

Interactional leadership: Jesus' model of leadership – A case of Mark 7:25–29



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Research Project Registration:

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Project Number: 13339746

Description:

This research is part of the project, 'Healing during the New Testament', directed by Dr Dube, Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria.

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Dates:

Received: 15 May 2019

Accepted: 24 Jan. 2020

Published: 28 May 2020

How to cite this article:

Addo, J.K. & Dube, Z., 2020, 'Interactional leadership: Jesus' model of leadership – A case of Mark 7:25–29', *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 76(4), a5554. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.5554>

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Inspired by Goffman and Mead Social Interactionism theory and Ghanaian traditional leadership model, this article interprets Mark 7:24–30 as text that re-imagines alternative leadership practice. The study suggests that social interactionism theory tenants of ritual making, people processing, characterisation, frame making and dramaturgy provide an alternative heuristic tools to understand Jesus' view of leadership. Seemingly and for Jesus, leadership is a product of social interaction derived from the manner one interacts with various people. This study proposes that the Ghanaian Akan traditional notion of leadership based on social interaction provides an analogical model that complements social interactionism theory in interpreting Jesus' leadership practices. Therefore, the study explains social interactionism theory and then illustrated it through Akan leadership model analogue. The story of the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:24–30 gives the social interaction, people processing, characterisation, frame making and dramaturgy that informs Jesus' leadership model to be modelled by the Church.

Keywords: social interactionism; leadership; Gospel of Mark; Jesus; Ghana.

Introduction

Jesus spent time with people and, through his interaction, he left us with vast material to infer regarding his leadership style. Social interaction is inordinately tied to leadership and it appears that a leader's success hinges on mastery of this indispensable daily phenomenon. Unknown to many is the nexus between leadership and interaction, which is typified in Jesus Christ, who expressed leadership in everyday living. Over the years, Bible-based discourses on leadership have projected 'service' as the key operational word.

The service paradigm concerning leadership predates Jesus, but the method by which he came at service is what sets for us a new leadership paradigm to be explored. In this article, an attempt is made to discover Jesus in his social interactions for a leadership paradigm using Mark 7:24–30 as the base material. Consequently, traditional leadership categories from the Akan culture implicitly inform my use of social interactionism perspective which is used to interpret the chosen text. Using models in Akan culture theorised through social interactionism, I argue that Jesus' interactions conveyed his leadership model and that leadership is visible or demonstrated through interaction.

Ghanaian traditional notion of leadership

The Ghanaian traditional notion of leadership is expressed through interaction. Among the Akan people of Ghana, leadership is service embodied in interactive performance. People do not tick boxes to measure a good leader; instead, one's public performance is decoded and observed to determine its humanness. The humane person which also translates into ideas about a good leader is determined from two terms 'nyimpa',¹ which literally means a human being but used here in a figurative sense in contrast to nyimpan – which literally means not a human being but also used here in a figurative sense. A person characterised by the expression 'nyimpa' performs humane social interactions of greeting, acts of kindness, valuing others, going out of his or her way to help and being of service to others, while the expression 'nyimpan' does the opposite. One's outward look through dressing or status does not measure one's state of being *nyimpa* [humanness]. The other term is *opanyin*, which literally means elder but construed intrinsically as a good leader. A person categorised as *opanyin* demonstrates culturally matured leadership tendencies which orient towards exemplary leadership actions and behaviours affecting others

1. In the Fante language, the expression 4y1 *nyimpa* [he or she is a human being] figuratively means someone who exudes ideal cultural values and inner virtues which translate into helpful actions towards others. In contrast, 4y1 *nyimpan* means a person who is bereft of good values and virtues who does not affect others positively.

and shaping society progressively. *Nyimpa* could be defined as one's embeddedness or level of incarnation into the lives of others. Before interpreting Mark's text, I theorise the concepts of *nyimpa* and *opanyin* using social interactionism.

Social interactionism perspective

Social interactionism that analyses meaning based on micro-social interaction is associated with Herbert Blumer and Hebert Mead and was later popularised by Erving Goffman. To understand what happens during the interaction process, Mead (1934) developed the concepts of 'Self', 'Self-interaction', 'the Development of Self' and 'Symbolic Meaning'; Goffman added the concepts of 'ritual making', 'frame making' and 'stage making' (Wallace & Wolf 2005:204). Although the perspective has various cogs, I limit the focus on Goffman's ritual making, characterisation, frame making and stage making, along with Mead's role-taking to analyse Jesus' performances in the interactional processes, motivation and interactional structure in Mark 7:24–30.

