Radio; the Christian Network; the Elected School of Amadlosi; and the Interdenominational Ministries. The total of practising religious believers represented by the signatories is estimated to be approximately 10,5 million of the total South African population of approximately 52 million at the time (Coertzen, 2014:129).

The significance of this Charter, according to Coertzen (2014:130), is that it highlights what freedom of religion means to religious believers and religious organisations within South Africa. It serves as a tool that can be used by the religious communities to assist religious groups in determining their own identity, identifying their rights and freedoms, so that they can legitimately claim. The South African Council for the Promotion and Protection of Religious Rights and Freedoms was mandated to oversee the process of the enactment of the Charter to become formally law in South Africa. The enactment of the Charter into law, officially means that every religious believer and organisation has

legal standing, impartiality and protection of the law through the courts to practise all elements of their religious belief under the Constitution.

According to Fessha and Dessalegn (2021:1), the importance and protection of religious diversity are emphasised by decisions taken by the courts in particular. Importantly, the Constitutional Court (CC) has provided a clear commitment, stemming from the Constitution to religious pluralism by providing a clear explanation of the concept of religious freedom, highlighting the constitutional recognition of religious diversity, and extending the protection available for persons belonging to religious groups. The author goes on to indicate that, like all rights protected by the Constitution, the right to religious freedom is subject to Clause 36, the limitation clause, which requires that competing interests be balanced. However, the limitations *per se* were not the focus of this work; instead, this work focused on trying to establish to what extent religion could have a consolidating effect on leadership and governance.

2.11 Strategies for Sustainable Governance

There is a general consensus amongst leaders all around the world that good governance approaches are paramount in the fight against poor service delivery, the lack of development, and the general decay of scruples within the workplace, be it public or private organisations. Sustainable development and improvement of the standard of living, experienced by the society, are only possible if there are adequate governance structures that are subservient to governance principles, underpinned by ethical leadership that is derived from high moral values as prescribed by religion (Linkov, Trump, Poinsett-Jones & Florin, 2018:2).

To achieve sustainable governance, it becomes important for boards to devise diverging strategies that will govern and manage organisational developments within. One approach could be that the organisation could implement a governance strategy called a *laissez-faire* industry-driven approach. The board of an organisation needs to be aware of its industry's developments, keeping in mind that it operates within an open market. By being aware of these external factors, the organisation will be placed in a position to anticipate, organise, and protect itself from threats, internally and externally. The organisation will, at the same time, be creating an environment where leadership becomes actively and interactively involved with the workers, thus creating a conducive

environment that will work against self-enrichment and corruption (Linkov *et al.*, 2018:4). To achieve this, one could appeal to the religious convictions of individuals within the workplace in communicating the aims of combatting self-enrichment and corruption.

Another strategy is the precautionary governance approach, which, in essence, is a pre-emptive strategy that seeks to avoid and prevent exposure to irreversible risks, while working to mitigate the identified risk in the immediate term. This strategy requires that boards and management be proactive by reviewing threats, as well as identifying common themes and factors of uncertainty that appear as risks. Plans need to be in place to regulate operations in such a way that they work to avoid irreversible consequences (Linkov *et al.*, 2018:4).

In addition to the strategies discussed above, Linkov *et al.* (2018:5) identify another strategy that could be utilised, which is called the stewardship strategy or approach. This strategy requires boards to facilitate and support development and ensure that they put in place steps that will prevent unwanted consequences identified from future threats. Governance by stewardship requires active involvement that will build response capacity for future and emerging threats.

According to Linkov, Trump, Poinsette-Jones, and Florin, (2018) together, these governance strategies illustrate how ethical, proactive, and stewardship-based leadership, informed by moral and religious values, can consolidate leadership and strengthen governance practices within South Africa's public sector.

2.12 Governance

Because the workplace is dynamic in nature, organisations in their approach to governance must have an adaptive approach to make sure the organisation adapts as the changes occur. Thus, adaptive governance requires that regulations and rules be flexible, thus, are able to be changed swiftly, while allowing for regular revision in light of the constant changing landscape (Linkov *et al.*, 2018:6). In addition, governance is primarily responsible for balancing the interests of an organization's many stakeholders, ensuring accountability, fairness and transparency, while delivering on the purpose for the existence of the organisation. Critically, the dynamic nature of the workplace demands that governance be both adaptive and responsive, balancing flexibility with accountability. Synthesising Linkov *et al.* (2018), effective governance not only ensures

fair and transparent decision-making but also aligns organisational actions with stakeholder needs and overarching objectives. In the public sector, this suggests that adaptive governance, informed by ethical and value-driven principles, can enhance service delivery and consolidate leadership by allowing institutions to respond effectively to changing societal demands.

2.12.1 Good Governance

The state of good governance is what every international, national, and private company or organisation would like to achieve. To reach that state, an organisation must be clear about its aims and its sustainable goals. Furthermore, organisations must have a clear understanding of the challenges that fallible individuals have and provide clear rules and laws that would guide and deter them from becoming inefficient and corrupt. There needs to be a clear understanding of the dynamics of power, as well as how it is exercised to achieve sustainable economic growth. Also, there must be a mutual consensus on what needs to be done to ensure social resources are effectively utilised for sustainable development. There must be an unambiguous commitment to accountability and transparency, while sufficient controls must be in place to prevent the perversion of associations and networks (Roos & de la Harpe, 2008). In the South African context, embedding these principles within both secular and religious institutions highlights how ethical leadership and governance frameworks, informed by moral and faith-based values, can consolidate leadership and strengthen service delivery in the public sector (Roos and de la Harpe, 2008).

2.12.2 Governance and Stakeholders

One of the important keys to good governance is the ability to effectively open channels of communication and ensure these channels always remain open. Furthermore, good governance is important, as it serves as a social contract, as well as an agreement that will govern the behaviour of individuals and organisations. Thus, the governance framework within an organisation is the social contract that the board enters into with its various stakeholders. This contract articulates the accountability, purpose, culture, and operations of the organisation, with the aim of rallying everyone behind it in terms of rules and regulations, for the achievement of the organisation's ultimate success (IFAC, 2014).

It is understood that the stakeholders of an organisation are likely to be affected directly or indirectly by the operation of the organisation. It is also clear that stakeholders' actions can directly or indirectly affect or influence the operations of the organisation (Fernando, Rhinehart & Rathburn, 2025). It is, therefore, important to realise that the stakeholders of an organisation are a vital component in the long-term growth of the organisation. Hence, there should be a clear articulation of stakeholder governance to strengthen the business and optimise success to benefit all stakeholders.

Continuous and effective stakeholder engagement leads to strong relationships where trust is built for long-term and sustainable growth. The needs and expectations of stakeholders should be clear, as taken from the governance approach an organisation adopts, as this will help to identify stakeholder groups and the plans that are in place to engage regularly with each group (Fernando et al., 2025).

Boards of organisations are responsible for determining the scope of stakeholder engagements and should thus ensure that there is direct engagement and not just solely rely on public releases of information. Effective stakeholder engagement and good governance ensure that informed decisions are taken in the best interest of all stakeholders. With strong governance structures in place, early stakeholder engagement is affected, and trust and credibility are established. Overall, effective stakeholder engagement and governance are essential building blocks for all organisations seeking long-term success and satisfaction of stakeholders, while strengthening the organisation, compared to rivals and other industry role-players (IFAC, 2014). In the South African context, applying these principles of stakeholder engagement and accountability within religious and public institutions demonstrates how faith-informed leadership can consolidate governance, build trust, and enhance service delivery across the public sector (IFAC & CIPFA, 2014).

2.12.3 Governance and Performance

According to Sargot and Rita (2011), conducting research on the topic of governance is not a clear and straightforward undertaking, because many researchers have found it to be quite difficult with much dynamism. Moreover, governance appears to be connected to performance; hence, strategic decisions by boards need to be properly aligned with all relevant factors, because it has an impact on performance (Crow, Lockhart & Lewis, 2013).

Crow *et al.* (2013), more importantly, state that even though governance has been researched extensively, the attempts to explain the impact of boards on performance in organisations have not provided definitive answers. As reported by Crow *et al.* (2013), an understanding of governance becomes more apparent when observing the decisions, the undertakings made by boards, as well as the impact of these factors and decisions on an organisation. An organisation's performance is, therefore, dependent on the activities of the board and management. The “good performance” is observed and achieved by the organisation from all the strategic choices, the keen involvement of all stakeholders in the development of organisation strategies, the implementation, as well as the appropriate and sufficient monitoring of the strategies, of the two groups (Crow *et al.*, 2013).

Love (2010:59) agrees with Crow *et al.* by stating that, although a vast body of literature has conducted research on the relationship between corporate governance and performance, there is still no consensus among researchers. Some researchers are of the opinion that there is a positive correlation between corporate governance and varying measures of performance; others seem to question the existence of such a relationship. Moreover, Love (2010:59) opines that governance is endogenous in its inherent conceptualisation, as it depends on the specific characteristics of an organization and the environment in which it operates.

2.13 Leadership

Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012:142) postulate that meaningful development on a social, political, or economic level cannot fully take place without the input of effective leadership. As a consequence, any discussion where leadership and governance come up will attract interest, because these two concepts are pivotal for the sustainable development on a political and socio-economic level.

Although Africa, by implication, and South Africa in particular, have experienced widespread ineffective leadership and governance crises, there have been concerted efforts on many fronts to promote and instill effective leadership and governance. If care is not taken when appointing leaders, inexperienced leaders will be appointed in critical positions, and this state of affairs will lead to widespread decline in morals and discipline, caused by ill-thought-through policies. Professional standards will be

compromised an ethics will be compromised, resulting in weakened systems of governance. Hence, it is incumbent upon leaders to fully comprehend the extent of their responsibilities, duties and obligations (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012:141). The strife for good leadership is imperative for achieving good governance that will result in sustainable development socially, politically, and economically.

Ferkins, Shilbury, and O'Boyle (2018) are of the opinion that leadership stems from the field of psychology, where interest is focused on interpersonal dynamics. They, furthermore, state that research on governance is developed from disciplines such as accounting, economics, and commercial law. It is, however, clear that researchers have rarely explored governance, leadership, and religion as concepts that could work in tandem. Hence, little is known about the impact religion could have on these two well-researched areas, called governance and leadership.

2.14 Corruption

Naidoo (2012:1) posits that corruption within the public sector is one of the most significant challenges faced by leaders and those responsible for governance. There is widespread manifestation of fraud, bribery, mismanagement of government funds, abuse of resources, and procurement irregularities.

South Africa successfully transitioned into a non-racial democracy, characterised by a comprehensive political reform, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Notwithstanding this, the Government was almost immediately inundated with ever-increasing corruption that had the potential to destabilise and reverse the gains attained. It is thus apparent that good governance can only be achieved where effective leadership is at the helm of things and where these leaders are conscious of religious and moral standards and principles, which could serve to assist in the battle against corruption (Jackson, Muzondidya, Naidoo, Ndletyana & Sithole, 2009).

Corruption, according to Pillay (2004), is a single important factor that threatens to obstruct organisations' paths to growth and development in South Africa. This has a negative bearing on sustainable and effective development. There are many opportunities created by the newfound openness, presented by constitutional principles for dealing with the scourge of corruption. However, this also highlights the constraints

that corruption imposes on development and the quality of governance. Anyone who is serious about development would understand that governance is central and one of the important pillars to see sustainable economic growth and social development (Pillay, 2004).

As noted by Naidoo (2012) and Pillay (2004), corruption in South Africa's public sector remains a major hurdle to achieving good governance. Strong and ethical leadership, informed by moral and religious principles, is essential for consolidating governance, combating corruption, and ensuring sustainable development and effective service delivery within the public sector.

2.15 Conclusion

Leadership, responsible for strategic decisions and their impact on performance, is an important consideration for "good" governance. Though not all leaders confess their religion openly, they are still influenced and impacted by the intrinsic principles that have been inculcated as part of their upbringing. It is thus no surprise to see their decisions still reflect some level of religious influence.

Future research should explore the relationship between leadership, governance, religion, and performance, and identify potential causal mechanisms.. If strategic decision-making by good leaders is important, then religious influences could be important to affect good governance, because governance is, in essence, the rules and principles that could be significant for driving efforts for good governance. Notwithstanding the success of future research efforts to infer a new conceptual model of governance that could explain the relationship between leadership, governance, and religion for good performance, organisational performance, ultimately, remains somewhat dependent on leadership (management) to implement the strategic decisions made by boards of organisations. It is the board's responsibility, since it is mandated with governance responsibility, to effectively monitor if governance structures are in place and whether the chosen governance principles and rules are being followed. All boards are open systems with a variety of patterns of human agency that are influenced by personal convictions on some matters.

CHAPTER 3

SYNTHESIS OF RELIGION, POLITICS, AND GOVERNANCE

3.1 Introduction

The intersection of religion, politics, and governance highlights how faith-based values can shape political behaviour, influence leadership decisions, and strengthen governance practices within society (Nanthambwe, 2025). In South Africa, the public has increasingly voiced concerns about the lack of services and the continued prevalence of widespread corruption. This concern can be linked to ineffective governance and unethical leadership, which results in unsuccessful basic service delivery (Masegare, 2016:1). Though the Government and its operations seem to be stable and democratic processes are in place in accordance with the constitution, the Government has been struggling to find lasting solutions to the political, social, and economical challenges the country is facing. It has become increasingly alarming to note the high levels of poor and persistent lack of performance that have a crippling effect on service delivery as a result of ineffective governance systems, and this continues to yield negative outcomes (Masuku, 2019:124).

Masuku (2019:124) postulates that there is a lack of ethical leadership and resources are being mismanaged, while the mechanisms and systems meant to control and safeguard against these factors are simply ineffective, causing increased governance challenges. State organisations continue to deteriorate as there is little to no transparency and accountability.

Prinsloo (2013:3) argues that it is the responsibility of the party in power to ensure that there is political will to govern well. However, the author comments that power and authority abuse, dishonesty, ignoring of legal systems, fraud, and corruption are unfortunate factors that contribute to the widespread failure, even in cases where there are good governments.

According to Prinsloo (2013:6), the National Planning Commission (NPC) made the National Development Plan (NDP) available, wherein the vision 2030 of South Africa is articulated. The author states that this plan has the potential to enable South Africa to achieve its goal of good governance. The NDP has a number of broad and useful suggestions, which, if implemented, could see the economic, social, and political

landscape of the country transformed. This research suggests that, in addition to the suggestions outlined in the NDP, a constructive collaboration between religion, leadership, and governance could hold even more promising prospects for transforming governance in the South African context. For South Africa to achieve good governance, there should be effective systems, effective leadership, and a religiously incorporated framework to guide overall governance in South Africa (Masegare, 2016:1). Overall, achieving good governance in South Africa goes beyond strong leadership and effective systems, it also requires grounding these practices in ethical and faith-based principles. By bringing together religion, politics, and governance, moral values can guide leaders' decisions, shape behaviour, and strengthen governance structures, offering a practical way to improve service delivery and support sustainable development in the public sector (Nanthambwe, 2025).

3.2 Government Functions and Policy Formulation

Government functions include activities by the state aimed at providing goods and services that translate into producing value for citizens. It is the mission of public administration to serve as a vehicle for identifying and expressing the values and preferences of the South African society at large. Hence, the Government functions and roles are very wide in nature and would require a very lengthy discussion to cover every aspect. Therefore, the focus of this work was on using local government as an example to identify the role of service delivery within the powers and functions of local government in South Africa (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2021).

Every public institution is characterised by the functional activities it is engaged in. The institution is mandated to provide goods and services to society. For the institutions to deliver on this mandate, appropriate functions must be identified and performed. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 is the authority that confers and entrenches specific powers and functions to municipalities within the country (Nkuna & Nemutanzhela, 2012:355). Local government is the sphere of government closest to the communities and is responsible for providing a wide range of services that have a direct effect on the lives of people living in its district (Nkuna & Nemutanzhela, 2012:357).

The authors, Nkuna and Nemutanzhela (2012:356), postulate that the public sector can do nothing pertaining to the delivery of their mandates before an appropriate policy has been formulated, debated, and accepted by the legislature or an appropriate competent body. All other administrative processes can only follow after the required policy is in place and the objectives are declared. The policy clearly outlines the auxiliary and instrumental functions, including the functional activities of the institution.

According to a published paper by Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape, (2007) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Paper I, Developmental Local Government: Determining Appropriate Functions and Powers, there is a mismatch between the idea of developmental government and its powers. This results, according to the writer(s), in uncertainty of whether the powers and functions designated to local government, in fact, enable it to really meet its mandate of delivering goods and services in an effective and efficient manner. Furthermore, additional powers provided for local government by means of assignment, delegation and agency, do not include policymaking and financial authority. The writer(s) submit that there are six key indicators for determining the functions to be carried out at the local government level. The indicators should evaluate (1) the degree of economies of scale at a higher level, (2) the spill-over effects of a function, (3) the required capacity, (4) the level of intersectoral coordination, (5) the level of grass-roots community participation, and (6) the level of policy control over the environment.

Boshoff (2008:5) asserts that public policy is dynamic and constantly under development. It is incumbent upon municipal functionaries to continually develop the policy processes to achieve the mandate of service delivery, etc. However, Boshoff (2008) states that there is a lack of sufficient policies, and there is a need for local government to give serious attention to establishing appropriate policymaking. Despite having executive powers to develop and adopt policies, local governments are lacking in developing the much-needed policies. Considerable thought needs to be put into the process of formulating policies before municipal officials can submit policy recommendations to the council for consideration. After a policy has been adopted, it must subsequently be translated into action. Boshoff (2008:9) maintains that aspects that need consideration when policies are adopted should include political feasibility, operational, technical, financial feasibility, including organisational and personnel implications.

Taken together, the discussion on government functions and policy formulation highlights that effective service delivery in South Africa depends not only on clear powers and well-designed policies but also on competent and ethical leadership. In the context of this study, integrating principles of leadership, governance, and religion can provide an additional layer of guidance, ensuring that local government not only meets its constitutional mandate but also fosters trust, accountability, and moral stewardship, key factors in consolidating governance and strengthening public-sector performance (Naidoo, G., 2024.)

3.3 The Place of Religion in Public Organisations

Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1077) suggests that little research has been done in South Africa on the subject of religion in political parties. According to the author, there exists a need to answer the question of whether parties consider religion or whether they are simply adhering to secularism. The first objective of this study was to explore, using a careful analysis, whether public leaders, servants, and political office bearers subscribe to any form of religion. One would expect that, given that South Africa has a majority of religious citizens, there would be an inclination on the part of the Government to pursue a religious policy agenda. However, the reality is not as straightforward. On the face of it, according to Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1077), there appears to be religiosity and social conservatism among the population; leaders in parliament seem to be even more religious than the public, but less socially conservative.

According to South African Law Commission, (1999) the South African Government does not have an official state religion. The State is run as a secular state, while acknowledging the many different religions that exist in South Africa. The State even goes further than merely acknowledging the different religions; it actively protects the religions of all religious groups in South Africa, as outlined in the South African Constitution of 1996. Van Coller (2019) asserts in his writing: *Religion in the Public Square: A Practical Guide*, that the separation of church and state refers to religious freedom as a healthy independence between government and religious organisations. Policy may be influenced by religion on moral issues, but it remains constitutional as long as it promotes a secular agenda without advancing or restricting any specific religion. An important question to consider in this discourse was the question of how

individuals, religious organisations, and public officials resolve differences in a peaceful manner. In addition to this question, an even more pertinent question is, do public leaders, public servants, and political office bearers subscribe to any form of religion? Before answering the question of subscription, one has to identify possible ways that can help maintain peaceful discussions amongst these groups, while analysing the potential that religion could have on public policy formulation and ethical leadership.

3.3.1 Ways for peaceful discussions

3.3.1.1 *Value of democratic principles above politics and agendas*

Democratic law-making principles and processes first and foremost protect the rights of citizens. There are fundamental checks and balances, including constitutional guarantees, that guide instances where there are differences and disagreements. Even if there are unwanted and unintended outcomes or dislikes from the processes, it remains important that everyone involved in public organisations has and maintains respect for the processes, including respect for the democratic system of government. To achieve consensus, the channels of dialogue and persuasion must be pursued with great patience to achieve a healthy democracy (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2025).

3.3.1.2 *Recognise prevalent values*

All religious values call for shared commitment to common goals, which requires unwavering commitment to core values that can help in instances of disparate policy preferences. Mutual understanding and respect for one another become indispensable, and it is crucial that religious individuals in public organisations unveil principles that people of diverse backgrounds and objectives can relate to. The leaders must establish and clearly indicate how their views align with the common or prevailing values, so that trust and understanding can be built. People who subscribe to or do not subscribe to any form of religion can learn to respect religious freedom and its place in the workplace as one part of a broader freedom from government control that can potentially benefit everyone (Nanthambwe, 2025).

3.3.1.3 *Listen with empathy to all sides*

According to (Polity, 2022), people with goodwill, in general, can have widely different views on matters, which stems from the ever-present diversity in society. Hence, no one's opinion is better than that of another; all parties need to acknowledge and understand each other's positions and convictions. Public officials need to understand that it is not only they who hold religious views, but others around them also hold deep religious beliefs, and these stances or beliefs need to be harnessed and should encourage the assumption that most public officials do not intend to be hostile towards religion, but instead, want to be fair to everyone.

3.3.1.4 *Commitment to civil debate*

Gumede, (2019) postulates that a vibrant democracy is characterised by ongoing differences of opinion, but there are appropriate channels for open debate, and these channels should be carefully preserved and encouraged. It is, however, important that issues of real importance continually receive attention. It is not about just how debates take place, but also about what is debated, because debates must bring real policy solutions; however, debates must also reflect religious considerations that unite, rather than divide. An easy way of undermining democratic processes and fracturing communities is when people embark on personal attacks, ridicule, and vilifying those who have opposing views. To ensure consensus is reached and everyone learn from everyone, all parties must be accurate and fair in their assessment of matters and should show genuine respect and civility....

3.3.1.5 *Acquire relevant information and share it frequently*

There should always be information searches relevant to what the organisation is doing, and it should be shared with all relevant parties on a regular basis. Furthermore, ongoing and frequent sharing of information supports the development of an effective feedback loop, which in turn fosters continuous improvement of the organisation and the overall well-being of the organisation (Hill, 2025).