Erving Goffman's cog of social interactionism analytical perspective

Goffman's social interactional analytical perspective is defined in his works, *Presentation of Self* (1959, Dramaturgy), *Interaction Ritual* (1967), *Frame Analysis* (1974) and *Interactional Order* (1983). Gleaned from these works are the concepts 'ritual making', 'frame making and stage making', 'people-processing encounters' and 'characterisation' as analytical tools which are used to analyse social interaction in everyday life. This mode of micro-analysis offers creative conceptual insights into how people interact. Goffman (1983:5) argues that individuals possess a large inventory of shared understandings and orientations which is used in daily interactions.

These shared understandings and orientations denote the cultural categories which are internalised by individuals. For Goffman (1983:11), interactions have their own structure and a critical feature of face-to-face gatherings. Whenever individuals come into each other's presence, they are in a social situation; they are actors. A social situation covers ambulatory units, contacts, conversational encounters, formal meetings, platform performances and social occasions. Here, participants engage in ritual making, frame making, stage making, processing encounters and characterisation.

Ritual Making of Social Ritualisation is (Goffman 1983):

[T]he standardization of bodily and vocal behaviour through socialization, affording such behaviour – such as gestures, if you will – a specialized communicative function in the stream of behaviour. (p. 3)

Ritual is observable conversation pattern expressing how an individual feels and evaluates participants during the interaction process (Goffman 1967:5). Whatever the forms, social interaction involves rituals. Ritual making which begins with the individual's presence is followed by various

performances, which include speech and gestures that are mutually deduced or understood (Goffman 1983:3).

People-processing encounters is another analytical dimension of Goffman's cog of social interactionism. Goffman (1983:8) explained people-processing encounters as those 'encounters in which the "impression" subjects make during the interaction affects their life chances'. Impressions are how subjects present themselves in the interaction. This kind of social interaction has subjects (individuals whose fates are determined in the process) and gatekeepers or deciders in the mix. Goffman describes processing encounters as ubiquitous in that they happen everywhere between any two or more individuals; in this sense, everyone is a gatekeeper and a subject regarding something.

Additional analytical tool is characterisation, which is defined as one's assumption of the other. Characterisation involves categoric characterisation, which is placing the other in one or more social categories and individual characterisation which puts the individual depending on his or her appearance, tone of voice, mention of name or any other person-differentiating device (Goffman 1983:4).

Another tool is Frame Making, which determines the meaning of gestures and rituals that one makes. The kind of gestures and rituals individuals in a social situation choose to express is a way of frame making the interaction, which is determining what is acceptable and excluding what is excluded in the interaction (Goffman 1971). Framing is not static, and humans' dynamic deliberative capacities allow them to shift frames rather easily, broadening, narrowing, or even changing their substantive content (Turner 1988:93).

Stage Making or dramaturgy is the most prominent in all Goffman's (1983) analytical tools. Dramaturgy views interactions as impression making akin to staged drama various physical props of the stage are used to enhance a performance, that is to say interaction revolves around people's use of relative positioning of bodies, movement back and forth between backstage and front-stage regions (Turner 1988:93). The individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself or herself in a given way solely to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response. Based on the manner, appearance and setting, individuals in interaction are regarded as performers who deduce from each other the nature of each other's action (Goffman 1971:244). The social performer performs a social role, which borders on rights and duties attached to a given status by the actor to the audience. The social role will involve one or more parts and that each of these different parts may be presented by the performer on different occasions to the same kinds of audience or to an audience of the same persons (Goffman 1971:27).

The social roles performers implicitly or explicitly play in social interaction unwittingly reveal their identity. The social performer uses front and back regions of the social setting. A region may be defined 'as any place that is bounded to

some degree by barriers to perception. A back region may be defined 'as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly challenged as a matter of course. It is here that the capacity of a performance may be thoroughly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed' (Goffman 1971:114). Front region is where impression is fostered on others. A performer may want to direct another in interaction. To direct the activities of others in interactions, a performer will creatively keep strategic secrets from the other interaction participants. A social performer can team up with others to foster a common impression. A team cooperates to stage a single routine to foster impression for the organisation, and this resonates with Jesus and his disciples on one side and other interactants on another side. The team notion is helpful to observe, understand and analyse the kind of team impression Jesus and his disciples possibly fostered.