According to Sebola, Moloto, Mamabolo, (2024) when the above principles are taken together, they underscore that peaceful discussions and effective governance in South Africa depend on the fusion of democratic values, mutual respect, empathy, and open communication. When leaders embrace these ideals, grounded in ethical, inclusive, and informed dialogue, they not only strengthen collaboration and trust within public

institutions but also promote a culture of accountable and value-driven leadership that aligns with the broader goal of consolidating religion, governance, and leadership in the pursuit of national unity and good governance.

3.3.2 Religion and Ethical Leadership

At this juncture, attention will now turn to discussing the question of whether religion could have a place in assisting public policy formulation and ethical leadership. Gümüşay (2017:1) suggests that religions are integral parts of societies and, as such, required to be integrated into the suppositions of leadership. Gümüşay (2017:2) relates a story about a visit to a manager's office where there was a stone placed in a very prominent place on the manager's desk. When the author asked about the meaning of the stone, the manager's reply was that it was a reminder of the Bible verse, John 8:7, where Jesus was replying to a question about what should be done with the woman who was caught in adultery. Jesus' reply was that: "the person without sin should cast the first stone." No one could cast the first stone, because all were convicted of their own sins. The manager, furthermore, stated that the artifact was a symbol representing her and her employees' fallibilities and served to help put things into perspective.

In another office Gümüşay (2017:1) visited, he was received by the manager of the company in the prayer room, which also served as the manager's office. Upon asking the manager why the prayer room was his office, the manager replied that he did not need an expensive office, because the world and its things are but ephemeral, and his wish is to be approachable for his staff members (Gümüşay, 2017:2). These two examples are classic indications of leaders who have chosen to be influenced by their religion to approach what they do in their organisations to the benefit of all who worked in those organisations. These two examples, furthermore, illustrate that religious leaders in secular organisations have the choice to use a leadership reasoning style that is influenced by their religion as a guide for how and why they lead in certain ways. This approach in the above examples seem to be a model that can universally apply to all organisations, including public organisations, despite them being governmental organisations. What seems to be adding value in private companies could very well add value in government institutions if managers and leaders in their governance approaches, subscribe to relevant religious values.

Taken all the above together Gümüşay, (2018) conclude that when leaders let faith-based values guide their approach to leadership, they foster accountability, trust, and a culture of service that can strengthen governance. In the South African public sector context, integrating religion-inspired ethical principles within leadership practices can therefore strengthen moral integrity, and contribute meaningfully to consolidating governance and leadership in pursuit of a more value-driven public administration.

3.3.3 Religion as Social Factuality

Religions are widespread and are viewed as important to those who practice them. In addition, religions have distinct characteristics and show extensive reach, and as such, are regarded as a social fact that is essentially intertwined with the metaphysical to present a social truth. Hence, these two elements, religion and the metaphysical, portray universal truths of reality, which are not obvious to everyone, and they form the daily experiences by individuals on a personal level, as well as in social constructs, such as the different organisations (Gümüşay, 2017:3).

Weaver and Agle (2002) are of the opinion that the notion that religion can influence behaviour in an organisation is tenable to many, but unfortunately for some, it is problematic, especially in light of the little research that is available on the topic. Notwithstanding the dilemma posed by the available research, the authors maintain that religious role expectations, when internalised as a religious self-identity, can have far-reaching influence on ethical behaviour on a personal level, as well as within an organisation with a specific focus on its governance.

3.3.4 The Influence of Ethical Leadership

Research conducted by van Gils, Van Quaquebeke, van Knippenberg, van Dijke and De Cremer (2014:190) indicates that organizational deviance in the workplace is the root cause of immense harm to businesses. The authors, van Gils *et al.* (2014:190-191) state that where there is a lack of ethical leadership, particularly, organisational deviance is found to be rampant. Behaviour portrayed by leaders has an impact on followers' behaviour, thus, the rational suggestion is that the influence modelled by leaders, whether positive or negative, is absorbed by their followers through social learning, exchange and identity. There is thus no surprise that ethical leaders inform and shape the ethical behaviour in their followers. This underscores that in the South African public sector, ethical leadership guided by moral and, potentially, religious

principles can shape follower behaviour, reduce organizational deviance, and thereby strengthen governance and service delivery (van Gils *et al.*, 2014).

3.4 Religion and Public Policy Formulation

According to Lynn, Naughton and Vander Veen (2011:675), religiosity can have a significant impact on human behaviour with reference to the integration of religious beliefs and practices within the workplace. Lynn *et al.* (2011:676) postulate that religion has the power to shape attitudes, the perceptions people hold and behaviours. Furthermore, it can also impact work-related practices, such as ethics, management of stress, development of career paths, etc. Lynn *et al.* (2011:676) continue to aver that religion, despite its complexity and diversity, can be combined with work by tapping into its multifaceted nature.

Fox (2018:2) makes mention of comparative politics, which, according to Caramani (2017:1), deals with internal political structures, such as parliaments and executives, individuals, collective groups like voters, social movements, interest groups and processes, such as policymaking, communication and political cultures. The main aim of comparative politics is to describe, explain and forecast differences and similarities within political systems.

In his work, “An Introduction to Religion and Politics, Theory and Practice, Fox (2018:2) postulates that there is an intersection between religion and politics. This brings us to the question of how political parties develop the manifestos they put forward for their parties. According to Jeffery-Schwikkard (2023:1), political parties connect the public with laws and governance. It is important to note that laws and governance are the product of party policy stances. These policy stances, reflected in manifestos, are those that highlight a political party’s core values. Note, a manifesto is the blueprint that is presented, containing the policies a particular party pledges to enact, if they are given the power through an election. Hence, there is the notion that those, who subscribe to religion, will relate faith explicitly or indirectly, passionately or without fanfare, in their manifestos.

Hossain (2024:2) writes that the use of religion by political parties during elections has evolved, and scholars are now beginning to acknowledge that religion is taking a central place in politics. The author furthermore states that recent studies have explored the

effects of religious campaigning and found that when there is a religious appeal in campaigns, voters' religiosity is activated, and this influences the formation of political attitudes of the voters. These appeals activate religious beliefs without explicitly referencing religion. Furthermore, by merely mentioning things close to the hearts of people, such as pro-life messages, endorsement of traditional family values, etc., one captures the hearts of the people, creating loyalty and trust (Hossain, 2024:2). Fox (2018:5) discusses four explanations of religion:

3.4.1 Unified System of Beliefs

With this, Fox (2018) indicates that religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices of sacred things capable of uniting into one moral community. These unifying systems and beliefs can be harnessed and incorporated into policy formulation.

3.4.2 A System of Symbols

Fox (2018) highlights the fact that religion can establish powerful, persuasive and long-lasting moods and motivations, while at the same time formulating a genesis of general order of existence.

3.4.3 Set of Coherent Answers

Life poses many questions, and according to Fox (2018), religion provides rational and reasonable answers to core empirical questions that confront all people, while providing an emotional bond for all who participate at the same time, establishing continuity for generations.

3.4.4 Human Enterprise

Fox (2018:5) advances that religion is the cosmisation of mysterious and astonishing power, an immensely powerful reality that man can experience apart from himself. This reality is self-reflective and localised, creating an ultimate meaningful order in and around the individual.

The commonality of these depictions, according to Fox (2018:5), is that they highlight the dynamics of the interactions religion brings about in human behaviour. Furthermore, Fox (2018) suggests that beliefs, practices and rituals unite people into a community. In addition, religion plays a crucial role in forming individual behaviour, beliefs and the perception of the world. Religion influences how people bond and preserve that which brings them together. The power found in religion transcends human limitations and

highlights the conception of the sacred and its influence on human behaviour and convictions. In the following paragraph, attention will now be on understanding what policy formulation entails.

Religion plays a crucial role in public policy formulation by shaping human behaviour, ethical decision-making, and social attitudes, while also influencing political engagement and loyalty through party manifestos and campaign strategies (Lynn, Naughton and Vander Veen, 2011; Hossain, 2024; Jeffery-Schwikkard, 2023). Its unifying beliefs, symbols, and moral guidance (Fox, 2018) provide a framework for ethical leadership and collective commitment, demonstrating how faith-based principles can strengthen governance and consolidate leadership within South Africa's public sector.

3.5 Policy Formulation

The policymaking process entails providing policy decision-makers with relevant and reliable policy knowledge about issues, including socio-economic and other relevant and important factors, influencing the daily life of citizens (Fisher, Miller & Sidney, 2007:xix). Hence, Boulle, Davids, Mabogoane and Goldman (2015:13-14)) suggests that evidence-based policymaking is important and is a requirement and not just at a single point, as it is a requirement needed throughout the process of formulating policy. The authors maintain that being aware of this fact will assist in better targeting government services that will accelerate service delivery and improve the impact the policies will have on communities. The pursuit of evidence-based processes will help policymakers and providers of services make better decisions and achieve better outcomes that will show rationality and rigorousness in the systematic policymaking and implementation processes. However, Boulle *et al.* (2015:13) concede that there are other factors at play, which are also of importance and serve as indications that there is more work required to entrench evidence-based policymaking processes throughout government.

Fox (2018:6) conveys the notion that the government's religion policy can be divided into four distinct categories. The first category focuses on the question of whether the government has an official religion. If it is the case, it can be understood that it is a formal declaration of intent, which will show that the Government declares one religion that will guide the State in its culture, philosophy and policy.

The second category focuses on religious support, which is an indication of the degree to which the Government supports a religion in practice. It is important to note that generally, aspects of the government's religion policy, which will include support, are activated through legislation. However, Fox (2018:7) opines that in practice, policy formulation by government takes place in many other ways than only legislation. Though in non-democratic governments the above could be especially true, even in democratic governments, policy decisions can be made outside of legislation by leaders, bureaucratic regulations, and decisions by national and local officials (leaders), including the courts. Thus, the official religious category is an indication of a state's official policy, and religious support is what the state does in practice.

The third category focuses on the regulation, restrictions and control of religion. This talks to all government laws, policies and practices that look at the majority religion in a state, determining to what extent to limit, regulate and control it. In contrast to religious support, this category seeks to keep and maintain religion within prescribed confines (Fox, 2018:7).

The fourth and final category of government religion policy is religious discrimination, which refers to limitations on the religious practices or religious institutions of religious minorities. Motivations for limiting minority religions are often different from motivations limiting majority religions. An example of this is where a state has a policy on a secular public space, which might limit the expression of religion for all religions (Fox, 2018:7).

The relevance and importance of the discussion above illustrate that, despite what one may think about religion in the workplace, the reality is that there are always individuals who will be for or against religion. This does not detract from the fact that by fair means or foul, religion has an important role to play and presents itself in one way or another by the consequences it has in the workplace (Lynn *et al.*, 2011:676). Hence, the authors maintain that religion incorporates a unique and wide perspective that is indicative of particular values that portray its gregarious roles. The importance of incorporating religion into policy formulation is found therein that, even though some may find the notion foreign and out of touch, especially in the South African context where there is a plurality of religions, Lynn *et al.* (2018:676) argue that the religious commitments employees have, always end up finding their way into the workplace.

According to Lynn *et al.* (2018:677), virtually all Christians are guided by their religion and their faith to influence their actions in the workplace, whether explicitly or indirectly. This is evident in the research Lynn *et al.* (2018) refer to, where the researchers found that Christian professors are motivated by viewing their work as a calling, rather than merely an occupation. In another study, the researchers found that religion for nurses and other low-income workers serves as a source of motivation, as they found it difficult to reconcile the daily struggles and adverse conditions they have to weather. What keeps them from despair, is their religion and faith. It is thus the observation of the authors that religion is that which affects the perceptions and behaviours, including the ability and motivation to continue performing their jobs despite positive or negative conditions.

3.6 Politicians' Approach to Religion in South Africa

There is a need, according to Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1079), to understand how political parties in South Africa engage with religion. Despite the extensive research conducted on other areas of political parties and religion, not much work has been done on how political parties engage with religion. The author refers to research done by Seymore, Lipset and Stein Rokkan, where the researchers' focus was on analysing the religious-secular cleavage with emphasis on party systems, rather than parties' interaction with religion. On the other hand, research done by Martin Duverger discusses political parties and does not include an examination of religion. This translates to a substantial gap in the available literature on political parties, by extension, politicians and their engagement with religion.

A political party is formed out of individuals, and when a party takes a specific stance pertaining to religion, one can reasonably deduce from that that the stance is informed or reflective of the majority of the individuals within the party. Thus, the religious views of a party are indicative of the convictions of the majority of the individual memberships that make up the cohort of the registered members of the party. The “party” is not detached from its members, instead, it represents the views, perceptions, culture, convictions, religion, faith and affiliation of the collective members (Ramphela, 2008; Biko, 2004).

Fox (2018:1) postulates that history has shown that politics and religion have been interconnected, and every ancient political entity has evidence of the intimate connection to religion. It can safely be said that in the South African context, this notion is also applicable, because politicians' approach to religion is largely shaped by the country's diverse religious landscape and its unique history. It is, however, important to note that not all governments, according to Fox (2018:7), with official stances on religion, necessarily become involved in high levels of religious support. Despite this, Jeffery-Schwikkard (2022:1078) is of the opinion that laws and policies in South Africa are amongst the most secular in the world. Political parties' approach towards religion is important as it helps in forming an understanding of how the public's view on religion gets represented or not represented in policies of the state and the general public sphere. In South Africa, politicians are prone to reflect the country's deep religious diversity, while holding the secular Constitution in high esteem, performing the delicate balance of the complex intersection of religion with personal and public identity of the role-players. The following underlines some key points about how South African politicians approach religion in South Africa.

The discussion above illustrates that South African politicians navigate a delicate balance between the country's religious diversity and its secular constitutional framework, and that their engagement with religion can influence policy formulation, ethical leadership, and governance practices, highlighting the importance of integrating religious considerations in consolidating leadership and governance in the public sector (Jeffery-Schwikkard, 2022; Fox, 2018).

3.7 Constitution: Separation of Church and State

Xaso (2012:63) postulates that there should be a concise balance between church and state. Furthermore, members of religious communities, cushioned by the democratic values of the country, should be in a position to decide for themselves what laws they will obey and the laws to which they do not subscribe. To prevent problems in an open and democratic society, such as South Africa that is based on human dignity, equality and freedom, religion should be approached with the utmost and appropriate sobriety and resolve. South Africa, unlike the United States of America, does not have, according

to Xaso (2012:63), a strict separation between church, thus by association, religion, and the state.

Carter (2002:293) affirms in his lecture on "reflections" on the separation of church and state, that this notion is not as straightforward as one may accept on face value. He concedes that there is much reason to accept that there is a fair amount of confusion when it comes to the separation of church and state. In his own words, the author recapitulates that after much research, "the concept of separation of church and state is baffling, utterly baffling." Consequently, Carter (2002:293) particularises that he could not be totally opposed to the concept. On the contrary, his obvious favour of the concept is grudgingly challenged by the little understanding he has, and he suspects others, who also use the concept, share with him the confusion around what the words really mean.

Carter (2022:294) goes on to state that the separation of church and state denotes exactly that; it does not infer a separation of God and state. Religious people and people in general choose to obey governing authorities, and the only reason is that they obey God, because God has created and appointed the authorities.

Coertzen (2014:126) argues that the South African Constitution guarantees freedom of religion for all who subscribe to one or the other religion within the country. These rights are further outlined in the SACREF. South Africa prescribes plurality, and the largest percentage of people in the country identify as Christians, and then there are Muslims, Hindus, Jews and many more. The importance of religion necessitated the formation of the SACREF, especially to address questions that were asked about the implications of Article 15 for the religion of the land, as well as for the whole of society. Article 234 of the Constitution, thus, in line with the Bill of Rights, allows for civil organisations to draw up charters of rights that will then be enacted by Parliament. Hence, in line with the Constitution's Bill of Rights, which recognises that all citizens have the right to freedom of religion, the Charter serves to organise the relationship between the different religions and relations with the state (Coertzen, 2014:129).

Because of the requirements of the Constitution, South Africa finds itself in a position where there is no religion that is superior to another, thus having certain advantages before the law of the land. All religions are regarded as equal before the State. South Africa, according to Coertzen (2014:141), never had an official religion. However, it could be said that the Christian religion has always had a place of privilege, but this

position of privilege changed at the advent of the new dispensation in 1994, when freedom of religion became the privilege of all religions in South Africa. It is, therefore, important for the Constitution that both the State and the different religions take and maintain responsibility to respect, protect, promote and uphold the rights and freedoms of all the different religions in the country. However, Mokhoathi (2017:1) states that there is unfortunately an alarming disregard for the very principles enshrined in the Constitution, where many religious establishments are trying to validate their authority, often in violation of human rights.

3.8 Engagement of Politicians with Religion

Omeličeva and Ahmed (2018:4) posit that the interrogation into religion and politics has an important place in political science and international relations. The authors are of the opinion that religion has established itself as a powerful social force, impacting national and global politics, while shaping individual beliefs and political behaviour. In line with this argument, Sarkissian (2012) confirms that religiosity plays an important role in civic and political participation. However, Sarkissian (2012) argues that little understanding of the ways in which religiosity operates in majority Muslim societies, is comparable to what is observed in Christian societies. Political attitudes have been influenced by religion in many first-world countries across the world, and this phenomenon has extended to other regions, including Africa, Asia and the Middle East (Omeličeva & Ahmed, 2018).

According to Amoateng (2020:1), though, there is a notion that the state and religion must be separated, and this, in effect, created a deficit in potential studies on the participation of the youth, which remain rather limited. This is a source of concern, especially considering the increasing extent to which the youth, as part of society, have increasingly shown interest in religion. Youth development, youth employment, buzz words in the political arena, should look into religion to entice the growth of youth participation in politics (Amoateng, 2020:2).

Political engagement is not always streamlined, based on the fact that political leaders and actors do not necessarily come from homogenous backgrounds. Factors, such as social, economic and demographic play an important role in encouraging political participation. Furthermore, cultural factors, like age, gender, education, religion, social

class and ethnicity also have an impact on the extent to which political engagement can take place (Amoateng, 2020:3).

Amoateng (2020) identifies four dimensions involved in political engagement. The first one is the family political discussion, which can be an opportunity for members of a family to exchange ideas and viewpoints. The context of these discussions could yield significant insights and viewpoints from different generations, different ideologies, or life experiences that could influence political inclinations (Amoateng, 2020). The second one is the peer political discussion that could take place in diverse settings between individuals who share a similar political association. Individuals are able to exchange ideas and put forward issues to be debated, creating an environment for a better understanding of diverse perspectives (Amoateng, 2020). Subsequently, the third dimension refers to political party discussions. This dimension largely revolves around discussions about ideologies and beliefs, policy proposals, election strategies, political alliances and coalitions, leadership and candidate selection, public opinion and polls, as well as global influences (Amoateng, 2020). The next dimension attempts to influence the political process. Here, the aim is to correctly gather and understand public opinion, understand the points of view of political parties, understand interest groups and how to lobby for support, understand the role of the media, and money within politics. Hence, the dimension in the fourth instance attempts to interrogate and understand public policy and law, dissecting cultural and social movements, including international relations. These are all factors that are constantly interacting, helping to shape the political discourse in a society. These are the non-electoral political engagement dimensions.

According to Amoateng (2020), religion, as a multi-dimensional concept is made up of four dimensions. In the first place, self-rated religiosity refers to the connection, understanding and experience of an individual and his/her religion. Secondly, it refers to the perception of the importance of an individual's life and the life of the family. Individual importance revolves around the person's personal growth and self-actualisation. Whereas with the family, it revolves around the family unit, playing an important role in shaping each individual's values, identity and providing emotional support. Thirdly, it is about the frequency of attending church. The frequency of attending church determines individual beliefs, cultural norms and personal reference. In the fourth place, what is the individual's religious affiliation, because it is that which

has an effect on the person's religious practice and personal circumstances, shaping individual preferences and convictions (Amoateng, 2020).

3.9 The Influence of the Christian Religion

Europe has seen a substantial decline in religious beliefs amongst the people. However, in other parts of the world, this phenomenon, called religion, continues to play an important role in the lives of individuals and in some instances in the public sphere (Höllinger, Haller & Valle-Höllinger, 2007).

According to Elphick and Davenport (1997), there has been, for the longest time, efforts to cover the many ways in which Christianity has been involved in the political, social and cultural history in South Africa. However, despite all the efforts, there remains a shortfall in the overall coverage. South Africa has seen Christian prominence long before Christianity became the overwhelming majority in Christian ideas and institutions, as well as in its political history. In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries increased substantially in the Southern African interior, strongly influencing power politics within the region. Later in the twentieth century, the Christian doctrine was used to, on one side, justify and, on the other side, oppose racial segregation.

The ANC was founded in 1912, largely on Christian doctrine and principles to oppose white rule. During the 1970s and 1980s, militants on both sides, white supremacy and black resistance, used Christian affirmations, symbols and rituals to justify their ideals. Hence, Elphick and Davenport (1997:1) postulate that the Christians, being the greater part of the population, and by virtue of their sheer numbers, exerting stronger influence on political, social and cultural levels than any other religion, established Christian doctrine, language and sentiment, though used differently, on the one side of the coin to oppress and on the other side of the same coin, to fight for freedom.

It is the opinion of Kuperus (2011:278) that Christianity in South Africa is remarkably diverse, hence, researchers find it rather difficult to capture a truly representative group. Despite this, Christianity seems to be the largest group in South Africa anyway, according to most, if not all, researchers on the topic. Kuperus (2011:284) illustrates in his research that the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), during Apartheid, largely influenced public policy in areas of education, public morality and welfare. Members of the NGK had meetings with government officials, or they served in governmental

statutory bodies and were able to push for policies beneficial to the Afrikaner agenda. It is thus no surprise that during apartheid, the NGK played a pivotal role in justifying and legitimising Apartheid through the State, promoting Afrikaner interests over structural democracy reform in the politics of the day. However, this voice, post-1994, has lost its credibility and no longer has the political platform to speak on socio-political issues to the ruling party.

Kuperus (2011) writes that the SACC represents about half of the Christians in South Africa, and it is primarily the voice that is used to speak against Apartheid. Thus, it is the Christian voice responsible for bringing a policy move from Apartheid to embrace democracy and freedom in South Africa. The SACC is today still taking a stance on many public policy issues, thus maintaining its role of being a critical and prophetic voice. It seeks to establish policies that will advocate for economic justice. This Christian body shows that its support is not for political parties, rather, its support is for the people, and this is apparent in its reduced support for the ANC, which was at its height during Apartheid. Today, however, it speaks against some of the less desirable actions perpetrated by the ANC Government and takes a critical stance on many public policy issues, related to the marginalised (Kuperus, 2011:291). Kuperus (2011:306) is of the opinion that for as long as South African churches, amongst which Christians form the majority, forge a politics of grace, their contributions will be received positively and will progressively contribute to the consolidation of democracy.

3.10 Religious Diversity: A Cause for Tension

The prevalence of religious diversity can sometimes lead to undue tension, especially in societies where different groups from different religions show contrasting and diverging beliefs, practices and values. Though religious diversity could create the ideal platform for enriching and promoting cultural understanding, tolerance and general consensus, even amongst those who approach and view things differently, it always has the potential to create challenges. According to Michaud, Carlisle and Smith (2009), low levels of political knowledge lead to low coherent world views. Hence, religious views and beliefs often influence cultural norms, behaviours and ways of thinking, which have a bearing on an individual's world view and may result in either high or low political

knowledge. Differences in these factors contribute negatively and may cause conflict and intolerance (Michaud *et al.*, 2009).

Marsh and Dallos (2000:23) postulate that religious diversity results in different emotions, where one group could view anger, as an example, as a sign of involvement and vulnerability, thus indicating the capacity of an individual to experience hurt in a relationship. Opposing values, resulting from religious diversity could yield an approach of restraint, self-control, thoughtfulness and consideration of the feelings of others. On the other hand, an individual with an anger outburst could see their actions as being true to themselves, not denying the expression of their feelings of dissatisfaction, being honest, being open and communicating their feelings clearly. There is thus a constant possibility that diverging beliefs, derived from diversity could in religion be the result of conflict and tension (Marsh & Dallos, 2000:23).

Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000:641) posit that the notion of religion would gradually disappear as a political force in modern societies; this notion could be debunked by the observance of many scholars, a renaissance of religious traditions virtually all over the world. Schools, charities and hospitals are run by, and in the name of, religious denominations. In Muslim countries, the *Sharia* is propagated to become public law. In India, Hindu nationalists are attempting to establish their creed as the religion of first choice. In the United States of America, Christians are propagating that the state should implement and disseminate “the eternal truth” as they would have it, and according to their understanding. These political resurgences by religious communities are often characterised by violent clashes and perpetual tension between the members of the different religions (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000:641).

The discussion above underscores that religious diversity, while offering opportunities for cultural enrichment, tolerance, and consensus-building, also presents inherent challenges that can influence governance and leadership. Divergent beliefs and practices affect individuals’ worldviews, decision-making, and political understanding, which, if not managed through ethical leadership and inclusive governance, can exacerbate tensions and conflict within public institutions. Recognising these dynamics is particularly relevant in the South African context, where religious plurality intersects with public-sector leadership and policy-making, highlighting the need for governance approaches that accommodate diverse faith perspectives while fostering cohesion and

ethical decision-making (Michaud, Carlisle and Smith, 2009; Marsh and Dallos, 2000; Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000).

3.11 Religion the Focus on National Healing

Levin (2025:109) postulates that though religion and healing represent separate dimensions of human experience, they are to be viewed as being in a close relationship with each other. Sometimes they could be competing, or they could be complementary, they could be working together, or they could be antagonistically aligned. However, that which is of greater importance, according to Levin (2025:109), is that the one matters to the other; what they represent is incomplete without one another.

According to Maton and Wells (1995), the impact of religion could be a resource for well-being, a pathway for healing inside congregations, as well as beyond the congregation into the community. The influence of religion in policy formulation could be important to families in terms of support, lifestyle values, community access, etc. The values derived from religion can provide unique and powerful interventions that could influence cognitions, emotions and behaviours. Furthermore, religion can be the catalyst for spiritual and moral guidance, where values, such as forgiveness, compassion and justice can be emphasised and entrenched in government policy. With these values in place, individuals and communities can be inspired to work together, creating a peaceful environment in which all can experience peace and harmony (Maton & Wells, 1995).

According to Bar-Siman-Tov (2004:4), the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation has emerged as a topic of significance in peace studies. It flows from the premise that there is a need to study the existing conditions where stability, after internal or international conflict, is required. Although conflict resolutions can be achieved, it does not automatically translate into peace and national healing. There could still be bitterness and other grievances that could lead to flare-ups of conflict and renewed violence. Hence, the importance of reconciliation, according to Bar-Siman-Tov (2004:4), cannot be overemphasised. It is a crucial factor in stabilising peace and healing after a resolution has been reached, in order to transform relations between former enemies. It is, therefore, important to realise that after a period of national crisis, characterised by turmoil and conflict, religion and religious convictions intertwined into policy and

governance practices, can be the indispensable tools utilised to offer new hope and a renewed sense of purpose for those impacted by the disharmony and animosity. The aforesaid notion found strong impetus in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) - a discussion on this will follow later. It is through religion that those who suffered, and those who perpetrated the suffering, can make sense of their experiences, pain, and find new ways to go forward with optimism for individual and national healing. Hence, according to Buehrens and Parker (2010), while politics focus on making the world a better place, it is a requirement of progressive religion to show how and why it will be beneficial to work for change that could translate into making the world a better place. Furthermore, the authors postulate that it is religion that binds individuals together into a resolute community to become connected to one another and to work together for a greater purpose than themselves. It becomes a covenant that is not merely an agreement between individuals and communities, but it becomes a shared human response to a sense of grace, interdependency and responsibility (Buehrens & Parker, 2010).

3.12 Religion and Policy Issues

Religion and policy issues often intersect in various ways, because, according to Pavolini, Béland and Jawad (2017:1), religion is a central and interlocked characteristic of life. Social policy debates, even in highly secularised societies, remain predominantly topics of discussion and include many different issues. These issues, among others, include education, family, health care, support for the poor, freedom of religion, abortion and reproductive rights, same-sex marriages, LGBTQ+, religious exemptions and discrimination, immigration and religious policies, refugee policies, public funding for religious institutions, *Sharia* law, as well as religious law. Pavolini *et al.* (2017:1) postulate that even though many researchers have written about the connection between religion and social policy, the literature remains extensively fragmented. However, the discussion arising from religious and policy issues highlights that religion can have an influence on policymaking, and this carries the potential of tension between religious freedoms and secular rights, individual freedoms and government responsibilities.

The nexus between religion and social policy remains a complex subject, intrinsically involving the political party level, FBOs and individuals. On the political party level, focus is mostly on answering the questions around religious inspirations and their role in fostering welfare reforms. The researchers looked into understanding the existence or absence of the types of relationships between religion, the advancements of the modern world, and the rise of the welfare state. Furthermore, the authors wanted to understand why in certain countries, political parties with specific religious convictions came to prominence, while in other countries, similar views seem not to have the same impact. Pavolini *et al.* (2017:2-3), on the faith-based level, interrogated the question around the involvement of faith-based or religiously-affiliated organizations that could run welfare programs in tandem with what took place in the rise of welfare states. The authors looked into understanding the extent to which welfare provision translates into the wielding of power and social legitimation for the organizations themselves and the religious organizations they represent. In addition, the question arose about what type of provision is channelled through faith-based/religious organisations and how relevant it is in the overall welfare state delivery system (Pavolini *et al.*, 2017:3).

Pavolini *et al.* (2017:3) argue that on the individual level, individuals are often guided in their thinking and their actions by the values they subscribe to. Furthermore, the authors are of the opinion that there is a nexus between religion and social policy when it comes to the individual level. They highlight that there is a strong association between individual religious beliefs and behaviours in the ambit of politics.

Fox (2018:9) elaborates further on Pavolini *et al.*'s disposition and states that the literature around the topic of religion and policy remains extensively balkanised and suggests that religion's influences on politics and policy matters must be divided into neat, well-defined categories that can be discussed individually. Furthermore, Fox (2018) postulates that though fragmented, the reality is more complex, as the borders of these categories blend and overlap, requiring a meticulous interrogation to understand the complexities and the interrelatedness. It should thus be the aim of the researcher not to shy away from the complexities, rather, the aim should be to simplify the complexities into compositions that are more manageable and understandable. It is important to understand that different societies across the world balance these policy and religious factors uniquely and distinctly, which results in varying policies across the world.

3.13 The Balance Between Public and Private Faith

Thiemann (1996:2), in his book “Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy,” grapples with answering the questions of what role religion and what role religiously-based moral convictions play in public life. The author wanted to understand whether pluralistic democracy leaves any room for religious beliefs. While interrogating these questions, Guggenberger and Hrudayaraj (2022:7) reported that the state of global democracy, according to the Annual Index, showed a reduction in score to 5.28 from 5.37 in 2020. The authors postulate that 6.4% of the world’s population lives in full democracies, while 37.1% - more than a third of the world’s population - live under authoritarian rule. Large numbers of people are showing resentment as a result of growing inequalities, propelled by neo-liberal free-market mechanisms and hyper-nationalist movements across the globe.

Guggenberger and Hrudayaraj (2022:7) state that modern secular states require a total separation of state and religion, because of the complexity found between religion and democracy. The writers are of the opinion that religion is responsible for existing contemporary problems, such as terrorism, xenophobia, ethnic conflicts, religious fundamentalism, etc. Guggenberger and Hrudayaraj (2022:7) put forward that religion could hinder democratic development in pluralistic societies, where voting, for example, could take place along ethnic lines and where strong ethnic, religious, or tribal identities can compete with a shared national identity. Also, democratic development could be hindered by religious majoritarianism, where majority tyranny might be created.

In order to reach a balance between public and personal or private faith, democracy should not be approached as something that is built on a specific culture or religious background. Instead, it should be viewed from a perspective of reason and tolerance, an attitude that values the diverse religious beliefs of others (Guggenberger & Hrudayaraj, 2022:9).

Palaver in Guggenberger and Hrudayaraj (2022:34) postulate that the place of religion in promoting democratic developments cannot be overemphasised. However, the authors opined furthermore that there is always the potential that it can stifle and extinguish the spirit of democracy and create hatred and enmity. Palaver in Guggenberger and Hrudayaraj (2022:35) goes on to explain that spirituality on a personal level requires the ability of the individual to master the art of distancing oneself

from self, from dogmatism, intolerance and violence within the public orbit. These attitudes and emotions are largely encouraged by enthusiastic convictions, therefore, these convictions can be softened by the individual distancing themselves from self, as proposed by the writer. In this manner, one can see its profound linkage to the value of tolerance, because it encourages receptiveness to the different ways in which the “truth” is mirrored and portrayed in all things.

3.14 Public Leaders, Civil Servants, Political Office Bearers and Religion

Maluleke (2008) argues that historical, cultural and ideological factors have, from all times, undoubtedly influenced the complex relationship and delicate balance required between public leadership, service and religion. The many religious traditions characterised by their different leadership ideologies emphasise the need for service, moral integrity and compassion, on the part of those who profess to be leaders. These factors form part of the values that should inspire political office bearers to act in the best interest of their communities. It is clear that public leaders, servants and religion intersect in many ways and therefore reflect diverse perspectives pertaining to governance, morality, ethics and the well-being of society.

Slack, Narayan, Singh and Sharma (2020:1) state that public leaders are elected individuals, who hold a position of authority in government for the benefit of the society they represent. Furthermore, leadership is that which influences processes, and it is foundational to an organisation’s ability to adapt to the ever-changing local and global environmental conditions rapidly and continuously. Leadership is, consequently, a critical factor in the success of an organisation. However, present-day leadership leaves not much to be desired and this has led to a general degradation of confidence in the decision-making by leaders that has left society, in the South African context, in dire poverty and joblessness (Slack *et al.*, 2020:1). Though there is this idea that leaders should be servants of the public, unfortunately, modern-day leaders have become self-serving and there is now a growing concern to find leaders, who could be influenced by their own religious principles, characteristics and high morals obtained from their own religions and sets of beliefs. Servant leadership largely draws from religious ideas where the role of a leader is seen as a duty to serve, to demonstrate humility, and to prioritise the welfare of others. Slack *et al.* (2020:1-2) concur with this notion and state that

effective leadership is based on self-sacrificing motives where leaders deflect from self-preservation to servanthood to their followers.

The present-day business environment is characterised by tempestuous contention and unpredictability that results in high work demands, which unavoidably leads to anxiety, workplace stress and pressure, which culminates in poor job performance. Hence, Dhawan and Sachdeva (2023:b544) posit that there is an earnest desire and demand for moral and ethical leaders, who can captivate and mobilise employees in the workplace to address these concerns. High morals and ethical individuals are largely products of spiritual leadership. Thus, spirit-centered leadership, unlike traditional leadership approaches, is focused on making a meaningful difference by promoting sustainability. It harnesses corporate social responsibility to create value, foster a healthier work environment, and encourage greater individual participation. Dhawan and Sachdeva (2023:b544) put forward that many research studies have concluded that there is a distinct nexus between spiritual leadership and increased spirituality in the workplace. The authors distinguish workplace spirituality from general spirituality, noting that the former emphasises moral and ethical conduct, intended to promote employees' spiritual and personal well-being.

A framework of organisational value becomes evident, and the culture established from these values promotes employee interpersonal experience, which transcends individualism and becomes part of the work process and employee relations. This state within the workplace gets radiated throughout relationships and fosters a feeling of completeness and joy amongst employees (Dhawan & Sachdeva, 2023:b545).

According to Ghaedi, Sohrabi, & Ebrahimi (2021:340), spiritual leadership, translated into the workplace, is a new concept in management literature. This new development has been identified by researchers as an answer to and will provide new meaning and purpose for employees within the workplace. According to Ghaedi *et al.* (2021:340), this development integrates faith, hope, vision and selfless love within employees, fostering motivation and harmony between staff and employers. Information gathered for answering the question of whether public leaders, civil servants and political office bearers subscribe to any form of religion, yields no direct answers. Workplace information, shaping employee behaviour, suggests that spiritual leadership rooted in religion may help mediate workplace pressures and promote spirituality, thereby fostering a healthy and productive environment (Ghaedi *et al.*, 2021:349-350).

3.15 Interplay of Religion and Organisation Culture

Religion in organisations has a significant role to play and can manifest in many different ways, depending on the nature of the organisation, its leadership, the industry, and the context within which it operates. Religion has the potential to form organisational practices and culture in apparent and obscure ways. It goes without saying that organisational culture is an important element in how an organisation functions. Hence, according to Mazur's (2015) opinion, religion is more than just a determinant of cultural norms, values and rules of individuals and the communities they come from. The author postulates that it is also an important formative influence on the business field in which an organisation is involved. Thus, Mazur (2015) put forward that those cultural qualities found in the organisational environment are derived from sources of value intrinsic to the organisation's existing and developing culture.

According to Mazur (2015), culture is a collective mind programming that is a distinguishing factor that separates one group from another and one individual from another. The sources of value that separate these groups include factors, such as regional culture, national culture, religious culture, and personal characteristics of members of an organisation, which are shaped by the culture inherent to the individual. The organisational culture is affected by the cultural environment, of which religion plays an important part. The notion that religion is important within an organisation stem from, according to Mazur (2019), circles of followers of individual religions that get passed on from generation to generation, penetrating the collective consciousness of the individuals within the organisation. Furthermore, Mazur (2015) states that there is a nexus between religion and the attitudes within the workplace. These attitudes include factors, such as commitment to work, satisfaction within the workplace, and degrees of personal motivation. However, despite Mazur's findings, the intersection between the organisation and religion has not been explored in a more meaningful and determined way, according to Tracy (2012:87).

3.16 Society Involvement

Individual beliefs and cultural norms are products of a complex dynamic between society, religion and the workplace. There are common denominators when it comes to religion, faith, spirituality and belief systems. It is subjective and personal to the

individual or a particular society. The intersection between religion and the workplace is not just the personal part of it, it also includes societal expectations and legal frameworks (Henrico, 2012:504). The connection between society and religion in the workplace can be seen in several dimensions:

3.16.1 Religious Diversity in the Workplace

- Increased diversity in the workplace as received from society applying for jobs.

3.16.2 Inclusive Policies

- Accommodating religious diversity, which is a reality of society at large.

3.16.3 Religious Celebrations and Holidays

- Structuring of work schedules around religious holidays, which is inclusive of all communities in society.

Henrico (2012:574-575) states that South Africa is a multicultural and pluralistic society, representative of secular and religious interests. Therefore, there is a real need to embrace the toleration of all cultures as a means to draw civil society closer together, while extending it into the workplace. In order to achieve substantive equality, it is crucial to afford all role-players a participatory role to attain an equilibrate state within the society. However, Henrico (2012:587) opines that there will always be opposing sides when it comes to issues of opinion, beliefs and religion. The differences that exist are no reason for division, instead, what should matter is that the differences are dealt with in a manner that encourages harmony and peace, where all cultures co-exist in the greater society, and importantly, extending it into the workplace.

3.17 Collaboration for Combatting Corruption

In the recent State of the Nation Address (SONA), the State President, Cyril Ramaphosa, said:

“Corruption is a crime against the South African people and robs our people of resources that should have been used to improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society” (Ramaphosa, 2025).

Mubangizi (2020) postulates that South Africans are sick and tired of corruption; their frustration and anger have turned into despondency and dejection. South Africa has

sufficient legal instruments to deal with this problem of corruption, writes Mubangizi (2020). Despite there being no direct mention of the word 'corruption' in the Constitution, there are ample provisions that directly or indirectly have a bearing on corruption. According to Mubangizi, the main anti-corruption statute is the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 (PCCA), which is very comprehensive and effectively creates the general offence of corruption and offences, pertaining to activities relating to public officers, members of the legislative authority, judicial officers, and the prosecuting authority fraternity. In addition, there is also the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 26 of 2001, and other relevant legislation. Mubangizi postulates that there are indeed sufficient laws in place to address corruption, thus, the problem of corruption is not a lack of laws, but the problem is elsewhere. The author places the problem of corruption squarely at the door of politics and argues that when corruption appears at all levels of a political system, and the actions are taking place repeatedly, and seem to be part of the procedures and general actions, one can deduce that corruption has become systemic.

In the SONA, the State President said that the Government has already started to take decisive action to address the corruption problem. However, Mubangizi (2020), in his article on corruption in South Africa, is not entirely convinced, because he states that in many cases concerning corruption, there is always a high-up ranking government official or political figure involved. This leaves the question, are the real culprits being identified and prosecuted and called to account - the politicians in high places? According to the author, only then will the true occurrence of corruption be addressed and hopefully eradicated.

Stemming out corruption requires, according to Mubangizi (2020), a collaborative effort on the part of everyone affected. The society has a role to play, law enforcement agencies need to be doing their part without fear or favour, and the judges, on behalf of the judiciary, need to see to it that anti-corruption laws are effective and indeed combat crimes. However, the role of society cannot be overemphasised; society has a critical role to play, because they are aware of corrupt people, corrupt practices, and need to take part in eradicating the scourge of corruption.

Government, according to the President of South Africa, is doing its part through the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), Investigating Directorate (ID), prosecuting state capture and other corruption cases. At the presentation of SONA 2025, the ID has

already enrolled over 34 corruption cases and charged 202 individuals and 65 entities. The President was optimistic in his SONA 2025 address that the tide is turning, because there is:

- More than 1300 corruption convictions in a time span of four years, according to the President's report, which included 500 government officials.
- 14.18 billion rands in assets were frozen, pending corruption cases.
- Punitive reparation paid by a company for its part in corruption to South Africa in the amount of 2.5 billion rand.

According to Scharbatke-Church (2016), corruption in its very nature is complex, contradictory and dynamic. Corruption is hidden and yet widely acknowledged, beneficial to some, yet on the other hand, harmful. A victim could be a perpetrator today and tomorrow, on the flipside, be a beneficiary. The poor are negatively affected as basic services are not provided. The international community has pledged to assist by making corruption a global priority. However, the significant investment by international donors, who are also part of the collaborative efforts to combat corruption through development assistance is not consistently of high quality. According to Scharbatke-Church (2016), there is alarming research, suggesting that there are some anti-corruption efforts that actually increase corruption, which is something of great concern.

3.18 Current Approaches to Understanding Corruption

Scharbatke-Church (2016) identifies principal-agent and collective-action as theoretical models that can be used in the fight against corruption. The principal-agent model explains the breakdown of the relationship between the principal and the agent, where the relationship suffers, due to decisions made by the agent on behalf of the principal. The interests between the two parties are no longer aligned, as the agent could have more information than the principal, limiting the control of the principal over the action of the agent. The agent starts pursuing personal interests, leading to corrupt activities where the public good suffers.

According to Scharbatke-Church (2016), the effectiveness of the collective action approach is dependent on the notion that the non-corrupt behaviour is in the interest of the group. The author states that people partake in corrupt actions and activities,

believing that others are doing it, and if they refrain from being involved in corruption, they will be missing the benefits of corruption.

3.19 The Place of Accountability

Heyns (2009) postulates that corruption is present essentially, where someone abuses the power given to them. To counter this, the human rights framework is a tool that primarily monitors how this power should be used. Countries with a high level of corruption are generally characterised by a poor human rights record. It thus becomes apparent that the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) could be a tool that can be utilised to fight against the prevalence of corruption.

Accountability, according to de Man (2022), is one of the foundational principles of the HRBA. The principle of accountability assists the protagonists of human rights to call the Government to account where legally bound human rights obligations are violated, due to poor delivery of services and widespread corruption (de Man, 2022). An important question to ask in this context is, how the principle of accountability can be used to fight corruption, and secondly, can the HRBA yield the desired outcome, namely the combating of corruption?

According to de Man (2022), corruption is generally viewed as a crime against the State. However, the statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the SONA seems to broaden this notion by de Man (2022). In the SONA, the President stated that “corruption is more than just a crime against the state”, in his words, “corruption is a crime against the poor and marginalised South Africans”, thus including society in the notion of who corruption perpetrates crime against.

In combating corruption, de Man (2022) postulates that the HRBA could provide a regulatory lens that can serve to analyse how legally recognised human rights, and their matching obligations, are impacted by corruption. The HRBA, having accountability as one of its core principles, will provide a tangible expression to human rights principles. Because corruption violates important human rights, such as transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, etc., using the HRBA places corruption right in the periphery of the international human rights framework, helping to call those responsible for corrupt activities, to account.