George Herbert Mead's cog of social interactionism perspective

Mead's concept of self-interaction involves the self which responds to a gesture that carries a symbolic meaning discerned through self-interaction by taking on the role or attitude of others, which in turn helps the individual to organise and re-organise his or her action by way of response. The concept makes it possible to analyse social interactions which are unstructured and are not affected by previously established social order. Self-interaction is the inward interaction one has with oneself, taking issues or reality into account and organising themselves for action (Wallace & Wolf 2005:192). Through taking the role of the other (assuming what the other person will say or do), the individual is able to come back to himself and thereby direct his own process of communication (Mead 1934:256). Self-interaction thus forms the basis for role-taking in Mead's conception of the human act in interaction.

Mead (1934:254) points out that another major consequence of the role taking is that it allows the individual to exercise control over his own response. The control of the response of the individual by himself through taking the role of the other brings out the value of this type of communication. The control can take the form of self-criticism, which helps the individual to conform to social process of experience and behaviour. For Mead, the self-criticism is essentially social criticism, and behaviour controlled by self-criticism is essentially behaviour controlled socially because of the internalisation of the generalised other (Mead 1934:256).

Mead argues that the self has two parts: the 'I' and 'Me'. The 'I' part is considered as the unorganised response of the individual to the attitudes of others, while the 'Me' part is the set of organized attitudes of others that the individual himself assumes in turn. They are the perspectives concerning oneself that the individual has learnt from others (Mead 1934:135). Generalised Other comprises the organised attitudes of the whole community. Mead explains that the matured-self arises

when a Generalised Other is assimilated so that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individuals (Wallace & Wolf 2005:209). The 'I' gives the sense of freedom or initiative. In short, Mead's concept of self-interaction begins with a gesture which carries a symbolic meaning and, meaning is discerned through self-interaction by taking on the role or attitude of others, which in turn helps the individual to organise and re-organise his or her action by way of response. Mead's way of observing social interaction leads the researcher to analyse Jesus' social interaction in Mark by asking what were the gestures used in the interactions? What symbolic meanings were possibly derived?

Analysing interaction from Social interactionism perspective with insights from Ghanaian traditional notion of leadership obviously raises the question as to the primary analysis. Social interactionism perspective observes or analyses social interactions at the micro level. It will help look at the Markan text themselves to segregate the various interactional markers and not social or cultural background. Ghanaian traditional notion of leadership brings in the cultural and structural categories which usually people in interaction carry and implicitly inform the interaction; thus, it becomes critical to how the interactions are analysed. Combined with knowledge of the 1st-century ancient Mediterranean biblical world, the methodological approach adopted puts this study within a context making the researcher a plausible emic reader of the Markan text.

Social interactional analysis of Mark 7:24–30

Social interactional observation and analysis

While the historical questions regarding authorship, date and location are necessary, I leave out questions associated with historical critical method. The story in Mark 7:24–30 records the encounter between the non-Jew Syrophenician woman who had a sick child and Jesus (Iverson 2007:40).

Stage making and characterisation (verses 25–26)

Verse 25 reports regarding the social encounter of the woman, saying 'in fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet'.

Plausibly, this interactional phrase can be appreciated in the light of Goffman's idea of personal front in dramaturgy. One's front on the social stage is those things that we most intimately identify with the performer himself or herself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he or she goes (Goffman 1971:14). Her personal front (manner) comes because of the characterisation 'a demon possessed girl's mother', consequently, gives her a front of uncleanness, vulnerability and creates an impression of need.

The story reports saying, she 'came and fell down at his feet' [ἐλθοῦσα προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ]. Falling at the

feet of Jesus is her interaction strategy emanating from the macro-social structure of the ancient Mediterranean communities, particularly the patron–client or the master–slave social system. The typical patron–client practice was a hierarchical relationship in which the client was of inferior social class, while the patron would possess greater economic wealth, power, authority or prestige that enables him to help or do favours for the client and the client serves him in return. It can be argued that the woman saw Jesus as one with power, and hence his capacity to do her a favour by healing her child. It is reasonable to infer from her action that she saw him in the light of a patron or a master, as such humbled herself before him with the gesture of obeisance like a client or a slave. The gesture of falling at his feet, a sign of humility, was suggestive of an effort to win Jesus’ attention and sympathy.