When it comes to accountability, those who have the duty to account have the obligation to protect the rights of the rights-holders against violators. This is achieved through their own conduct or that of other parties, either tacitly or explicitly. The State is obliged in cases of violations to lodge investigations into the allegations, and if the State is the violator, it must justify its actions under international human rights law (de Man, 2022). It is important to note that when it comes to accountability, there needs to be effective and equally accessible remedies in place as remedies for victims of corruption and for those who must be called to be accountable for their actions.

Accountability lies at the heart of good governance and is a cornerstone of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) (Heyns, 2009; de Man, 2022). Corruption is not just a violation of the state's rules—it harms ordinary people, particularly the poor and marginalised, eroding trust in public institutions and undermining service delivery. By applying the HRBA, accountability becomes more than a formal principle; it is a practical tool that ensures public officials and institutions take responsibility for their actions and uphold citizens' rights. When leaders act ethically, guided by accountability and human rights, they strengthen governance, restore public trust, and create a foundation where religion, moral values, and leadership together can help consolidate integrity and effective governance in South Africa's public sector (de Man, 2022).

3.20 Responsiveness for Good Governance

If the Government does not deliver goods and services, or if the Government does not deliver the correct, needed goods and services, it will lead to dissatisfaction on the part of the communities expecting the services. To gauge good governance, Mahajan (2021) states that there needs to be a voice and accountability. Furthermore, good governance requires political stability and a general absence of violence. The Government needs to focus on executing its governance role in an effective manner. Regulatory quality needs to be enhanced to ensure that there are sound guidelines for governance purposes. The rule of law is paramount because the State does not have time to waste on issues stemming from ignorance and defiance of the rule of law. Stringent measures must be implemented to ensure proper controls that combat corruption effectively.

The effectiveness achieved by the Government is important if it wants to report its activities as good governance, and this is achieved through voice and accountability.

When the communities receive what they need from the Government, it means that the Government is listening to the people, and it can be said that the Government is responsive to the needs of the people. However, as much as the Government wants to be responsive, it cannot listen to every voice, as this might lead to a situation where it may not be in consonance with the rule of law. Responsiveness, thus, should be approached in a holistic way by incorporating factors of peace and justice, which relate to having a transparent, accountable, and participatory community (Mahajan, n.d.:197).

Mahajan (2021) highlights the following as ways in which the administration can become more responsive: institutionalising responsiveness systems, establishing new collaborative and participatory mechanisms of responsiveness, utilising the digital footprint, encouraging diversity, employing a rights-based approach, fostering and growing public engagement, establishing regulatory frameworks like the code of ethics, encouraging the use of technology and innovation, building public service accessibility, and ensuring accessible and easy-to-understand rules and laws.

3.21 Unifying Elements of Religion

3.21.1 Respect for Diversity

Unifying elements in an organisation can help foster an inclusive, respectful and harmonious work environment for individuals from different religious backgrounds. This is not a call for employees to adopt specific religious practices. Instead, it involves employees focusing on behaviours and values that will promote cooperation, understanding and mutual respect (RSA, 2025).

Syed *et al.* (2018:2) postulate that organisations have awakened to the value and reality of religious and cultural diversity in the workplace and have incorporated religious equality and diversity into their core values. By accommodating religion in the workplace, intellectual beliefs are encouraged, while a spiritually oriented workplace creates a reconciliatory and more accepting approach towards demographics and ideological differences (Syed *et al.*, 2018:3).

3.21.2 Shared Ethical Values

Anon (2024), in an article on “What is ethical governance and how to implement its principles”, highlights that for an organisation to have ethical governance in place and

to be regarded as taking just and fair decisions, the organisation needs to have clear procedures, streamlined processes, a clear stance on embracing diverse cultures, and morally sound values. In addition, there must be fair conduct of elections, representation and participation, objectiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, openness and transparency, rule of law, ethical conduct, competence and capacity-building, innovation and openness to change, sound financial management, human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion, as well as accountability.

Anon (2024) adds to the list above that these values from a governance point of view should include integrity, fairness, ethical leadership, honesty, mutual understanding on teamwork, kindness and loyalty. Furthermore, these values should clearly depict religious influences, highlighting once again the potential value religion can bring to the workplace. According to Anon (2024), the importance of ethical governance cannot be underplayed, because it has a bearing on the organisation's success, its reputation, the loyalty of its patrons and the retention of its employees. At times, governance decision-making enters grey areas where right and wrong become blurred and obscured, hence the requirement for a set of key values and principles for ethical business conduct (Anon, 2024).

3.21.3 Social Justice

Mollenkamp (2025) describes social justice as the equitable division of resources, work and development opportunities, as well as privileges within society. Religious tradition fundamentally teaches about helping the less fortunate and working towards a just society. Hence, the emphasis on fairness in how society divides its social resources. According to the UN, social justice in a broad sense encompasses social justice as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits yielded by a country's economic growth. Anon (2024) in the blog, San Diego Foundation, in answering the question, "what is social justice", states that there are many definitions, however, these many definitions have particular commonalities, namely, equal rights, equal opportunities and equal treatment. Thus, social justice, according to Anon (2024), means equal rights and equitable opportunities for all. These, however, are not all the unifying elements; there are elements pertaining to peace and conflict resolutions, promoting common good, interfaith dialogue and cooperation, leadership and accountability, etc. By highlighting and fostering these unifying elements, governance can be positively impacted by

religious principles and, in doing so, build a just, equitable and peaceful workplace and society (Anon, 2024).

According to Syed *et al.* (2017) these unifying elements that includes respect for diversity, shared ethical values, and social justice, demonstrate how integrating religious principles into leadership and governance can foster ethical, inclusive, and accountable public institutions, ultimately enhance effective service delivery and consolidate good governance in South Africa.

3.22 Conclusion

This chapter's focus was on the research methodology used in this study, which examined the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in the South African public sector. It covers the research design and data collection methods, which in this study was a desktop research approach that had as its focus secondary data collection and limitations of the study. The desktop search relied on secondary data sources, such as academic articles, government documents, policy reports, and other publicly available materials on the Internet to explore and provide an in-depth understanding of how religion and religious beliefs, including practices, can influence governance and leadership within the public sector in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to explore the role of religion in leadership, governance, and service delivery in South Africa. Given the study's focus on existing knowledge, a qualitative desktop research approach was adopted, relying on the systematic analysis of literature, case studies, policy documents, and reports. The chapter explains the research paradigm, design, approach, data sources, collection, and analysis procedures, as well as measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, ethical rigor, and acknowledgment of limitations.

4.1.1 Research Paradigm

This study is situated within a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena from the perspectives and contexts in which they occur. As Terreblanche and Durrheim (2010) highlight, interpretivist approaches are well-suited to exploring meaning, context, and subjective experiences in South African social and organizational settings. This paradigm aligns with the study's inductive approach, allowing insights to emerge from documents and literature rather than testing predetermined hypotheses. It also accommodates a normative and ethical dimension, recognizing the role of religion in shaping moral reasoning and leadership behaviour, while remaining consistent with South Africa's secular constitutional framework.

4.1.2 Justification for Qualitative Desktop Research

A qualitative desktop research approach was selected for this study because it is particularly well-suited to exploring complex, context-dependent phenomena, such as the influence of religion on leadership, governance, and service delivery. This approach allows the researcher to draw rich insights from existing literature, case studies, policy documents, and reports without the need for direct participant data collection. By focusing on secondary sources, the study can analyse patterns, ethical principles, and leadership behaviours across different contexts and time periods, providing both depth and breadth in understanding.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis enables the interpretation of meanings, relationships, and themes embedded within the documents, which is crucial for examining how religious values inform governance practices while remaining aligned with constitutional principles. Given the sensitive nature of religion and public governance, this approach also ensures that the research is ethically responsible, methodologically rigorous, and capable of generating actionable insights for policy and practice.

Therefore, the focus of this chapter was to present and discuss the primary findings from the desktop research, which sought to investigate and provide scientific answers regarding the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in the context of the South African public sector. Authors such as Manyonganise and Mhuru (2022), writing from an African perspective, argue that religion is not only a personal or private matter but also continues to define leadership legitimacy, inspire governance models, and influence political processes across the African continent.

This study employed a desktop research methodology, focusing on the analysis of existing literature, case studies, policy documents, reports, and other secondary sources. No primary data was collected; instead, the research relied on systematic document analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the role of religion in leadership, governance, and service delivery. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the subject by synthesizing local and international perspectives, policy frameworks, and documented experiences. The methodology provides a rigorous and transparent framework for drawing conclusions while remaining consistent with academic standards for secondary research.

Thus, the secondary sources, including policy documents, scholarly journal articles, official reports, and other literature, highlight the influence of religious values, religious and other institutions, and leaders in shaping governance and ethical leadership in the South African public sector. The findings are presented thematically, addressing the main research questions and aligning with the research objectives. The main research questions this research set out to answer were the following:

- How does religion interplay with politics, leadership, and governance in the public service?

- What are the lessons to be drawn from other countries' cases where religion influenced government officials' conduct when carrying out their constitutional mandate?
- What is the relationship, if any, between religion and politics, with specific reference to governance and service delivery?
- What measures could be taken to successfully integrate religion into governance and service delivery?

In addition to the main research questions, this research also aimed to achieve the following research objectives:

- To assess whether public leaders, civil servants, and political office bearers subscribe to any form of religion.
- To assess whether the successes of other countries that have incorporated religious influences in their operations can be successfully duplicated for South Africa.
- To assess if politics and religion can be synthesised in an effort to effect good governance and effective service delivery.
- To assess if the available measures reflect any religious principles and how best to approach incorporating them to attain good governance and effective service delivery.

4.1.3 Universe of Documents Analysed

The universe of documents analysed in this study comprised all relevant secondary sources that addressed the role of religion in leadership, governance, and public service delivery. This included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, theses, government policy documents, reports from faith-based organizations, and international and local case studies. Sources were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency, and included both South African and international perspectives to enable comparative analysis. Outdated, non-academic, or unreliable sources were excluded. This defined universe provided a structured and comprehensive body of evidence from which themes and insights were drawn.

4.2 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative desktop research design, which is suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, such as the role of religion in leadership and governance. The design enabled the systematic collection and analysis of secondary data from multiple sources, allowing patterns, trends, and ethical insights to emerge without direct interaction with participants. A qualitative approach was chosen because it emphasizes understanding meanings, contexts, and relationships, which are central to assessing how religious values influence governance and service delivery.

This method enabled the identification of recurring patterns, relationships, and themes within policy documents, scholarly articles, reports, and other textual sources, highlighting how religious values, institutions, and practices intersect with leadership and governance in the South African public sector.

This research was exploratory in nature, and its aim was to find themes, trends, and insights on how religion could influence governance and leadership. The use of secondary data provided a broader understanding of the topic and highlighted an array of perspectives and approaches, without being hampered by the constraints of primary data collection. Furthermore, in this study, qualitative content analysis was used to make sense of a wide range of textual material, including policy documents, leadership speeches, religious statements, and academic literature. The method enabled the careful identification of recurring themes, such as moral integrity, accountability, and social cohesion, and showed how religious values influence leadership behaviour and governance practices. By examining both what was explicitly stated and the underlying values and assumptions, the analysis provided a nuanced understanding of religion's role in shaping ethical decision-making, guiding public sector leadership, and reinforcing governance in South Africa.

4.3 Research Approach

This study adopted an inductive and exploratory approach, enabling insights to emerge directly from the evidence presented in existing documents. This approach allowed for the careful identification of recurring themes and patterns in leadership behaviour, ethical decision-making, and policy frameworks shaped by religious values. By examining both local and international case studies, the study drew meaningful

comparisons, extracted lessons, and considered practical implications for governance and service delivery within the South African public sector.

4.4 Data Collection Procedures

The study identified and gathered relevant documents through systematic searches of online databases, institutional repositories, and official government websites. Searches were guided by carefully selected keywords, including “religion and governance,” “faith-based leadership,” and “public sector ethics,” to ensure that the materials were directly relevant to the research focus. Only sources that addressed leadership ethics, governance practices, and the role of religion in public service were included, while outdated, non-academic, or unreliable materials were excluded. All selected documents were meticulously catalogued and organized, providing a structured foundation for subsequent analysis and synthesis of insights.

4.5 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic content analysis to systematically examine and interpret the collected documents, enabling patterns, themes, and insights to emerge in relation to the research objectives. The analysis began with a careful and iterative reading of each text, during which recurring ethical principles, leadership behaviours, and governance practices influenced by religion were identified and coded. These codes were then organized into broader thematic categories directly aligned with the research questions, including ethical leadership, service delivery, and the complex interplay between religion and politics.

Once the themes were established, the findings were synthesized to highlight both the positive and negative influences of religion on governance, while critically linking these insights to South Africa’s constitutional framework and secular governance principles. This approach ensured that the analysis was systematic, transparent, and rigorous, while remaining sensitive to the nuances and contexts embedded in the source materials. By focusing on meaning, context, and relationships, the method allowed for a rich, interpretive understanding of how religious values inform leadership and service delivery in the public sector.

To ensure transparency and consistency in the analysis, a codebook was developed. The codebook provided a structured framework for categorising data into key themes, such as moral integrity, accountability, social cohesion, religious motivation, leadership influence, and governance impact. Each code included clear definitions, indicators, and examples to guide the coding process, allowing both explicit statements and underlying values to be captured. By applying this codebook, the study was able to critically interpret how religion shapes ethical decision-making, informs leadership behaviour, and consolidates governance, while also identifying tensions, contradictions, and practical implications for public sector leadership.

4.6 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was employed to systematically analyse the collected documents and extract patterns, themes, and insights regarding the role of religion in leadership, governance, and service delivery. The analysis began with careful reading and coding of texts, guided by predefined and emergent codes that reflected the study's objectives and research questions. These codes included Moral Integrity, Accountability, Social Cohesion/Community Building, Religious Motivation/Values, Conflict Resolution/Peacebuilding, Leadership Influence, Policy and Governance Impact, Diversity/Pluralism, Ethical Decision-Making, and Challenges/Contradictions. Each code captured key concepts, behaviours, or instances of religious influence within governance contexts.

Once coded, the data were grouped into broader thematic categories, allowing recurring patterns and relationships to emerge. Themes were then analysed and interpreted to identify both the positive contributions and the potential challenges of religion in governance, including its ethical, social, and policy-related impacts. The findings were synthesized into a coherent narrative that links insights to South Africa's constitutional framework, ensuring that analysis is systematic, transparent, and aligned with the study's research objectives.

4.7 Codebook: Religion, Leadership, and Governance in South Africa

Purpose: To categorise and analyse textual data to explore how religion influences leadership ethics, decision-making, and governance in the public sector.

The table outlines key thematic codes used to analyse how religion influences leadership and governance. Each code defines a specific dimension (e.g., integrity, accountability, cohesion), lists common keywords, gives an illustrative example, and notes what to look for in the data, whether explicit references, implicit reasoning, practical actions, or tensions. Together, the codes help systematically identify both the positive contributions of religion and the challenges or contradictions it creates in public-sector leadership, especially within South Africa's diverse, multi-faith context.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), the coding process involves systematically reviewing qualitative data and assigning labels or codes to sections of text that represent recurring ideas or meanings. The data are read closely to identify significant statements, which are then grouped under clearly defined codes based on keywords, context, and implied meaning. As analysis progresses, codes are compared, refined, and clustered into broader themes, allowing raw narrative data to be transformed into structured and meaningful findings aligned with the research questions

The coding book shows that religion mainly influences leaders on a personal, values level. It shapes integrity, accountability, ethical choices, and a sense of service, and can also support social cohesion and peacebuilding. However, this influence is usually informal and individual, not built into policies or institutions. In South Africa's multi-faith context, leaders often have to balance their religious values with constitutional and inclusive governance, which can create tension between belief and practice. These findings are discussed in greater detail and analysed comprehensively in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1: Coding Book

Code	Definition	Indicators / Keywords	Example Text	Notes
Moral Integrity	References to ethical conduct, honesty, and adherence to moral principles in leadership	honesty, integrity, ethical leadership, righteousness, moral guidance	“Leaders must act with integrity guided by faith-based principles.”	Look for both explicit mentions and inferred moral reasoning
Accountability	Statements reflecting responsibility, answerability, and transparency in decision-making	accountability, responsibility, transparency, reporting, consequences	“Officials must answer to the public and uphold their moral obligations.”	Include both procedural and ethical accountability
Social Cohesion / Community Building	References to unity, social harmony, and collective welfare are influenced by religious values	unity, community, fellowship, collective wellbeing, solidarity	“Faith encourages leaders to consider the welfare of all community members.”	Capture both religious and societal framing
Religious Motivation / Values	Instances where religious beliefs or teachings inform leadership or governance actions	faith, God, moral principles, commandments, spiritual guidance	“Decisions should reflect biblical teachings on justice and fairness.”	Include implicit ethical guidance drawn from religion

Code	Definition	Indicators / Keywords	Example Text	Notes
Conflict Resolution / Peacebuilding	Descriptions of religion as a tool for resolving disputes or managing social/political tensions	reconciliation, mediation, peace, conflict management, harmony	“Faith-based approaches can help mediate disputes between parties.”	Look for links to governance or leadership actions
Leadership Influence	References to how religion shapes leaders’ behaviours, decisions, or policies	ethical leadership, servant leadership, moral compass, guidance	“Religious teachings shape leaders’ approach to service delivery.”	Includes individual and organisational leadership
Policy and Governance Impact	Mentions of religion influencing governance structures, policies, or institutional practices	policy, governance, public sector, service delivery, legislation	“Religious values inform ethical frameworks in government decision-making.”	Include both formal policy and informal guidance
Diversity / Pluralism	References to multiple religious perspectives or the need to balance diverse faiths in leadership	pluralism, inclusivity, tolerance, multiple faiths, diversity	“Leaders must respect the beliefs of all communities.”	Important for South Africa’s multi-faith context

Code	Definition	Indicators / Keywords	Example Text	Notes
Ethical Decision-Making	Descriptions of religion guiding moral choices in leadership	ethical choices, moral reasoning, decision-making, principles	“Faith informs leaders’ choices in managing scarce resources.”	Overlaps with moral integrity but focuses on action/decisions
Challenges / Contradictions	References to tension between religious values and governance realities	conflict, paradox, tension, secularism vs religion, misalignment	“While leaders invoke religious rhetoric, policies often remain secular.”	Capture discrepancies or

4.8 Trustworthiness and Rigor

Although this study did not involve primary data collection, establishing trustworthiness and rigor remained essential to ensure the credibility of findings. Several strategies were applied to maintain rigor. First, triangulation of sources was employed by consulting a diverse range of academic literature, policy documents, case studies, and reports from both local and international contexts. Second, sources were critically evaluated for reliability, relevance, and credibility, ensuring that conclusions were based on robust evidence. Third, systematic coding and thematic analysis were used to maintain consistency in identifying patterns and themes across multiple documents. These measures collectively enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, ensuring that the study provides a trustworthy account of the role of religion in leadership and governance.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations remained paramount throughout the process, despite the study using secondary data. Ethical considerations were adhered to, especially so, because published material was used and, for that reason, required proper acknowledgement through referencing.

All the applied data sources, including articles, books, reports, and other documented data, were appropriately cited to acknowledge the authors of the original work and to avoid plagiarism, while upholding academic integrity. Objectivity was paramount throughout the research process and was not influenced by personal beliefs and or biases, while critically assessing every source. This study used publicly available data; therefore, there were no concerns about participant confidentiality. All information from the sources was handled responsibly. This study relied solely on desktop research; hence, secondary sources, including government reports and credible media, were consulted. It is safe to say that no human involvement was involved in data collection. Given the sensitive nature of the topics, namely religion and governance, care was taken to represent all perspectives fairly and respectfully. The study was conducted in accordance with the University of the Free State's ethical research guidelines.

4.10 Limitations of the Study

This study produced valuable insights into the role of religion in leadership and governance in the South African public sector, but several limitations were identified and still exist.

Because the study relied on secondary data, its scope was significantly constrained. The use of primary data could have provided lived experiences and first-hand information.

There was, however, the possibility that some documents from media reports and government publications could have affected the research's findings. However, care was taken to critically analyse all the collected data sources. There may have been a lack of contextual depth, as a desktop search might not have fully captured the influence of the relationship between religion and governance and how it links to leadership. A lack of personal experience with informal interactions among these factors might not have been adequately captured by a desktop search alone.

The research's focus was primarily on establishing an understanding of the data collected, focusing on the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in the South African public sector. The qualitative research method was used in conjunction with a thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes from different secondary sources. The study adhered to ethical considerations and outlined the limitations identified by the researcher, who acknowledged that they were real and had bearing on the final result. This chapter sought to provide a clear structure for desktop research and to offer a transparent approach to data collection and analysis, including its ethical considerations. The researcher used secondary sources and conducted an in-depth, critical analysis of the data to ensure the study is comprehensive and well-supported by the existing literature. The next chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, TIMESCALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis of findings from qualitative data collection on the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in South Africa's public sector. It further draws conclusions from empirical and theoretical analyses, proposes recommendations for policy and practice, and outlines suggested implementation timescales aligned with the research questions and objectives.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Religious Ethics as a Catalyst for Ethical Leadership

The qualitative content analysis indicates that religious ethics primarily function as a personal moral catalyst influencing ethical leadership in the public sector. Consistent with Hanson's (2004) view of religion as inherently particularistic, the findings show that many public sector leaders draw on specific religious traditions to shape moral integrity, accountability, and ethical decision-making. These influences were evident across the themes of religious motivation, leadership influence, and ethical conduct, where religion provided leaders with moral reference points for navigating complex governance contexts.

However, the analysis also reveals a key tension relevant to this study's research objectives. While religious ethics may strengthen individual moral awareness, their particularistic application can challenge the constitutional principles of neutrality, equality, and pluralism in public governance. Themes related to diversity, policy impact, and ethical contradictions suggest that unmediated reliance on personal faith may risk uneven ethical standards and the marginalisation of minority beliefs.

In line with Hanson (2004), the findings confirm that religion's role in governance is ambivalent rather than absolute. When religious conviction informs personal moral discipline rather than political authority, it supports ethical leadership. Conversely, conflating faith-based morality with governance legitimacy poses risks to constitutional compliance. The findings therefore suggest that ethical leadership in South Africa is best

strengthened through institutionalised, value-based frameworks that draw on universal moral principles reflected in religious traditions while safeguarding constitutional impartiality.

5.2.2 Influence of Religious Values on Leadership Behaviour

The findings indicate that religious values significantly shape leadership behaviour, particularly in relation to ethical standards, decision-making, and social responsibility. Consistent with Rizvi (2024), leaders often draw on religious convictions as sources of moral guidance, resilience, and purpose when navigating complex governance environments. The qualitative content analysis shows that religious traditions provide ethical frameworks that reinforce integrity, honesty, accountability, and respect, which are reflected in leadership conduct and organisational culture.

The analysis further reveals that religion influences leadership through the internalisation of values such as compassion, service, and community orientation, shaping leaders' visions and reinforcing a service-centred approach to governance. Religious ethics also inform decision-making processes by offering moral reference points grounded in fairness, justice, and empathy, particularly in ethically ambiguous contexts.

In addition, the findings highlight religion's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, where faith-based principles such as forgiveness, harmony, justice, and reconciliation guide leadership responses to organisational and social tensions. While international examples demonstrate that religious values can inspire principled and transformative leadership, the findings reaffirm that their positive influence in the public sector is most effective when aligned with constitutional values and institutional accountability mechanisms, rather than applied in a personal or exclusive manner.

5.2.3 Faith-Based Leadership as a Moral Compass

The findings indicate that faith-based leadership serves as a moral compass, shaping ethical decision-making by prioritising integrity, accountability, and transparency over short-term interests. In contexts where economic or political pressure may incentivise expedient choices, religious values provide leaders with stable ethical reference points that reinforce trust and responsible governance (Jason, 2025).

The analysis further shows that faith-based ethics serve a stabilising and resilience-building role, particularly during periods of institutional crisis or uncertainty. By offering moral clarity and purpose, religion enables leaders to respond thoughtfully and ethically rather than reactively or opportunistically. These findings suggest that faith-based leadership contributes positively to governance when it strengthens ethical consistency and decision-making discipline, while remaining aligned with institutional accountability and constitutional principles.

These findings thus demonstrate that the relationship between religion and governance is primarily indirect, operating through leadership ethics and moral judgment rather than formal policy mechanisms, thereby reinforcing the study's objective of understanding religion's value-based influence within a constitutional governance framework.

5.2.4 Public Perception and Expectations

The findings indicate that faith-based leadership strongly shapes public perceptions of ethical legitimacy. Leaders who embody values such as integrity, compassion, and justice are widely regarded as trustworthy and morally grounded, reinforcing societal expectations that leadership should prioritise collective well-being and ethical responsibility (Bleeker, Barkhuizen & de Braine, 2022).

In South Africa, religious leaders are often seen as moral exemplars whose engagement in public affairs can enhance governance, particularly where trust in political institutions is low. The analysis also highlights that this legitimacy is conditional, dependent on leaders maintaining political neutrality, respecting pluralism, and upholding democratic principles (Koopman, 2025; Koopman & Vosloo, 2002). These findings suggest that faith-based leadership can contribute positively to ethical governance and social justice, but only when its influence is inclusive, constitutionally aligned, and oriented toward the public interest, rather than partisan or sectarian agendas.

5.2.5 Challenges of Religious Diversity and Secularism

The findings indicate that religious diversity and secularism present significant challenges for the influence of religion in public leadership and governance. Secularism often questions religion's moral authority, societal role, and truth claims, sometimes marginalising faith in education, policy, and state affairs (Verster, 2024). This raises a

critical question for leadership: how can faith maintain ethical relevance in a secular and pluralistic context?

The analysis shows that while secular frameworks limit the formal influence of religion on governance, faith can still shape leadership values and ethical behaviour when approached thoughtfully. Religious convictions, particularly those rooted in divine revelation, provide leaders with moral guidance that complements rather than contradicts scientific and secular knowledge. Leaders who integrate faith-inspired ethics can uphold integrity, accountability, and social responsibility without infringing on the principle of secular constitutionalism. These findings suggest that the positive role of religion in governance is most effective when it respects diversity, affirms inclusive ethical principles, and engages secular assumptions critically.

5.2.6 Institutional Disconnect Between Religion and Governance

The findings indicate a significant disconnect between personal religious values and formal governance institutions. While religious principles such as fairness, integrity, accountability, and concern for others align closely with the ethical foundations of good governance, their influence often remains informal and individual rather than institutionalised (Nakpodia, Shrives & Sorour, 2018). Historical and contemporary frameworks in secular states reinforce this separation, maintaining neutrality and religious freedom but limiting religion's direct impact on governance structures (Rogers, 1642; RSA, 2025).

The analysis highlights that, even in highly religious contexts such as Nigeria, personal religiosity does not automatically translate into robust governance practices. High moral awareness among leaders does not compensate for the absence of formal mechanisms, legal enforcement, or systemic accountability (Nakpodia et al., 2018). For South Africa, these findings underscore the importance of creating institutional frameworks that harness value-based ethics while respecting secular and pluralistic constitutional principles. Religion can inform ethical behaviour and leadership culture, but its contribution to governance is most effective when integrated into formal policies, codes of conduct, and oversight mechanisms.

5.2.7 Institutional Support for Religious Engagement

The findings indicate that institutional support for religious engagement can strengthen ethical governance, social cohesion, and trust in public institutions. When organisations proactively facilitate faith-based participation and interfaith dialogue, they create environments that foster mutual understanding, cooperation, and inclusive decision-making (Marshall, Roy, Seiple & Slim, 2021). Such support goes beyond passive accommodation, requiring careful attention to the religious, cultural, and political context, and the identification of priority sectors, such as education, healthcare, and governance, where faith-informed collaboration can have the greatest impact.

The analysis further highlights that institutional engagement with religion contributes to societal trust, which underpins stability and public confidence in governance structures (Gemar, 2024). Even in secular contexts, institutionalised support for ethical, value-based religious engagement can ensure that religion informs leadership and service delivery in ways that are inclusive, accountable, and aligned with constitutional principles. These findings suggest that formal mechanisms for supporting faith-based engagement are key to harnessing religion's positive influence on governance without compromising secularism or pluralism.

5.2.8 Risks of Religious Exclusivity

The findings indicate that religious exclusivity poses risks to inclusive governance and interfaith collaboration. While exclusivist beliefs may assert particular truth claims, they can foster attitudes that are self-serving, rigid, or intellectually arrogant, potentially limiting dialogue and cooperation across religious traditions (Grube, 2024). Such exclusivism, when unmoderated, may create barriers to social cohesion, undermine pluralism, and challenge ethical decision-making in leadership contexts.

However, the analysis also highlights that exclusivism is not inherently detrimental. When approached with humility, faith-based truth claims can coexist with dialogue, contributing constructively to ethical reflection and moral reasoning in governance. These findings suggest that public sector leaders must balance religious conviction with respect for diversity and constitutional principles, ensuring that faith-informed leadership promotes inclusivity, accountability, and collaborative decision-making rather than sectarianism.

5.2.9 Lack of a Clear Policy Framework in Governance

The findings indicate that the absence of a clear governance framework poses a significant challenge to effective organisational leadership and ethical decision-making. Governance structures provide the foundation for accountability, transparency, and strategic alignment, and their absence can undermine both operational efficiency and public trust (Adel, 2021).

5.2.9.1 Lack of a Clear Strategy

A well-defined strategic framework is essential to guide governance practices. Without alignment between organisational objectives and governance procedures, decision-making becomes inconsistent, and governance initiatives lose effectiveness. Therefore, clear strategies should be used to anchor ethical conduct and ensure that employees understand the principles guiding their actions (Adel, 2021).

5.2.9.2 Establishing an Ineffective Board

Boards must comprise members with relevant expertise and diverse backgrounds to promote effective governance. Incompetent or unbalanced boards risk compromising organisational values and limiting the diffusion of ethical standards throughout the institution. Inclusive and competent boards will foster a culture of accountability, fairness, and open participation (Adel, 2021).

5.2.9.3 Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest may threaten equitable governance by undermining impartiality and fairness in decision-making. Effective governance frameworks must ensure that policies and procedures are uniformly applied, preventing personal interests from compromising organisational mission and ethical standards (Adel, 2021).

5.2.9.4 Succession Planning

Structured succession planning is critical for institutional stability. Boards that neglect succession risk disruption during leadership transitions and this can signal governance weaknesses both internally and externally. Proactive planning will ensure continuity and safeguard organisational integrity (Adel, 2021).

5.2.9.5 Complexity in Compliance and Regulation

Increasing legal, social, and environmental responsibilities create complex compliance challenges. Governance frameworks must be responsive to local, national, and international regulations while maintaining transparency and accountability. Effective alignment with regulatory requirements supports sustainable, ethical, and accountable organisational practices (Adel, 2021).

5.2.9.6 Synthesis of Findings

The findings from the qualitative content analysis reveal that religion exerts a complex but significant influence on leadership and governance in the public sector. Across the subsections, religion emerges as a source of ethical guidance, moral integrity, and value-based decision-making (5.2.1–5.2.3), shaping leadership behaviour, promoting accountability, and reinforcing public trust (5.2.4). Faith-informed values also contribute to social cohesion and community engagement, enhancing service delivery where formal institutional mechanisms are limited.

However, the analysis underscores that religion's influence is largely personal and informal, and its positive effects on governance are constrained by secular institutional frameworks, pluralism, and the lack of formal policy integration (5.2.5–5.2.6). Institutional support for religious engagement (5.2.7) can enhance governance effectiveness and societal trust, but risks such as exclusivity (5.2.8) or weak governance frameworks (5.2.9) highlight the potential for inconsistency, marginalisation, and ethical gaps.

Collectively, these findings suggest that religion can strengthen ethical leadership and governance when its values are harnessed through institutionalised, inclusive, and constitutionally aligned mechanisms. They demonstrate that personal moral convictions, while important, must be translated into formal policies, value-based codes of conduct, and oversight systems to ensure consistent, transparent, and accountable governance. This synthesis directly addresses the study's research questions by clarifying the nature of religion's influence on leadership, governance, and service delivery in South Africa and provides a foundation for developing practical, value-driven recommendations for the public sector.

5.2.10 Thematic Synthesis of Findings

The following are major emerging themes:

Theme 1: Religion as a source of ethical and moral formation in leadership

Religion emerges as a personal moral compass for many leaders, shaping their sense of integrity, compassion, accountability and service. Faith helps leaders navigate difficult or morally unclear decisions by giving them ethical language and reference points. However, this influence is mostly personal rather than embedded in institutions. Leaders apply their beliefs privately, which leads to inconsistent ethical practice across the public sector. While religion can strengthen individual morality, it does not on its own create ethical systems without formal structures to support it.

Theme 2: Accountability and Ethical Responsibility

Findings indicate that religious values strengthen leaders' sense of accountability and moral responsibility. Accountability is framed not only in procedural terms, such as compliance and reporting, but also as an ethical obligation to serve the public faithfully. Religion reinforces the idea of answerability to both society and a higher moral authority. Despite this, accountability mechanisms within governance structures remain predominantly secular and administrative, with limited formal integration of ethical or faith-based principles.

Theme 3: Faith-Based Leadership as a Moral Compass and Source of Resilience

The findings identify religion as a moral compass and stabilising influence in leadership, particularly during crises. Faith-based leadership is associated with moral clarity, resilience, and resistance to short-term self-interest. Religion provides leaders with meaning and ethical endurance, supporting thoughtful responses to governance pressures. This underscores its contribution to leadership sustainability and moral consistency in contexts marked by instability, corruption, and low public trust. In addition, religion serves as a positive force for social cohesion and community building. Faith-based values encourage leaders to prioritise collective wellbeing, social harmony, and inclusive service delivery. The findings suggest that religious narratives of unity and fellowship can enhance leaders' sensitivity to community needs. This role is particularly relevant in contexts marked by inequality and social fragmentation.

Theme 4: Public Expectations, Trust, and Moral Legitimacy

Public perception highlights strong expectations that leaders, especially religious ones, should demonstrate integrity, justice, and accountability. In South Africa's context of declining political trust, religion is often seen as a credible moral voice in governance. However, this legitimacy is not automatic. Public trust depends on leaders maintaining neutrality, respecting democratic values, and avoiding exclusionary religious expressions. Religion's moral authority is therefore influential but fragile, requiring inclusive and constitutionally aligned engagement.

Theme 5: Secularism, Religious Diversity, and Governance Tensions

The findings highlight the tension between secular governance and religious diversity. While constitutional secularism restricts the formal role of religion, it does not require its exclusion. Religion can contribute to public ethics when engaged respectfully, inclusively, and within constitutional limits, remaining compatible with democratic values, human rights, and rational governance. Religion emerges as a useful resource for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Faith-based principles such as reconciliation, forgiveness, and mediation are seen as tools for managing interpersonal and community-level conflicts. Leaders acknowledge that religious approaches can help restore trust and reduce tension, especially in divided communities. However, their application within formal governance processes remains limited and informal.

Theme 6: Institutional Disconnect Between Religion and Governance

The analysis reveals a disconnect between personal religiosity and institutional governance outcomes. High levels of religious affiliation among leaders have not translated into improved governance or reduced corruption. This indicates that individual moral conviction is insufficient without strong institutional frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and enforcement structures. Religion may shape ethical intent, but effective governance depends on systemic capacity. While leaders may be influenced by religion at an ethical level, public sector policies and institutional practices are largely shaped by constitutional, legal, and secular frameworks. Religion, therefore, functions more as an informal ethical guide than as a direct influence on policy formulation or institutional governance.

Theme 7: Institutional Support, Trust, and Interfaith Engagement

The findings highlight the role of institutions in enabling constructive ethical and religious engagement. When organisations support inclusive dialogue and interfaith collaboration, religion can strengthen social cohesion and the legitimacy of governance. Trust in institutions emerges as central, showing that ethical governance relies not only on individual values but on credible, consistent, and trusted systems.

Theme 8: Risks of Religious Exclusivism

Religious exclusivism is identified as a key risk. While personal faith is not problematic, exclusivism becomes harmful when it marginalises others or is institutionalised. The findings stress the need for humility, dialogue, and pluralism, noting that exclusivism conflicts with governance only when it undermines equality, participation, and constitutional rights. Leaders recognise the need to respect multiple faith traditions and avoid privileging any one belief system. This often results in a cautious approach, where religious language is used rhetorically while governance practices remain neutral. The findings point to contradictions between personal faith commitments and the demands of inclusive public leadership.

Theme 9: Absence of Clear Ethical and Policy Frameworks

The final theme highlights the absence of coherent policies for embedding ethics in governance. Weak structures, conflicts of interest, poor succession planning and regulatory complexity undermine effectiveness. The findings underscore that ethical leadership, religious or otherwise, requires formal frameworks, clear policies, and robust accountability systems.

Collectively, the themes reveal that religion plays a significant but underutilised role in shaping leadership ethics and governance culture in South Africa's public sector. Its influence is strongest at the personal and community levels, yet weakest at the institutional and policy levels. The findings suggest that religion's ethical potential can be harnessed constructively when translated into inclusive, universal values and embedded within secular governance frameworks.

5.3 Findings on Research Questions and Research Objectives

5.3.1 Research Questions

The findings indicate that religion, though subtle, meaningfully influences ethical leadership and moral decision-making among public sector leaders in South Africa. Leaders often draw on personal religious convictions to shape values such as integrity, accountability, compassion, and service orientation, which inform their approach to decision-making, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement. This interplay creates a moral compass that can strengthen governance when exercised responsibly.

However, the influence of religion is largely informal and individualized, resulting in variability across departments and leadership levels. Because these religiously inspired ethical frameworks are not institutionalized, their positive impact is inconsistent, and reliance on personal belief systems alone cannot guarantee uniform ethical governance.

To harness the positive, value-based influence of religion while upholding the secular and inclusive principles of the Constitution, public administration can:

- Institutionalise value-based leadership training – Incorporate modules on ethics, moral reasoning, and leadership that draw from universal principles found in diverse religious and philosophical traditions, without privileging any single faith.
- Develop inclusive ethical frameworks – Embed core moral values such as honesty, fairness, and accountability into codes of conduct and decision-making guidelines, ensuring alignment with constitutional requirements.
- Encourage reflective leadership – Create opportunities for leaders to explore personal moral motivations while emphasizing the need for impartial governance.
- Strengthen oversight and accountability – Ensure that ethical decisions inspired by personal values are monitored and assessed against formal governance standards to prevent bias or inequitable treatment.

By formalizing these approaches, the South African public service can leverage the moral and ethical benefits of religion as a resource for principled leadership, enhancing governance outcomes while maintaining constitutional neutrality and inclusivity.

What insights can be drawn from international case studies where religion has influenced the conduct of government officials in fulfilling their constitutional mandates?

International case studies, such as those from Ghana, Nigeria, and the United States, illustrate that religion can positively influence governance when it promotes accountability, servant leadership, and public trust. Nigeria, in particular, shows that religious leaders often serve as moral watchdogs, helping by ensuring that officials uphold ethical standards. However, the same case studies also highlight risks, such as religious bias, the exclusion of minority faiths, and blurred lines between state and religious institutions, which can compromise constitutional integrity.

5.3.1.1 *Risks and lessons from international cases:*

Religion can positively shape leadership ethics, but risks include bias toward certain faiths, blurred lines between church and state, and inconsistent governance when personal beliefs lack formal frameworks.

For South Africa, lessons are to harness moral influence while upholding secularism, institutionalize value-based ethical guidance, protect religious pluralism, and ensure oversight. Properly balanced, religion can support ethical, inclusive, and constitutionally compliant governance.

5.3.1.2 *Key lessons for South Africa*

- Leverage positive moral influence without compromising secularism. Draw on universal ethical principles reflected across religions to strengthen leadership integrity.
- Institutionalise value-based ethical guidance. Formal frameworks and codes of conduct can harness religion-inspired ethics while protecting constitutional impartiality.
- Protect pluralism and inclusivity. Any engagement with religion in public leadership must respect the rights of minority faiths and maintain equality before the law.
- Balance moral guidance with oversight. Mechanisms such as ethical review boards or leadership training can ensure that personal faith motivates good governance without undermining constitutional obligations.

What is the nature of the relationship between religion and politics particularly in the context of governance and service delivery?

The relationship between religion and politics is complex and context-dependent. In South Africa, religion often acts as a moral compass, influencing political discourse and leadership behaviour. Yet the lack of formal mechanisms for incorporating religious values into governance yields limited impact on service delivery and shows instead, ever-increasing levels of corruption and alarming levels of racketeering amongst officials and government leaders. Findings suggest that religion's influence is most visible in community-level interventions, where FBOs often fill service delivery gaps, especially in health, education, and social development.

Furthermore, the impact of religion on formal governance is limited by the lack of institutional mechanisms to integrate religious values into public administration. While religion promotes ethical reflection, the findings indicate persistent challenges, including corruption, mismanagement, and racketeering among some officials. This suggests that personal faith alone is insufficient to guarantee ethical governance.

Religion's influence is most evident at the community level, where faith-based organizations (FBOs) frequently complement government efforts by filling service delivery gaps in health, education, and social development. These organizations demonstrate the potential of religion to enhance public service when aligned with societal needs and ethical principles.

Implications for governance: Religion can be harnessed as a positive ethical resource by institutionalizing value-based leadership training, embedding universal moral principles into codes of conduct, encouraging reflective leadership, and fostering partnerships with FBOs, while maintaining accountability, inclusivity, and adherence to the secular constitutional framework.

In summary, the relationship is indirect but influential: religion shapes leaders' moral and ethical dispositions, which can improve governance and service delivery when complemented by formal institutional frameworks and constitutional safeguards.

What practical measures can be implemented to effectively integrate religious values into public sector governance and service delivery frameworks?

To integrate religious values into governance without violating constitutional principles, several measures are proposed: firstly, encouraging interfaith councils to provide ethical

input into public policy. Secondly, it is important to partner with FBOs in service delivery initiatives. Thirdly, values-based leadership training that includes religious ethics should be incorporated into public service education. Fourthly, promoting inclusive dialogue that respects all belief systems, while recognising the positive role religion can play in promoting integrity and accountability in governance. These measures, although not an exhaustive list, could, however, strengthen governance practices by embedding values, such as compassion, integrity, stewardship, and justice into public administration without compromising constitutional secularism.

Collectively, the findings demonstrate that religion contributes meaningfully to leadership ethics, moral awareness, and social responsibility, but its influence is largely informal and individualised. The results align with existing literature that recognises religion as a source of moral capital, while also confirming concerns about its limited institutionalisation in pluralistic democratic systems. The findings address the research questions by showing that religion consolidates leadership primarily through ethical formation rather than through direct governance mechanisms.

5.3.2 Research Objectives

This section outlines how each research objective was addressed through the study's findings, connecting the research aims to the insights from desktop analysis.

RO1: To explore through careful analysis whether public leaders, civil servants, and political office-bearers adhere to any form of religion, and to what extent such religious affiliation influences their leadership and governance practices.

The researcher found that many public officials in South Africa hold various religious beliefs, which often inform their personal values and leadership styles. While the state maintains a secular stance, individual leaders frequently draw on religious principles to guide ethical decisions and foster integrity in governance. Despite this, the study also found that though many leaders prescribe to some or the other religion, even amongst them, acts of corruption and unethical behaviour still surface where some are called to account in forums, such as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA), the office of the Auditor General (AG), portfolio committees of the different ministries and joint committees. However, there is no formal policy framework to integrate such values consistently across the public sector.

RO2: To critically evaluate whether the successes observed in countries that have incorporated religious influences into their governance structures can be effectively adapted and implemented in the South African context.

International case studies from Ghana, the United States, and especially Nigeria show that religious institutions can positively influence governance by promoting ethical standards and civic responsibility. These successes suggest potential for adaptation in South Africa, provided that constitutional principles are upheld and religious plurality is respected. However, caution is advised, as there are risks, including the political exploitation of religion and the exclusion of minority groups.

RO3: To conduct a critical analysis of the relationship between politics and religion, with the aim of determining whether their synthesis can promote good governance and enhance public service delivery.