The idea of ritual making as a tool within Goffman’s dramaturgy helps to understand the woman’s action. Ritual is understood as an action of a performer in a social encounter either face to face or mediated, where the person acts out in a kind of pattern – verbal or nonverbal, consciously or not – by which he or she expresses his or her view of the situation and by which he or she evaluates participants. By portraying the gesture of falling at Jesus’ feet, the woman fostered an impression of a client, respect, submission and dependence on him. Her gesture of falling at his feet and later addressing Jesus as Lord further created the impression that she acknowledges and submits to his power, lordship and authority and control over her. Similarly, the gesture of the woman bowing to a male religious leader is also evident in the Akan traditional cultural system. In the Akan traditional situation, it is more of humility and respect to the religious leader demonstrated by the Syrophenician woman.

The story continues in verse 26 with the description of the woman; the ‘woman was a gentile, a Syrophenician’ [γυνὴ ἤν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα]; this is a treble description of the one who prostrated [προσέπεσεν] before Jesus, ‘a woman, a gentile and a Syrophenician’. This phrase describes the social status of the woman coming into the social situation with Jesus. Characterisation as a tool helps in understanding the social status of this woman who interacted with Jesus.

The description of the woman – a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth – suggests a categoric characterisation, which dovetails into her personal front. The characterisation allowed Jesus to glean clues from her conduct and appearance while applying his previous experience of gentiles (Greeks) and his untested stereotypes to her. Such a characterisation led to Jesus’ conclusion that the woman is an ‘outsider and unworthy’ of Jewish salvation agenda; meanwhile, Jesus was to the woman a foreigner to the Tyre and Sidon community (Burkill 1966:22, Carney 1975).

Similarly, characterisation according to where one hails from is very much a part of the Akan social system. Unconsciously, such characterisation influences the interactional approach one will adopt in the Akan social context; for example, how a person is treated, liked or favoured by another in a social

situation has everything to do with what the other perceives to be his or her background. Jesus’ countenancing and sustaining interaction with an ‘outsider and unworthy’ person reveals him as non-discriminatory on the basis of gender and race, and an impression of accepting all is created with this gesture of his.

Having been introduced to the characters of the story, Mark moves to their interaction. Mark reports, saying, ‘And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter’ [καὶ ἡρώτα αὐτὸν ἵνα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς] (Mark 7:27). In tandem with her personal front, the woman pleaded with Jesus for help.

The woman who had initiated the interaction with the gesture of kneeling, here, employs the social interactional resource of speech. Speech plays a special role in interaction, allowing matters sited outside the social situation to be brought into the collaborative process. It allows for negotiation of plans regarding matters to be dealt with beyond the current social situation or the frame of the interaction (Goffman 1983:3). The Syrophenician woman through her request framed the interaction with Jesus limiting it to her need and by extension her daughter’s. Jesus had to remain this frame and engage her. The use of the Greek, ‘ἡρώτα’ [imperfect indicative active in grammatical function], suggests that she was repetitive in her plea, and she kept beseeching Jesus. Her repetitive plea coupled with the gesture of bowing down created a submissive impression, desperation and vulnerable visual regard to Jesus. Such an impression could easily lead exploitation of her but not so with Jesus. Given the nature of her plea, it can be gleaned that she characterised Jesus as spiritually powerful, a healer and an exorcist, hence, mightier than herself. Besides, her plea fostered an impression of open acceptance and belief in Jesus’ ministry and mission. Jesus was hospitable to her and listened to the plea. Hospitality and kindness, being important part of Akan traditional leadership, are reflected in Jesus’ interaction response to the woman. *By countenancing a foreign woman, Jesus showed a sign of good leadership and good neighbourliness, as Akan leaders who do such things are highly commended. This leadership orientation is underpinned by the communal sense of living in the Akan communities.*

Social processing encounter (verses 27–29)

Verse 27 should be understood as affirming social categories and yet also importantly presenting social processing encounter. The *narrator’s report* concerning Jesus’ response, saying, ‘let the children first be fed’, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs’. Jesus’ response brings a couple of social interactional issues to the fore. Here we correlate Goffman’s people-processing encounters whereby the impression that subjects make during the interaction affects their life chances. During *the encounter*, *interactants* tend to gate-keep their categories of *assessment*. Firstly, Jesus affirms the Syrophenician woman’s categoric characterisation, implying that she was an outsider. Jesus shows knowledge of existing stereotypes of the Jewish people

against *Syrophoenician ethnic group*. His response to her uses two characterisations: those who are deserving of what the woman was requesting, the 'chosen people', the so-called 'children of God', 'Israel' he characterised as 'children' and outsiders he characterised as 'dogs'. The Jews stereotype the Syrophoenician ethnic group as dogs and this characterisation creates the impression to the woman that she did not deserve her request concerning healing. Secondly, through his response, Jesus modifies the interactional frame, making possible for one to interpret it in the light of Goffman's processing encounter. Her subsequent responses would determine whether her request would be granted or not. Jesus may have intended the woman to merit her request, or at least transcend those traditional stereotypes.