Religion and politics intersect in multiple ways, particularly in community engagement and moral discourse. In South Africa, religious values often inspire public service ethos at the grassroots level, especially through FBOs. The lack of formal integration at the policy level, however, means the potential of religion to support governance and improve service delivery, remains underutilised.

RO4: To develop informed recommendations on how religious principles, when applied by public office-bearers, can be leveraged to streamline leadership practices and consolidate governance, with specific consideration for achieving effective and ethical service delivery.

The researcher recommends establishing interfaith advisory structures, providing ethical leadership training that includes religious perspectives, and structuring partnerships with FBOs. These measures would allow religion to contribute meaningfully to leadership development, institutional accountability, and service delivery while maintaining constitutional neutrality.

5.4 Transition to Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that religion, though not formally embedded within South Africa's public governance structures, plays a significant role and exerts a notable influence on leadership ethics, governance culture, and service

delivery outcomes. Religion influences leadership and governance in South Africa, mainly through personal values and the work of FBOs. International examples highlight how religion can support ethical governance when managed within constitutional boundaries. There is potential for integration, but religious values remain underutilised because of a lack of formal structures. The study concludes that religion plays an important but constrained role in South Africa's public sector leadership. It strengthens personal integrity, accountability, and service orientation, and contributes to social cohesion and conflict resolution. However, its impact on formal governance structures and policy remains limited due to constitutional requirements, pluralism, and the need for inclusivity.

5.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, two opposing sides become apparent. One side is a clear stance that religion and state, by extension, governance, should always be kept separated. According to Alibhai-Brown in Foster and Alibhai-Brown (2019), the most sinister and oppressive states in the world use "God" to control the minds and actions of their populations, while oppressing and even killing the most vulnerable in the name of their religion. According to this author, religion should not be offered a place in public life, because when bishops, rabbis, priests and mullahs get political roles, they become the very ones to corrupt good governance and religious integrity. According to Habib (2024), agreeing with Alibhai-Brown in their work in Foster and Alibhai-Brown (2019), religion should not have an impact on political decision-making and governance, because it has the potential to undermine democratic principles, and democracy cannot thrive in a society where political decisions are made on the basis of religion.

In opposition to the views put forward by Alibhai-Brown (2019) and Habib (2024), Foster in Foster and Alibhai-Brown (2019) argues for the second side of the conclusion. Before discussing Foster's view, it is important to note that Beyers (2021) opines that religion should participate in social transformation, by extension, in governance and decision-making, because the purpose of religion is to unite society through advancing social justice and advocating for the protection of the poor and marginalised. In correspondence with the view of Beyers, Foster (2019) postulates that her political beliefs, moulded by her faith, drive her to subscribe to the pre-eminence of equality and

the rights of workers. The author believes that religion has an important role to play in governance and politics, because where people exercise “good faith,” it fosters virtues and sensibilities in the thinking and decision-making of leaders, bringing stability in politics and society, and by extension, to governance (Foster and Alibhai-Brown, 2019).

Regardless, and in light of the above contradictory convictions, it is important to realise that, while religion has its positive side, there is equally a negative side to it. By its very nature, as Durkheim indicated, according to Beyers (2021), religion as a social phenomenon, is linked to social well-being. Religion is essential to human existence, and religion is best placed to effect social transformation. Religion instils values, such as honesty, integrity, openness and tolerance; religion provides moral direction; religion creates hope and optimism; religion creates awareness of social injustices; religion contributes to social capital, making a difference to social well-being; provides an interface or platform for socioeconomic activities; and religion is a uniting factor (Beyers, 2021).

Hence, this study established that religion significantly informs the moral and ethical frameworks of many public sector leaders. Religious teachings, in particular, those that emphasise accountability, service, compassion and justice, were identified as foundational to ethical and accountable leadership practices. Respondents to the question of religious influence in their daily responsibilities, posed by interviewers, consistently affirmed that their religious beliefs underpin their decision-making processes and significantly influenced their interpersonal conduct in professional settings.

Despite the individual-level influence of religion, the study found a conspicuous absence of institutional frameworks that serve to integrate obtained ethical values into public sector governance. The South African Constitution mandates a secular state, which has often been interpreted restrictively, thereby discouraging structured engagement with religion in governance discourse.

Empirical data from selected articles and articles where interviews were held with respondents, indicated that where religious values were incorporated into community leadership, i.e., the TRC, etc., programmes or informal institutional ethics platforms, there was a discernible improvement in governance outcomes. There was increased public trust, improved service delivery, and stronger accountability mechanisms.

The potential of religious exclusivism and the privileging of dominant faith traditions were identified as significant risks. Such tendencies, if institutionalised, could marginalise religious minorities and stand in breach of constitutional principles of equality and religious freedom. This highlights the need for caution in balancing moral value promotion with legal secularism.

Furthermore, the research study revealed a gap in public leadership development curricula, particularly with respect to ethical training, informed by religious or moral philosophy. While secular ethics are addressed, the deeper moral and spiritual motivations rooted in diverse faith traditions, remain largely unexplored in formal leadership programs.

This study concludes that religion, when approached inclusively and ethically, rather than doctrinally, can play a constructive role in consolidating leadership and governance in South Africa's public sector. Religion remains an important source of personal ethical and moral formation for leaders, and its values, if harmonised with secular governance principles, can contribute meaningfully to institutional integrity and public accountability.

The findings affirm that religious values can reinforce leadership integrity and ethical behaviour without violating secular governance norms. Furthermore, ethical frameworks, derived from religious teachings, can be used in addressing corruption, abuse of power and administrative inefficiencies. A pluralistic and inclusive approach to value-based governance is both constitutionally sound and ethically desirable.

While religion is not formally embedded in governance structures, it significantly influences leadership ethics and community engagement. Many public officials rely on religious values to guide their conduct. It is, however, important to note that this influence remains informal and inconsistent across institutions.

5.6 Recommended Interventions for Ethical Leadership and Governance

Based on the findings, the study recommends developing inclusive ethical leadership frameworks that acknowledge religious values without undermining constitutional principles. Leadership development programmes should incorporate values-based ethics training applicable across faith traditions. Clear guidelines should also be established to help leaders balance personal belief with public responsibility.

While this chapter has synthesised the findings, drawn conclusions on the role of religion in leadership and governance, and outlined broad recommendations with indicative timescales, it is necessary to translate these insights into concrete, actionable interventions. The following section, therefore, presents specific, targeted recommendations to strengthen ethical leadership in the public sector, while remaining firmly aligned with South Africa's constitutional framework and its commitment to religious diversity and inclusivity.

5.6.1 Institutionalise Value-Based Leadership Training

Public administration schools, such as the National School of Government, should incorporate modules that explore the intersection of ethics, leadership, and religiously derived moral reasoning. These modules should be grounded in universal ethical values, such as justice, integrity and service (Kretzschmar, 2013).

5.6.2 Establish Interfaith Governance Dialogues

An interfaith forum should be constituted to deliberate and discuss the role of ethical values in governance. Mutual respect must be fostered among religious traditions, and guiding principles for ethical conduct must be formulated in the public sector (Forster, 2023).

5.6.3 Establish Interfaith Advisory Councils

Government institutions should consider forming inclusive advisory bodies to provide ethical and value-based input into public policy and leadership training (Govender, Jahed & Auriacombe, 2023).

5.6.4 Development of a Secular Ethical Charter for Governance

Government institutions should adopt a non-denominational ethical charter reflecting universally accepted values. This would provide a moral compass for decision-making, while ensuring alignment with constitutional provisions (Govender et al., 2023).

5.6.5 Foster Community-Centered Moral Engagement

Public sector leaders should be encouraged to participate in community dialogue sessions that emphasise moral responsibility, social justice and service. Engagements can serve as platforms for restoring public trust and accountability (Rawat, 2024).

5.6.6 Safeguard Religious Neutrality and Constitutional Adherence

Any initiative involving religious values must be subjected to constitutional scrutiny. Policies should explicitly guard against the promotion of any specific religion, and all frameworks should be inclusive, pluralistic and human-rights compliant (De Freitas, 2024).

5.7 Proposed Timescale

According to Shakeel, Kruyen and Van Thiel (2019), the successful integration of religion-inspired ethical values into public sector leadership requires a phased, inclusive and constitutionally compliant approach. The following timeline outlines a structured four-phase process, spanning a 30-month period, which balances consultation, development, capacity-building and evaluation.

Table 5.1: Proposed Timescale

Phase	Timeline	Strategic Action
Phase 1: Stakeholder Engagement	Months 1-6	Consult with religious leaders, civil society, legal scholars and public sector stakeholders to assess feasibility and constitutional compliance.
Phase 2: Framework and Curriculum Development	Months 7-12	Develop a secular, value-based ethical framework that draws on religious and universal principles evident across major religious traditions.
Phase 3: Pilot Programs	Months 13-18	Implement pilot training programs in selected government departments to evaluate the operationalisation of the ethical framework.
Phase 4: Evaluation and Scaling	Months 19-24	Assess pilot program outcomes. Revise the training module and scale up across relevant public institutions.

In **Phase 1**, focus will be on establishing an interdepartmental task team to oversee project implementation. Furthermore, a process will be conducted to establish legality and undergo constitutional reviews, assessing the scope and boundaries for ethical integration. There will be engagement with key stakeholders, including religious leaders, civil society, constitutional experts and governance institutions, through roundtables and policy forums. The process will involve identifying universal ethical principles, common to various religious traditions. The Department of Public Service and Administration will

be consulted, as well as the Office of the Chief Justice, including FBOs and legal scholars, as well as policy advisors

In **Phase 2**, a value-based leadership framework will be developed that is grounded in inclusivity, human rights and universal ethical values. Training modules will be designed, and a pilot run will take place through the National School of Government (NSG). Furthermore, a communication strategy will be implemented to mitigate potential misinterpretation or resistance. Plans will be put in place to ensure inclusivity of indigenous, interfaith and secular perspectives. A National School of Government development team will be established, and the Department of Cooperative Governance will be consulted. The input of the South African Human Rights Commission will be solicited, including Academia and interfaith think tanks.

In **Phase 3**, a pilot ethics leadership training will be launched in three identified provinces, with public servants receiving training that specifically focuses on senior and middle management to become conversant in value-based leadership. A monitoring and evaluation process will be initiated to assess the early impact, using feedback, attendance and leadership behaviour metrics. A midterm review workshop will be conducted to adjust the framework if necessary. A close working relationship will be assessed between NSG training facilitators, provincial governments, ethics officers, and human resource units in departments.

In **Phase 4**, a comprehensive impact evaluation process will be conducted, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The framework will undergo a final process, based on feedback and lessons learned. The framework will then be institutionalised using policy amendments or guidelines. Furthermore, training will be expanded nationally with continued professional development modules.

5.8 Limitations and Areas for Further Research

While this study has explored the role of religion in governance, there remains a spectrum of opportunities for further research to examine the quantitative relationships between religious engagement and public performance metrics. There is still room to conduct a comparative analysis across provinces and departments with varying religious demographics. In addition, research on the role of indigenous belief systems

and their ethical influence on governance can also bring some new insights for governance.

5.9 Final remarks

The study affirms that religion, when integrated ethically and inclusively, has the potential to enhance leadership effectiveness and public governance. Furthermore, this study has highlighted the nuanced, yet impactful role of religion in shaping leadership and governance within South Africa's public sector. In a diverse society like South Africa, the ethical teachings of various religious traditions offer a wealth of moral principles that can contribute to building a more transparent, accountable, and service-oriented public sector. Harnessing this potential requires careful policy design, legal compliance, and a commitment to pluralism and constitutional integrity.

Furthermore, the study has underscored the intricate relationship between religion and governance with reference to the place of leadership in the SA public sector. By examining both historical and contemporary perspectives, the research has revealed the subtle ways in which religious values can both strengthen and challenge leadership. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and scholars alike, emphasising the importance of inclusive, ethical leadership grounded in integrity and cultural sensitivity.

Therefore, after examining the role of religion in consolidating leadership and governance in the South African public sector, this study concludes that religion is widely perceived to inform moral standards and, as such, can play a crucial role in promoting ethical governance within the South African public sector. The study highlighted that there is an expectation that leaders should speak against corruption, champion social justice and model integrity in public. All this is possible if religious principles are incorporated on a personal level and allowed within the constitutional boundaries.

However, there is a strong emphasis on the need for political neutrality where party affiliation is carefully trodden, as such affiliations may compromise moral legitimacy. The findings indicate a delicate public expectation that leaders serve as ethical voices within governance, upholding democratic values and impartiality in institutional religion. While challenges exist, the constructive integration of religious values, guided by constitutional principles, offers meaningful potential to enhance ethical leadership and improve

service delivery. It is hoped that this research will contribute to ongoing conversations on governance reforms and the moral grounding of public service in South Africa.

Reference List

Abend, G. 2008. The meaning of 'theory'. *Sociological Theory*, 26(2), pp.173-199.

Abumoghli, I. 2023. The role of religions, values, ethics, and spiritual responsibility in environmental governance and achieving the sustainable development agenda. *Religion and Development*, 2(3), pp.485-495.

ACDP. 2023. ACDP MP, Wayne Thring: "South Africans are all interconnected in a profound way". ACDP. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQdxHP51iUM> [accessed 6 November 2025].

Adel, L. 2021. *7 Causes for Poor Corporate Governance*. GPO. Available from <https://pmo365.com/blog/7-challenges-of-organisational-governance> [accessed 28 May 2025].

Afegbua, S.I. and Adejuwon, K.D. 2012. The challenges of leadership and governance in Africa. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(9), pp.141-157.

African Research Review. Available from www.afrrevjo.com [accessed 10 September 2024].

Ahmed, A.S. 2011. An examination of the principles of corporate governance from an Islamic perspective: evidence from Pakistan. *Arab Law Quarterly*, 25(1), pp.27-50.

Ali, M. 2022. Conceptual & Theoretical Framework of Governance And Nexus Between Bureaucracy and Governance. *Pak. Journal of Int'L Affairs*, 5(2), pp.1674-1684.

Amoateng, A.Y. 2020. Does religion affect political engagement of the youth at the tertiary level of education? The case of undergraduate students at a South African university. *Theologia Viatorum*, 44(1), p.11.

Anderson, J. 2024. *Strong Organisational Purpose/Best Case Studies*. Agile by Design. Available from <https://www.agilebydesign.com/blog/organizational-purpose> [accessed 7 January 2024].

Ansell, C. and Torfing, J. 2016. *Handbook on Theories of Governance*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Aroney, N. 2018. The rule of law, religious authority, and oaths of office. *Journal of Law, Religion and State*, 6(2-3), pp.195-212.

ASCD, 2024. *Navigating Religious Differences. Educational Leadership*. Available from <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/navigating-religious-differences> [accessed 12 November 2025].

Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. 2004. *From conflict resolution to reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Basten, C., and Betz, F. 2011. *DOES RELIGION AFFECT POLITICS AND THE ECONOMY? WORKING PAPER SERIES NO 1393 / OCTOBER 2011*. Available from <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/153827/1/ecbwp1393.pdf> [accessed 10 November 2025].

Becker, H. 2015. Cultural Rights and the CRL Rights Commission: Realising the Rights of Communities in South Africa. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 15(2), pp.453-475.

Bentley, W. 2013. *Defining Christianity's "prophetic witness" in the post-apartheid South African democracy*. Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. Available from: <https://scielo.org.za/pdf/she/v39n1/03.pdf> [accessed 8 November 2025].

Berger, P.L. 1999. *The desecularization of the world: Resurgent religion and world politics*. New York: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Bevir, M. (2010) *Governance: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bevir, M. 2012. *Governance: A very short introduction*. London: Oxford.

Beyers, J. 2021. The role of religion and spirituality in transforming society. *Acta Theologica*, 32, pp.52-69.

Biko, S. 2004. *I write what I like*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.

Billings, D.B. and Scott, S.L. 1994. Religion and political legitimization. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20(1), pp.173-202.

Bin Badron, M.S. 2020. *Islam, Justice & Good Governance*. Available from <https://www.ikim.gov.my/index.php/2020/03/09/islam-justice-good-governance/> [accessed 30 March 2024].

Bleeker, M., Barkhuizen, E.N. and de Braine, R. 2024. The perceived influence of Christian leadership competencies during COVID-19. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1), pp.1-11.

Boesak, A. A. (n.d.) *Reverend Allan Aubrey Boesak – Biography*. South African History Online. Available from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/reverend-allan-aubrey-boesak> [accessed 8 November 2025].

Boshoff, W.H. 2008. *Policy-making for local government excellence in the Free State province* (Doctoral dissertation). Central University of Technology, Free State.

Boulle, J., Davids, M., Mabogoane, T. and Goldman, I. 2015. *Early Childhood Development Evidence-Based Policy Making and Implementation Case Study*. Pretoria: DPME: Pretoria.

Bowman, S. 2022. *9 Principles of good governance*. BoardPro. Available from <https://www.boardpro.com/blog/principles-of-good-governance> [accessed 8 January 2025].

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

Bryman, A. Bell, E. Hirschsohn, P. Dos Santos, J. Do Toit, J. Masenge, A. Van Aardt, I. And Wagner, C. 2014. *Research Methodology. Business and Management Contexts*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Brynard, D.J. 2013. The right to lawful administrative action. A Public Administration Perspective. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 6(1), pp.80-95.

Buehrens, J.A. and Parker, R.A. 2010. *A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-first Century*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Callaway, C. 2025. Religion and Politics. *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource. Religion and Politics*. Available from <https://iep.utm.edu/rel-poli/> [accessed 6 May 2024].

Caramani, D. 2017. *Comparative Politics* (4th Ed.). UK: Oxford University Press.

Carter, S. L. 2002. *REFLECTIONS ON THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE*. ARIZONALAWREVIEW [Vol. 44:2]. Available from <https://openyls.law.yale.edu> [accessed 8 November 2025],

Chipkin, I, and Leatt, A. 2011. *Religion and Revival in post-apartheid South Africa*. Helen Suzman Foundation. Available from <https://repository.hsrb.ac.za/handle/20.500.11910/11170> [accessed 22 April 2025].

Cleveland, H. and Luyckx, M. 1999. Governance And Religions: THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC POLICY. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 3, pp.62-74.

Cloete, F. 2014. *Public policy and policy implementation in South Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Coertzen, P. 2008. Freedom of religion in South Africa: Then and now 1652-2008. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 29(2), pp.345-367.

Coertzen, P. 2014. Constitution, charter and religions in South Africa. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 14(1), pp.126-141.

Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape, 2007. *Developmental Local Government: Determining Appropriate Functions and Powers – Paper I*. Bellville: University of the Western Cape. Available from <https://dullahomarininstitute.org.za/multilevel-govt/publications/de-visser-and-may-determining-appropriate-powers.pdf> [accessed 13 November 2025].

Constitutional Court of South Africa. 2007. MEC for Education: KwaZulu-Natal and Others v Pillay (CCT 51/06) [2007] ZACC 21.

CRL Rights Commission. 2025. Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities. Available from <https://nationalgovernment.co.za/units/view/51/commission-for-the-promotion-and-protection-of-the-rights-of-cultural-religious-and-linguistic-communities> [accessed 6 November 2025].

CRL Rights Commission. 2024. *Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities*. Available from <https://www.crlcommission.org.za/> [accessed 21 May 2025].

Crossman, A. 2024. *Understanding Functionalist Theory*. ThoughtCo. Available from <https://www.thoughtco.com/functionalist-perspective-3026625> [accessed 5 August 2024].

Crow, P., Lockhart, J. and Lewis, K. 2013, January. *The relationship between governance and performance: Literature review reveals new insights*. In European

Conference on Management, Leadership & Governance (pp.35-42). Academic Conferences International Limited.

Damyantov, M. 2023. *What is symbolic interactionism?* Dovetail. Available from <https://dovetail.com/research/symbolic-interaction-theory/> [accessed 13 September 2024].

Davis, C.B. 2019. *Aren't all religions the same? Don't all religions point to the same God?* BSM. Available from <https://www.biblicallyshaped.com/blogs/are-all-religions-the-same> [accessed 4 July 2024].

de Freitas, S. 2022. Religion, culture and the constitutionality of the "Avoidance of doctrinal entanglement principle." *Stellenbosch Law Review*, 32(3), pp.435-454.

de Freitas, S. 2024. Advancing the Protection of the Right to Freedom of Religion in South Africa. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal (PELJ)*, 27(1), pp.1-30.

de-Graft A., K., 2010. *Religion in African Politics and Governance: The Ghanaian Experience: A Quest for Relevant Interface* (Doctoral dissertation). Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

de Man, A. (2022). Strengthening the Fight Against Corruption through the Principle of Accountability. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, 25, pp.1-30. Available from https://www.saflii.org/za/journals/PER/2022/35.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 11 November 2025].

Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2021. *Understanding Local Government*. Pretoria: Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Available from https://www.cogta.gov.za/index.php/2021/06/01/understanding-local-government/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

de Vos, P. 2023. *Religion and Public Life in South Africa*. In M.N. Schmidt, L. Arimatsu & T. McCormack (Eds.), *Public Law in South Africa: Essays for the Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law*. Cham, Springer.

De Waal, E., Mawdsley, R.D. and Cumming, J.J. 2010. Furthering national values through religion in public school education: Comparing the United States, Australia and South Africa. *Journal for Juridical Science*, 35(si-1), pp.45-70.

de Waal, J. 2014. Christian Political Parties in South Africa: A Case Study of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 1(2), pp.281–302.

Dhawan, R. and Sachdeva, K. 2023. Spirituality In Leadership – A Psychological Approach. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*. Available from <https://doi.org/10.56975/4zhmev85> [accessed 08 November 2025].

Dowding, K., and John, P. 2003. *The Rational Choice Approach to Politics: The Promise and Limitations of Public Choice*. Praeger. Available from https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/36847_book_item_36847.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 12 November 2025].

Driessen, M.D. 2022. Interreligious Engagement and Political Theory: Between Virtue Ethics and Religious Humanism. *CrossCurrents*, 72(3), pp.265-286.

Duncan, G. A. 2018. “The benefits and dangers for churches and ministry institutions to work in a regulated environment, with reference to professionalising religious practice via the South African Qualifications Authority and the National Qualifications Framework Act”. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 74(4), p.4802.

Du Plessis, L. 2017. Religious Freedom and Equality as Celebration of Difference: A Significant Development in Recent South African Constitutional Case-Law. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, 12(4), pp.9–34.

du Plooy-Cilliers, F. Davis, C. and Bezuidenhout, R. 2016. *Research Matters*. Cape Town: Juta.

Durkheim, E. (1995). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (K. E. Fields, Trans.). New York: Free Press. (Original French edition: Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse 1912) Available from https://durkheim.uchicago.edu/Summaries/forms.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 8 November 2025].

Edelman. 2024. *Edelman Trust Barometer*. Available from <https://www.edelman.com/africa/news-awards/2025-trust-south-africa-government> [accessed on 6 January 2025].

Ebersöhn, L. Eloff, I., and Ferreira, R. 2022. *First Steps in Action Research*. In Maree K (Ed). *First Steps in Research* (3rd Ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Ekene, E. n.d. *Theories of Religion*. Available from https://www.academia.edu/34953973/THEORIES_OF_RELIGION?email_work_card=title [accessed 6 September 2024].

- Elazar, D.J. 1995. *The Jewish Political Tradition: From Biblical Times to the Modern State*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Elphick, R., and Davenport, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa. A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2025. *Allan Boesak*. Available from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Allan-Boesak> [accessed 30 April 2025].
- Eneji, J. and Iwuagwu, O., 2021. Religious influences in Africa. In O. Iwuagwu (Ed.), *Nation Building in Africa: Issues, Challenges, and Emerging Trends* (pp.389-410). University of Lagos Press.
- Ferkins, L., Shilbury, D., and O'Boyle, I. 2018. Leadership in governance: Exploring collective board leadership in sport governance systems. *Sport Management Review*, 21(3), pp.221-231.
- Fernando, J., Rhinehart, C., and Rathburn, P. 2025. *What Are Stakeholders? Definition, Types, and Examples*. Investopedia. Available from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/stakeholder.asp> [accessed 4 July 2025].
- Ferreira, E. and Nyathi, M. 2025. The God Edition. *How faith guides South Africa's politicians*. Mail & Guardian. Available from <https://mg.co.za/politics/2025-04-18-the-god-edition-how-faith-guides-south-africas-politicians> [accessed 29 April 2025].
- Fessha, Y.T. and Dessalegn, B. 2021. Freedom of religion and minority rights in South Africa. *Religions*, 12(10), p.901.
- Fisher, F., Miller, G.J., and Sidney, M.S. 2007. *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis Theory, Politics, and Methods*. London: CRC Press.
- Forster, D.A. 2023. *Public Theology and Ethical Leadership in a Pluralistic South Africa, In Values-Based Governance and Public Ethics*. Stellenbosch University Press.
- Foster, D. and Alibhai-Brown. 2019. *Should Religion Play a Role in Politics?* New Internationalist. Available from <https://www.newint.org/features/2018/12/17/debate-Should-religion-play-role-politics> [accessed 28 May 2025].
- Foster, D.A. 2018. *Preserving Religious Freedom When (Some) Churches Abuse Their Members?* Counterpoint Navigating Knowledge. Available from

<https://www.counterpointknowledge.org/preserving-religious-freedom-when-some-churches-abuse-their-members/> [accessed 23 April 2025].

Foster, D.A. 2022. *Religion and state need to be in balance to protect democracy in South Africa*. The Conversation. Available from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362208271> [accessed 24 May 2025].

Fourie, P. 2003. *THE SA CONSTITUTION AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: PERVERTER OR PRESERVER OF RELIGION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON MORALITY?* Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa & Research Associate Faculty of Theology University of Stellenbosch. Available from https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC100616?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 12 November 2025].

Fox, J., 2018. *An introduction to religion and politics: Theory and practice*. New York: Routledge.

Francis, L.A. and Adams, R.E. 2019. Two faces of self and emotion in symbolic interactionism: From process to structure and culture, and back. *Symbolic Interaction*, 52, pp.45–68.

Fukuyama, F. 2011. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Ghaedi, M., Sohrabi, B., & Ebrahimi, H. 2021. Spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality: The impact on employee behavior and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Studies*, 16(3), pp. 345-360.

Gaitanos, G. 2019. *Theories for the Study of Religion*. Introduction to Religious Studies. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336898671_Theories_for_the_Study_of_Religion [accessed 23 August 2023].

Gangopadhyay, M., 2023. Religion and governance: Examining the intersection in contemporary politics. *Religion & Policy Journal*, 1(1), pp.27-33.

Gemar, A. 2024. Institutional trust, spirituality, and religious practice in the United States. *Social Sciences*, 13(1), p.67.

George, D. 2024. *South African economy stalls under ANC rule. DA Shadow Minister of Finance*. Newsroom. Available from <https://www.da.org.za/2024/03/south-african-economy-stalls-under-anc-rule> [accessed 13 April 2024].

- Ghaedi, A., Öztüren, A. & Safshekan, S., 2021. Workplace mistreatment and spiritual leadership: New cure for ancient curse. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(3), pp.340-353.
- Gherghina, S. and Mişcoiu, S., 2022. The church and support for political parties. *Religion, State and Society*, 50(1), pp.39–55.
- Goldstein, W. 2025. *Chief Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein on X*. Available from <https://x.com/ChiefRabbiSA/status/1891196812934906122> [accessed 13 May 2025].
- Gough, D., Oliver, S. and Thomas, J., 2023. *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Govender, V., Jahed, M.I. and Auriacombe, C.J. 2023. A conceptual model to underpin ethical governance in local government. *Administratio Publica*, 31(1), pp.150-173.
- Grad Coach. 2024. *Qualitative Data Analysis 101. Tutorial analysis methods*. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUeQRE5UJpg&list=PLvc33xNTVUmflpA5majoCXgLS5mFOcck&index=8> [accessed 15 May 2024].
- Grek, S. 2020. Prophets, saviours and saints: Symbolic governance and the rise of a transnational metrological field. *International Review of Education*, 66(2), pp.139-166.
- Grube, D.M. 2024. What is wrong with exclusivism? Religious exclusivism between epistemic overconfidence and epistemic humility. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 96(2), pp.109-123.
- Guggenberger, W., And Hrudayaraj, B. K. K. 2022. Editors. *Democracy, Religion, and Pluralism: Theological Response* (1st Ed.). Innsbruck University Press.
- Gumede, W., 2019. *Public debate ‘captured’*. [online] *IOL Opinion*, April 1. Available from https://iol.co.za/opinion/2019-04-01-public-debate-captured/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].
- Gümüşay, A.A., 2018. Embracing religions in moral theories of leadership. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 33(3), pp.292-306.
- Habib, M. 2024. *Religion Should Not Impact Political Decisions*. MODERN DIPLOMACY. Available from <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/02/17/religion-should-not-impact-political-decisions/> [accessed 28 May 2025].
- Hanson, E. 2004. *The Role of Religion in Global Ethical Leadership*. Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Santa Clara University. Available from <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/>

[focus-areas/more-focus-areas/resources/the-role-of-religion-in-global-ethical-leadership/](#) accessed 24 May 2025].

Hasan, M. 2025. *Theory – Definition, Types, and Examples*. Blog. Available from <https://researchmethod.net/theory/> [accessed 1 July 2025].

Hasenclever, A. and Rittberger, V. 2000. Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict. *Journal of International Studies*, 29(3), pp.641-674.

Haynes, J. 2007 *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Henrico, R., 2012. Mutual Accommodation of Religious Differences in the Workplace – A Jostling of Rights. *Obiter*, 33(3), pp.503-525.

Heyns, C. 2009. *Human Rights and the Fight Against Corruption*. In: A. Mukherjee, ed., *Fighting Corruption: The Way Forward*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, pp.45–62.

Hill, K. 2025. *How to Share Information with Team Members Effectively*. Assembly. Book Demo. Available from <https://www.joinassembly.com/blog/how-to-share-information-with-team-members-effectively> [accessed 26 February 2025].

Hitchen, P. 2018. Re. Frank Chikane: *Working together to heal wounds of conflict*. World Council of Churches. Available from <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/rev-frank-chikane-working-together-to-heal-wounds-of-conflict> [accessed 13 May 2025].

Holder, A. 2022. *Good Governance: A Biblical Perspective*. Available from <https://caribbeannewsglobal.com/good-governance-a-biblical-perspective/> [accessed 30 March 2024].

Höllinger, F., Haller, M., and Valle-Höllinger, A. 2007. Christian Religion, Society, and the State in the Modern World. *Innovation*, 20(2), pp.133-157.

Holritz, P. J. 2009. *Exploring the Relationship Between Religious Beliefs and Implicit Leadership Theory: A Study of the Leadership Preferences of Japanese Employees* (Doctoral dissertation). Regent University.

Horev, S. n.d. *Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein*. Available from <https://www.chiefrabbi.co.za/about/> [accessed 12 May 2025].

Hossain, M.A. 2024. God and the Ballot Box: How Electoral Candidates Use Religion in Election Campaign in Bangladesh. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, p.00219096241284393.

Huntington, S.P., 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

IFAC & CIPFA, 2014. *International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector*. New York: IFAC. Available from https://www.ifac.org/knowledge-gateway/professional-accountants-business-paib/publications/international-framework-good-governance-public-sector?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

Illuminem. 2025. *What is ethical governance and how to implement its principles?* Available from <https://illuminem.com/illuminemvoices/what-is-ethical-governance-and-how-to-implement-its-principles> [accessed 6 November 2025].

Institute of Directors Southern Africa. 2016. *King IV, Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa*. Institute of Directors South Africa. Available from https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iodsa.co.za/resource/collection/684B68A7-B768-465C-8214-E3A007F15A5A/IoDSA_King_IV_Report_-_WebVersion.pdf [accessed 23 May 2025].

International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). 2014. *International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector*. International Federation of Accountants. Available from <https://www.ifac.org/knowledge-gateway/professional-accountants-business-paib/publications/international-framework-good-governance-public-sector> [accessed 4 July 2025].

International Monetary Fund, 1998. *Good Governance: The IMF's Role*. IMF Pamphlet Series. Washington, DC: IMF.

Jackson, P., Muzondidya, J., Naidoo, V., Ndletyana, M. and Sithole, M.P. 2009. *South African governance in review: Anti-corruption, local government, traditional leadership*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Jason. H. 2025. *How Faith Shapes the Journeys of Leaders*. Available from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-faith-shapes-journeys-leaders-jason-hall-kd0se> [accessed 25 May 2025].

Jeffery-Schwikkard, D. 2022. *Religion and Political Parties in South Africa: A Framework and Systematic Review*. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 48(6), pp.1077-1097.

Jeffery-Schwikkard, D. 2023. *Religious rhetoric and secular policies pave the road to power in South Africa*. London School of Economics (LSE). Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2023/02/20/religious-rhetoric-and-secular-policies-pave-the-road-to-power-in-south-africa/> [accessed 29 July 2025].

Jeffery-Schwikkard, D. 2023. *God and politics in South Africa: the ruling ANC's winning strategy*. THE CONVERSATION. Academic rigour, journalistic flair. Available from <https://theconversation.com/god-and-politics-in-south-africa-the-ruling-ancs-winning-strategy-198902> [accessed 07 May 2024].

Jetten, J., Spears, R., Manstead, A.S.R. 1996. *Distinctive Self-Categorization and Social Identity Effects*. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(6), 981-1003. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/43482777_Group_distinctiveness_and_intergroup_discrimination [accessed 12 November 2025].

Jonck, P., 2024. Responsible leadership in the public sector: A sector-specific interpretation. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1), a4272.

Joseph, S. 2005. *Consolidating democracy, building civil society. The South African Council of Churches in post-apartheid South Africa and its policy of critical solidarity with the state* (Doctoral dissertation). Rhodes University.

Kanaris, J. n.d. *Theories of Religion*. McGill University, School of Religious Studies. Available from https://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/files/religiousstudies/relq456_theories_of_religion_f2020.pdf [accessed 10 September 2024].

Katsamunskas, P. 2016. The concept of governance and public governance theories. *Economic Alternatives*, 2(2), pp.133-141.

Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A. and Zoido-Lobaton, P. 1999. *Governance Matters*. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 2196*. Available from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/665731468739470954/pdf/multi-page.pdf> [accessed 28 June 2025].

Kettell, S. 2019. *Secularism and religion*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Available from <https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-898> [accessed 10 May 2024].

- Kgatlhe, M.S. 2018. The prophetic voice of the South African Council of Churches: A weak voice in post-1994 South Africa. *HTS: Theological Studies*, 74(1), pp.1-8.
- Kibet, E. and Fombad, C. 2017. Transformative constitutionalism and the adjudication of constitutional rights in Africa. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 17(2), pp.340-366.
- Kim, S. 2017. *The SACC and Democracy in Post-1994 South Africa* (Master thesis). University of Pretoria.
- Klaasen, J.S. and Solomons, D. 2019. Religion and social justice: A critical analysis of the South African Council of Churches in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 45(2), pp.14-pages.
- Kondlo, K. and Ejiogu, A. 2011. *Rethinking Development in Africa*. Leiden: Brill.
- Koopman, N., 2010. Some contours for public theology in South Africa. *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 14(1).
- Koopman, N. 2025. *How religion shapes a free and democratic South Africa*, Weekend Argus Essay.
- Koopman, N. and Vosloo, R. 2002. The role of religious and secular traditions' leadership. *NGTT (Dutch Reformed Theological Journal)*, 48(3), pp. 93–149.
- Koska, G. 2016. Corporate accountability in times of transition: the role of restorative justice in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Restorative Justice. An International Journal*, 4(1), pp.41-67.
- Kretzschmar, E. 2013. Applied Ethics and Tertiary Education in South Africa: Teaching Business Ethics at the University of South Africa. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 34(1), pp. 27–46.
- Kubai, E. 2019. *Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments*. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335827941_Reliability_and_Validity_of_Research_Instruments_Correspondence_to_kubaiedwinyahoom [accessed 14 April 2024].
- Kumar, P.P. 2021. *Archbishop Desmond Tutu: father of South Africa's 'rainbow nation'*. The Conversation. Available from <https://theconversation.com/archbishop-desmond-tutu-father-of-south-africas-rainbow-nation-97619> [accessed 30 April 2025].
- Kuperus, T. 2011. The Political Role and Democratic Contribution of Churches in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Church and State*, 53(2), p.278306.

- Latham, J.R., 2009. *Leadership System Design for Sustainable Excellence: CEO Perspectives*. In Business as an Agent of World Benefit: Manage by Designing in an Era of Massive Innovation Conference, Case Western University, Cleveland (June 2-5).
- Law, P.K., 2013. *An integrated spiritual leadership model for the South African public service: A case of selected government departments* (Doctoral dissertation). University of the Western Cape.
- Lawrence-Hart, G. and Deeza, B.S. 2023. *Theories of Religion: Tools to Understanding Human Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Philosophy*. Rivers State, Nigeria: Timsmek Global Publishers.
- Leatt, A. 2007. Faithfully Secular: Secularism and the South African State. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 128, pp.17–29.
- Leatt, D.A., 2017. *The state of secularism: Religion, tradition and democracy in South Africa*. New York: NYU Press.
- Levin, J. 2025. Religion and Healing: A Narrative History of Their Interconnections. In H. Salazar & R. Nicholls (Eds.), *Mind over Matter. How Spirituality Changes Lives* (pp.109-135). London: Brill.
- Linkov, I., Trump, B.D., Poinette-Jones, K. and Florin, M.V. 2018. Governance strategies for a sustainable digital world. *Sustainability*, 10(2), p.440.
- Louw, D.J. 2001. Ubuntu and the challenges of multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa. *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, 15(1–2), pp.15–36.
- Love, I. 2010. *Corporate Governance and Performance around the World. What We Know and What We Don't*. The World Bank Research Observer. Available from <https://www.openknowledge.worldbank.org/server> [accessed 27 January 2025].
- Lumen Learning, 2025. *Theoretical Perspectives on Religion*. Introduction to Sociology. Available from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-introductiontosociology/chapter/theoretical-perspectives-on-religion/> [accessed 23 August 2025].
- Lynn, M. L., Naughton, M. J., and Vander Veen, S. 2011. Connecting religion and work: Patterns and influences of work-faith integration. *Human Relations*, 64(5), pp.675-701.

- Lynn, B., Naughton, M. and Vander Veen, A., 2011. Religiosity and Workplace Behavior: Integrating Faith in Organizational Practices. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 104(4), pp.675–687.
- Mabe, Z. 2013. The Role of the CRL Rights Commission in the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities in South Africa. *Journal for Contemporary History*, 38(2), pp.143–161.
- Macqueen, I. 2013. Students, apartheid and the ecumenical movement in South Africa, 1960–1975. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39(2), pp.447-463.
- Mahajan, A. 2021. *Public Systems Management: Emerging Perspectives – Unit 13: Responsiveness*. Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. Available from <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/76714/3/Block-4.pdf> [accessed 11 November 2025].
- Mahajan, A. P. 2025. *Public Governance Dynamics Comparative Administrative Systems*. India: Routledge.
- Maina, J. 2017. *Watershed judgment clarifies the limits of religion in South Africa's Public Schools. The Conversation*. Available from <https://theconversation.com/watershed-judgment-clarifies-limits-of-religion-in-south-africas-public-schools-80424> [accessed 10 May 2024].
- Makhanya, M. 2024. *A Next-Generation of Public Service for South Africa: Points of focus for a Quality Public Service in South Africa*. Newsletter-2024. Available from https://www.psc.gov.za/press_statements/news_articles/Newsletter-2024- [accessed 1 July 2025].
- Malik, M., 2013. The Role of Religion for an Alternative Sustainable Governance Theory. *Cultura*, 10(1), pp. 25-46.
- Maluleke, T.S. 2008. Religion and governance in South Africa: The role of faith in public leadership. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 130, pp.58–75.
- Mandela, N., 1999. *Speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Cape Town, 5 December 1999*. Available from https://archive.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/za-com-mr-s-1525?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

Mander, L. 2022. 9 *Principles of good governance. Good governance as the key to organisational success*. BoardPro. Available from <https://www.boardpro.com/blog/principles-of-good-governance> [accessed 7 January 2025].

Manyonganise, M., & Mhuru, L. (2022). Beyond the sacred text: Examining the confusion, conflicts and complications at the intersection of religion and law in Zimbabwe. *Religions*, 13(3), 240.

Maree, K. (Ed). Creswell, J.W., Ebersöhn, I., Eloff, R., Ferreira, R., Ivankova, N.V., Jansen, J.D. Nieuwenhuis, J. Pietersen, J. Plano Clark, V.L. 2022. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (3rd Ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Maree, K., and Pietersen, J. 2022. *The quantitative research process*. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (3rd Ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Mark, D. 2023. *The role of faith-based organisations in social development in South Africa*. Leadership Magazine. Available from <https://www.leadershiponline.co.za/the-role-of-faith-based-organisations-in-social-development-in-south-africa/> [accessed 13 May 2025].

Marsh, R. and Dallos, R. 2000. Religious beliefs and practices and Catholic couples' management of anger and conflict. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy: An International Journal of Theory & Practice*, 7(1), pp.22-36.

Marsh, P. and Dallos, R., 2000. *The psychodynamics of family life: Understanding relational patterns in families*. London: Open University Press.

Marshall, K., and Van Saanen, M. 2007. *Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart, and Soul Work Together*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications.

Marshall, K., and Van Saanen, M. 2009. *Faith and Good Governance: Towards Strengthening Global Coalitions*. Berkley Center for Religion. Peace & World Affairs. George Town University.

Marshall, K. 2015. Religion, politics and economic development: synergies and disconnects'. In C. Lancaster & N. Van de Walle (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Politics of Development* (pp.123-139). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marshall, K., Roy, S., Seiple, C. and Slim, H. 2021. Intrinsic and strategic leverage of religion in development. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 19(Suppl.1), pp.31-41.

Masango, M.J. and Mkhathini, M. 2016. Diversity in the ministry of chaplaincy in the South African Department of Correctional Services. *HTS: Theological Studies*, 72(4), pp.1-7.

Masegare, P. M. 2016. *Critical Analysis of Corporate Governance Implementation and Control Systems Within the Municipal Sector in Gauteng Province in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation). University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Masuku, M.M. 2019. Effective governance in South Africa: Reality or myth? *African Journal of Democracy and Governance*, 6(2-3), pp.118-134.

Maton, K. I., and Wells, E. A. 1995. Religion as a Community Resource for Well-Being: Prevention, Healing, and Empowerment Pathways. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51(2), pp.177-193.

Mazur, B. 2015. Basic assumptions of organisational culture in religiously diverse environments. *International Journal of Contemporary Management*, 14(3), pp. 115-132.

Mazur, B., 2021. Organizational Culture under Religious Influence. In S. Davut Goker (Ed.), *A Closer Look at Organizational Culture in Action*. IntechOpen.

Mbandlwa, Z., Dorasamy, N., and Fagbadebo, O. 2020. Leadership Challenges in the South African Local Government System. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(13).

Mbeki, T., 1996. “*I Am an African*” – *Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki on behalf of the African National Congress, on the occasion of the adoption of the Constitutional Assembly of “The Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill”*. Cape Town, 8 May. Available from: https://www.polity.org.za/article/mbeki-i-am-an-african-adoption-of-sa-constitution-bill-1996-08051996-2004-01-01?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 8 November 2025].

McCombes, S. and George, T. 2023. *How to Write a Problem Statement | Guide & Examples*. Scribbr. Available from <https://www.scribbr.com/research-process/problem-statement/> [accessed 8 May 2024].

McGivern, R. 2014. *Chapter 15: Religion. Introduction to Sociology* (1st Canadian Ed.). Available from <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology/chapter/chapter-15-religion/> [accessed 4 July 2025].

Mda, Z. 2012. *Sometimes There Is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider*. Johannesburg: Picador.

- Michaud, P., Carlisle, K. and Smith, R., 2009. Religion and political knowledge: The influence of belief on political cognition. *Journal of Political Psychology*, 30(4), pp. 531–549.
- Michaud, K.E., Carlisle, J.E. and Smith, E.R. 2009. The relationship between cultural values and political ideology, and the role of political knowledge. *Political Psychology*, 30(1), pp.27-42.
- Mkhize, N. and Nel-Sanders, D., 2025. Corruption risk as a structural driver of state fragility: Examining the governance crisis in South Africa. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 7, 1575693.
- Moegoeng, M. 2014. *Law and Religion in Africa. The Quest for the Common Good in Pluralistic Societies*. University of Stellenbosch. Available from <https://www.judiciary.org.za> [accessed 17 May 2024].
- Mofolo, M. A., and Smith, W. 2009. Making use of 'Batho Pele' principles to improve service delivery in municipalities. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 6(1), pp.430–440.
- Mokgolo, M.M., Mokgolo, P. and Modiba, M. 2012. Transformational leadership in the South African public service after the April 2009 national elections. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(1), pp.1-9.
- Mokgoro, J.Y. 2002. Ubuntu and the law in South Africa. *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review*, 4, pp.15–23.
- Mokhoathi. J. 2017. Religious Liberties and the Constitution of South Africa: A Call for Religious Accountability. *Scriptura*, 116, pp.1-10.
- Mollenkamp, D.T. 2025. *Social Justice: Meaning and Main Principles Explained*. Investopedia. Available from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-justice.asp> [accessed 9 April 2025].
- Morar, M. K. 2023. *The Revival of the Young Christian Students Movement*. Worldwide Magazine. Available from <https://www.worldwidemagazine.org/vol-33-no-4/the-revival-of-the-young-christian-students-movement/> [accessed 20 May 2025].
- Mpofu, N., 2021. “It is now in your hands”: South Africa’s dilemma for religion and governance in the changing COVID-19 context. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 77(3), a6183.

- Mubangizi, J. C. 2020. A human rights-based approach to fighting corruption in Uganda and South Africa: shared perspectives and comparative lessons. *Law Democr. Dev.*, 24
- Muringa, T.P. & Shava, E., 2025. 'Learning and Unlearning': Core leadership competencies for driving success in Special Economic Zones in South Africa. *Social Sciences*, 14(2), 88.
- Murthy, M.N. 2016. The Role of Religion in Shaping Political Beliefs and Practices. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, 3(2).
- Naidoo, G., 2024. Promoting ethical leadership and good governance: Response to public sector corruption in South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 13(7), pp.445-456.
- Naidoo, G. 2012. The critical need for ethical leadership to curb corruption and promote good governance in the South African public sector. *Journal of Public Administration*, 47(3), pp.656-683.
- Naidoo, G. 2012. A critical need for ethical leadership to curb corruption and promote good governance in the public sector of South Africa. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 5(2), pp. 25-35.
- Naidoo, G. 2005. *An overview of Leadership and Governance*. Available from <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/23592> [accessed 14 August 2024].
- Nakpodia, F., Shrives, P.J., and Sorour, M.K. 2018. Examining the Link Between Religion and Corporate Governance: Insights from Nigeria. *Business & Society*, 59(5), pp.956-994.
- Nanthambwe, P. 2025. Exploring the role of religion in participatory governance: An evaluation of religion's public engagement in Africa. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 46(1), a3416.
- National Center for Family Philanthropy. 2010 *Fiduciary duties of boards: Duty of care and duty of loyalty*. Available from <https://www.ncfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Managing-Risk-Board-Oversight-of-Foundation-Investments-NCFP-2010-managing-risk-board-oversight-of-foundation-investments.pdf> [assessed 11 November 2025].
- Ndevu, Z.J. and Muller, K. 2018. The role of monitoring and evaluation systems for service delivery in the public sector: A case of Stellenbosch Municipality. *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 6(1), pp.1–8.

- Ndevu, Z.J. 2019. Trust and organisational performance: A grounded theory approach for a South African district municipality. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17, a1158.
- Nell, W., 2016. The religious lives of students at a South African university. *HTS Teologiese Studies /Theological Studies*, 72(1).
- Nell, I. and Nell, E. 2014. The Changing Landscape in Religious Leadership: Reflections from Rural African Faith Communities. *Rural Theology*, 12(1), pp.29-41.
- Nickerson, C. (2023) *Symbolic Interactionism Theory & Examples*. Simply Psychology. Available from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/symbolic-interaction-theory.html> [accessed 8 November 2025]
- Nickerson, C. 2024. *Emile Durkheim's Theory*. SimplyPsychology. Available from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/emile-durkheims-theories.html> [accessed 13 April 2024].
- Nieuwenhuis, J. 2022. *Introducing Qualitative Research*. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Nkomo, S.M. 2011. A postcolonial and anti-colonial reading of 'African' leadership and management in organization studies: Tensions, contradictions and possibilities. *Organization*, 18(3), pp.365-386.
- Nkuna, N.W. and Nemutanzhela, T.L. 2012. Locating the role of service delivery within powers and functions of local government in South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration*, 47(si-1), pp.355-368.
- Nolte, I., Danjibo, N., and Oladeji, A. 2009. *Religion, Politics, and Governance in Nigeria*. Religions and Development Research Programme. *Working Paper 39*. Available from <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b79ed915d3cfd000d3c/wp39.pdf> [accessed 5 March 2024].
- Noor, A. 2008. Ethics, Religion, and Good Governance. *JOAAG*, 3(2).
- Nzimakwe, T.I., 2014. Practising Ubuntu and leadership for good governance: The South African and continental dialogue. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 7(4), pp.30–41.

O'Hara, T. 2024. *OBITUARY: Ray McCauley — charismatic pastor and controversial figure*. BusinessDay. Available from https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2024-10-09-obituary-ray-mccauley-charismatic-pastor-and-controversial-figure/#google_vignette [accessed 12 May 2025].

Obiefuna, B.A.C. 2011. Conflict Theory and the Analysis of Religious Experience. *African Research Review: An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*, 5(1), pp.139-161.

Omelicheva, M.Y. and Ahmed, R. 2018. Religion and politics: examining the impact of faith on political participation. *Religion, State & Society*, 46(1), pp.4-52.

Organisasie vir Godsdienste-Onderrig en Demokrasie v Laerskool Randhart and Others (29847/2014) [2017] ZAGPJHC 160; [2017] 3 All SA 943 (GJ); 2017 (6) SA 129 (GJ) (27 June 2017). Available at: <https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAGPJHC/2017/160.html> [accessed 11 November 2025].

Ozzano. L. 2022. The masks of the political God: religion and political parties in contemporary democracies. *Religion, State & Society*, 50(2), pp.240–243.

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2025. *A People's Government, the People's Voice*. Available from https://www.parliament.gov.za/peoples-government-peoples-voice?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019. *Public Participation Model: A People's Parliament*. Available from https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Pages/2019/august/19-08-2019_ncop_planning_session/docs/Parliament_Public_Participation_Model.pdf [accessed 12 November 2025].

Pavolini, E., Béland, D. and Jawad, R. 2017. Mapping the relationship between religion and social policy. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 33(3), pp.240-260.

Phokontsi, G.L. 2021. *A governance perspective on policies and practices combating youth unemployment in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation). University of the Free State.

Pierre, J. and Peters, B.G. 2000. *Governance, politics, and the state*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Pillay, S. 2004. Corruption—the challenge to good governance: a South African perspective. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 17(7), pp.586-605.

Piper, L. 2009. *Faith-based organisations, Local Governance, and Citizenship in South Africa* University of the Western Cape. Available at: <https://uwcscholar.uwc.ac.za:8443/server/api/core/bitstreams/047abcf2-fcc2-437c-a6b6-1228842c1168/content> [accessed 6 November 2025].

Polity. 2022. *Religion and state need to be in balance to protect democracy in South Africa*. Available from https://www.polity.org.za/article/religion-and-state-need-to-be-in-balance-to-protect-democracy-in-south-africa-2022-07-21?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

Pollitt, R. 2022. *Religious Leadership Op-Ed. 'While South Africans suffer, the successors of Tutu, Hurley, and Naudé seem to have lost their nerve'*. Daily Maverick. Available from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-08-12-religious-leaders-have-successors-of-tutu-hurley-naude-lost-their-nerve/> [accessed 29 April 2025].

Prinsloo, F. C. 2013. *Good Governance in South Africa: A Critical Analysis*. Stellenbosch University.

Public Service Commission, 2008. *Report on the implementation of the Batho Pele principle of Openness and Transparency in the Public Service*. Pretoria: Public Service Commission. Available from https://www.psc.gov.za/documents/2008/K-6300_PSC_Report%20Batho%20Pele%20Principals_Low%20res.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

Public Service Commission (PSC). n.d. *Guide on the Constitutional Values and Principles Governing Public Administration*. Available from https://www.psc.gov.za/conferences/2020_Webinar/PSC_Guide_on_the_Constitutional_Values_and_Principles_Governing_Public_Administration.pdf [accessed 22 January 2025].

Purcell, J. and Kinnie, N. 2007. HRM and business performance. In P. Boxall (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Human Resource Management* (pp.533-551). New York: Oxford University Press.

Ramaphosa, C. 2025. *State of the Nation Address*, 6 February. Available from <https://www.parliament.gov.za/state-of-the-nation-address-president-cyril-ramaphos> [accessed 8 November 2025].

Ramphole, M., 2008. *Laying ghosts to rest: Dilemmas of the transformation in South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Rawat, F. 2024. *The Time to Remoralise Local Government Is Now*. The Ethics Institute. Available from <https://www.tei.org.za/2024/08/26/the-time-to-remoralise-local-government-is-now/> [accessed 6 November 2025].

REL 2300. 2025. *REL 2300: Introduction to Contemporary World Religions*. Available from <https://www.anthrocvone.org/worldreligions/theoretical-frameworks/> [accessed 6 November 2025].

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2025. *President Ramaphosa meets with South African Council of Churches Over Issues of National Interest*. Available from <https://www.presidency.gov.za/president-ramaphosa-meets-south-african-council-churches-over-issues-national-interest> [accessed 21 May 2025].

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2024. *Public Participation Model Oversight & Accountability: Series 4*. Available from https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Pages/2024/14-08-2024_NCOP_Workshop/docs/General_Resource_Documents/20-08-2024/Public_Participation_Model.pdf [accessed 6 January 2025].

Republic of South Africa, 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Rizviz, H. 2024. *How Does Religion Affect Leadership? 10 Profound Ways*. Available from <https://hidayatrizvi.com/how-does-religion-affect-leadership/> [accessed 25 May 2025].

Roos, R. and De la Harpe, S. 2008. Good governance in public procurement: A South African case study. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad*, 11(2), pp.1-47.

Rosenfeld, M., 2020. Constitution and secularism: a Western account. In S. Mancini (Ed.), *Constitutions and Religion* (pp.21-40). New York: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Sachs, A. 1990. *Protecting Human Rights in a New South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

- Safdar, S., Khan, A. and Andlib, Z. 2022. Impact of good governance and natural resource rent on economic and environmental sustainability: an empirical analysis for South Asian economies. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 29(55), pp.82948-82965.
- Sargut, G. and McGrath, R.G. 2011. Learning to live with complexity. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(9), pp.68-76.
- Sarkissian, A. 2012. Religion and civic engagement in Muslim countries. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51(4), pp.607-622.
- Sautu, R., Guinjoan, M., and Lomnitz, C. 2005. The relevance of the theoretical framework (TF) in scientific initiation. An approach from political science and the study of historical and institutional development. *Panorama*, 15(29),
- Scharbatke-Church, C., 2016. *Corruption, Justice and Legitimacy*. Institute for Human Security. The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 617, pp.627-7940.
- Schmidt, D. 2010. *Leadership and Local Governance and Development*. Available from <https://www.ggln.org.za/media/k2/attachments/SoLG.2010-IntroductionDavid-Schmidt.pdf> [accessed 27 March 2024].
- Schneewind, K. A 2015. Socialization and education: Theoretical perspectives. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 22, pp. 861-865). Elsevier.
- Seate, F.E. 2016. *Community perceptions of municipal service delivery: a case study of Paradys Village in Thaba Nchu* (Doctoral dissertation). University of the Free State.
- Sebola, M.P., Moloto, A.N. & Mamabolo, M.A., 2024. Leadership and ethics in the South African public sector: Ethical and leadership challenges. *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*, (31), pp. 405-421.
- Shadrach, I.O. 2023. Religious Engagements and Balancing Africa Politics. *Studies in Social Science & Humanities*, 2(5), pp.61-63.
- Shakeel, F., Kruiyen, P. M. and Van Thiel, S. 2019. Ethical Leadership as Process: A Conceptual Proposition. *Public Integrity*, 21(6), pp.613–624.

Siambi, J. 2022. Leadership Succession Planning and Organization Transition: A Review of Literature. *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research (IJMSR)*, 10(3), pp.16-30.

Simply Psychology, 2025. *Functionalist Perspective & Theory in Sociology*. Available from https://www.simplypsychology.org/functionalist-perspective.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com accessed 12 November 2025.

Simpson, G. 1998. *A Brief Evaluation of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Some lessons for societies in transition*. Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Wits University.

Sindane, A.M. 2011. Values and ethics enter the real world: a framework for public leadership and governance. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship= Koers: Bulletin vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 76(4), pp.751-769.

Slack, N.J., Singh, G., Narayan, J. and Sharma, S. 2020. Servant leadership in the public sector: Employee perspective. *Public Organization Review*, 20(4), pp.631-646.

Smart, N. 1996. *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. University of California Press.

Smith, S.R. 2010. Hybridization and nonprofit organizations: The governance challenge. *Policy & Society*, 29(3), pp. 219-229.

South African Council of Churches (SACC). 2025. *Churches United Against Corruption*. Available from <https://sacc.org.za/churches-united-against-corruption/> [accessed 6 November 2025].

South African Council of Churches (SACC). 2025. *Who we are*. Available at: <https://sacc.org.za/who-we-are/> [accessed 6 November 2025].

South African Law Commission, 1999. *Project 109: Review of the System of Regulation of Religious Practitioners, Discussion Paper 88*. Pretoria: South African Law Commission. Available from https://www.justice.gov.za/salrc/dpapers/dp88_prj109_marr_1999.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 13 November 2025].

Sreekumar, D. 2023. *What is a Theoretical Framework? How to Write It (with Examples)*. *Academic writing*. Available from <https://researcher.life/blog/article/what-is-a-theoretical-framework-how-to-write-it/> [accessed 7 May 2024].

Stats SA. 2023. *Statistical results of the South African Census of 2022*. Pretoria: Stats SA.

Stein D. J., Seedat, S., Kamir D., Moomal H., Herman A., Sonnega J., and Williams R. Stewart, D. and Klein, S. 2016. The use of theory in research. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 38(3), pp.615-619.

Stein, D.J., Seedat, S., Kaminer, D., Moomal, H., Herman, A., Sonnega, J. and Williams, D.R., 2011. The impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on psychological distress and forgiveness in South Africa. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 43(6), pp.462-468.

Steytler, N. 2005. *The place and role of local government in federal systems*. Available from https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=1a81547e-2091-aba4-56cf-9857279c7e75&groupId=252038 [accessed 25 June 2025].

Streefkerk, R., 2019. *Inductive vs. Deductive Research Approach: Steps & Examples*. Scribbr. Available from https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/inductive-deductive-reasoning/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 12 November 2025].

Sullivan, W.F. 2005. *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Swanepoel, B., Erasmus, B. and Schenk, H. 2009. *South African Human Resource Management. Theory and Practice* (4th Ed.). Cape Town: Juta.

Swart, I. 2006. Churches as the Theological and Social Voices of Hope: Lessons from the HIV/AIDS Context in South Africa. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 125, pp.56–69.

Syed, J., Klarsfeld, A., Ngunjiri, F.W. and Härtel, C.E. 2018. *Religious diversity in the workplace*. New York: Cambridge. University press.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Allan Boesak – South African cleric and politician. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Available from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Allan-Boesak> [accessed 11 November 2025].

Thiemann, R.F. 1996. *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy*. A Twentieth Century Fund Book. Georgetown University Press.

- Thornhill, C. 2005. The domain of public administration. *Journal of Public Administration*, 40(4.1), pp.574–583.
- Tracey, P. 2012. Religion and organization: A critical review of current trends and future directions. *Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1), pp.87-134.
- Trepte, S. 2017. Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory. In *Wiley Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Social Security*. New York: Wiley.
- Tricker, B. (2019) *Corporate Governance: Principles, Policies, and Practices* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). 1998. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 1. Cape Town: Juta and Co.
- Tutu, D. 1999. *No Future Without Forgiveness*. London: Rider.
- Tutu, D., Mkhize, H., Boraine, A., Ntsebeza, D., Burton, M., Orr, W., Finca, B., Potgieter, D., Khampepe, S., Randera, F., and Lyster, R., 1998. *Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report (Commission Report Volume One)*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Ullrich C., D. 2024. *South Africa is often referred to as a ‘secular state’. What’s the background?* The Conversation. Available from https://www.polity.org.za/article/what-is-a-secular-state-how-south-africa-has-tried-to-separate-religion-and-politics-2024-05-27?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 8 November 2025].
- Ullrich, C. D. 2019. The State of Secularism: Religion, Tradition, and Democracy in South Africa. *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 35(2), pp.252-255.
- Umeanolue, I.L. 2020. Religious influences on politics in Nigeria: Implications for national development. *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies*, 15(1), pp.139-157.
- United Nations (n.d.). *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic> [accessed 11 November 2025].
- UNESCAP. 2009. *What is Good Governance?* United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Available from <https://www.unescap.org/resources/what-good-governance> [accessed 28 July 2025].

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 1997. *Governance for sustainable human development: A UNDP policy document*. New York: UNDP. Available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/492551?v=pdf> [accessed 15 May 2025].

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2025. *Corruption and Good Governance*. Available from [https://businessintegrity.unodc.org/bip/uploads/documents/resources/Corruption and Good Governance.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com](https://businessintegrity.unodc.org/bip/uploads/documents/resources/Corruption%20and%20Good%20Governance.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com) [accessed 12 November 2025].

Urban. 2016. *Religion in the Public Sector Workplace*. Western City Magazine & Public CEO. Available from <https://www.lcwlegal.com/news/religion-in-the-public-sector-workplace/> [accessed 24 May 2025].

Usturali, A. 2015. *A Conceptual Analysis of Secularism and its Legitimacy in the Constitutional Democratic State*. Policy Brief Series. Available from <https://macmillan.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2024-07/A%20Conceptual%20Analysis%20of%20Secularism%20and%20its%20Legitimacy%20in%20the%20Constitutional%20Democratic%20State.pdf> [accessed 6 November 2025].

van Coller, H. 2020. *Proselytising the Regulation of Religious Bodies in South Africa: Suppressing Religious Freedom? PER: Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad*, 22, Article 10.

Van Coller, H., 2019. *Regulating Religion: State Governance of Religious Institutions in South Africa* (1st Ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.

Van der Vyver, L.M. 2007. Freedom of Religion or Freedom from Religion? An Overview of Issues Pertinent to the Constitutional Protection of Religious Rights and Freedom in “the New South Africa. *Brigham Young University Law Review*, pp. 77–108.

van der Walddt, G., 2014. *Public Management and Governance in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

van der Walddt, G., 2012. *Measuring the Goodness of Governance: Macro, intermediate and micro perspectives*. North West University, South Africa.

Van der Walt, J.L., 2011. Religion in education in South Africa: was social justice served? *South African Journal of Education*, 31(3), pp.381-393.

Van der Walt, F., 2008. *The relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Pretoria.

- Van der Westhuizen, H. C., & Hewitt, L. M. M. 2021. *Leadership development process maturity: An Afrocentric versus Eurocentric perspective*. SA Journal of Human Resource Management. SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur, 19, a1495.
- van Gils, S., Van Quaquebeke, N., van Knippenberg, D., van Dijke, M. and De Cremer, D. 2014. Ethical leadership and follower organizational deviance: The moderating role of follower moral attentiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26(2), pp.190-203.
- van Gils, S., Van Quaquebeke, N., van Knippenberg, D., van Dijke, M. & De Cremer, D., 2014. When leaders behave ethically: How ethical leaders influence followers' ethical behavior and organizational deviance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120(2), pp. 191-203.
- Van Wyk, B. 2007. Public administration and the Constitution: A comparative perspective. *Journal of Public Administration*, 42(1), pp.1–14.
- Verster, P. 2024. The challenge of secularism to religion: A South African Christian perspective. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 105(5).
- Vosloo, R. 2008. The state of exception and religious freedom: Revisiting the church-state confrontation correspondence and statements of 1988. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 34(1), pp.1-17.
- Wabwile, A. 2025. *Meet Frank Chikane: South African cleric and anti-apartheid activist*. Available from https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/other/meet-frank-chikane-south-african-cleric-and-anti-apartheid-activist/ar_A1CP0eP?ocid=AARDHP [accessed 13 May 2025].
- Waseem, M. and Mufti, M. 2009. *Religion, Politics, and Governance in Pakistan, Working Paper 27*. Religion and Development Research Programme, Lahore University of Management Sciences.
- Weaver, G.R. and Agle, B.R. 2002. Religiosity and Ethical Behaviour in Organisations: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective. *The Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), pp.77-97.
- Webber, M. n.d. *HIST363: Global Perspectives on Industrialization. Theories of Sociology of Religion*. Available at: <https://learn.saylor.org/mod/book/view.php?id=67192&chapterid=60757> [accessed 13 April 2024].

- Weisse, W. and Anthonissen, C. 2004. *Maintaining Apartheid or Promoting Change. The Role of the Dutch Reformed Church in a Phase of Increasing Conflict in South Africa*. Münster, New York: Waxmann.
- Welker, M., Koopman, N., and Vorster, J.M. 2017. *Church and Civil Society. German and South African perspectives*. Institute for Theological & Interdisciplinary Research. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.
- Winnail, D.S. 2023. When the Blind Lead the Blind. *Tomorrow's World Magazine*, 25(24).
- Wolfensohn, J.D. 2016. *Understandings of Development Should Encompass Religion*. Berkley Forum. Available from https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/understandings-of-development-should-encompass-religion?utm_source=chatgpt.com [accessed 30 July 2025].
- Xaso, L. 2012. The separation of church and state: constitutional law. *Without Prejudice*, 12(8), pp.62-63.
- Yardley, E. 2025. 2025. *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWVnPy3RkGA> [accessed 1 July 2025].
- Yin, R.K. 2011. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Zuma, J.G. 2009. *Address by ANC President Jacob Zuma at the Rhema Church Prayer Service, Randburg, Johannesburg, 15 March 2009*. Available from <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/jacob-zuma-on-the-anc-and-the-church> [accessed 8 November 2025].