Here, Jesus works as a gatekeeper (decider); his most important indicator will be the woman's faith through him in the 'God' of the Judeans. This she did by revealing faith in something that is expected from the chosen people or the children. Furthermore, Jesus created the impression that on the basis of his fame and what the woman heard, he was the sole decider as to whether her request will be granted or not. He is the one to take the 'Children's' bread and throw it to the 'dogs'. As it were, Jesus was fully aware of his right and his responsibility as a gatekeeper (decider) informed by the popular culture of the Jews against the Syrophoenician ethnic group. Similarly, Akan Traditional Leadership orientation celebrates cultural values and traditions as Jesus demonstrated in his response to the woman but the leaders expected to transcend the negative stereotypes and prejudices which arise out of ethnocentricity.

The woman's response comes in verse 28, saying, 'even the dogs under the table eat the Children's crumbs' [καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν παιδίων], in this clause, the woman employs the *analogy* of children feeding dogs which negates perhaps Jesus' graded right to the bread. Jesus' supposed harsh response is turned around by the woman's witty response regarding the simultaneous place of the dogs with the children at table. Donahue and Harrington (eds. 2002:234) strongly suggest that Jesus was 'overcome in this verbal repartee' by the woman. Well, no verbal contest is actually seen in this pericope, Hooker (1991:185) argues that in the context of the discussion, the use of dogs is a 'challenge to the woman to justify her request' rather than a demeaning statement (Taylor 1952). Camery-Hoggatt (1992:150–151) shares a similar view and calls Jesus' response *peirastic irony*. It has been quizzed that 'was not the entire clause of verse 27 or just the key term 'first' added to echo the early Christian mission's struggles with the prerogatives of the Jews and the mission to the Gentiles?' (Guelich 1989:387).

In verse 28, the woman explicitly characterises Jesus as 'Lord', although the use of lord is not unique and limited to Jesus, it is an individual characterisation perhaps based on what she had heard from others about him (Moloney 2002:215). In terms of her interactional approach in this response, she puts up a meek manner (Moloney 2002). From social interactional

perspective, manner refers to those stimuli which function at the time to indicate the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the social situation. Employing a meek, apologetic manner, the Syrophoenician woman gives the impression that she wants to follow the lead of Jesus. Plausibly, the macro-sociocultural arrangement of patron–client relationship of their time most likely influenced her manner. The woman continued with Jesus' modified frame of processing encounter by employing his 'dog' stereotype in giving a clever response 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs'. She is counting on a socially accepted practice, that of slavery, to request something from the master. From the response, the woman is not backing off. Though not literary a 'child', but culturally, 'dogs' were permitted to lay under the master's table. 'The crumbs' falling from the table are the 'dogs' portion of the same meal, the woman asserted. Did the woman's manner combined with her speech create the impression that satisfied Jesus' indicator?

Jesus' response comes in verse 29, saying, 'For this saying you may go your way' [καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὑπάγε]. Plausibly, here Jesus also stays with the people-processing encounter approach in this response. It can be garnered from Jesus here that the woman's impression had met his indicator – faith in himself. After processing the woman's response in the light of his indicator, he found the woman a believer in his ministry and mission and as such worthy of help. Although Jesus began processing the woman's performance in the interaction from a Jewish position, one may call it a position of bias, he will not allow that to influence his decision. It was not about where the woman was coming from; rather, it was about what the woman believed, that is, the very essence of Jesus ministry – belief in God and submission to him. His interactional processing of the woman creates the impression of impartiality, fairness and equity to all.

Consequently, he affirms and commends her, 'for this saying'. He goes on to assure her that 'you may go your way'. He concludes with an audacious declaration of hope, 'the demon has left your daughter'. By these words, Jesus creates the impression 'I care'. By this, he continues the tradition of Judean faith being accessible to 'outsiders' even if they do not ask for it. Although tradition puts you at the margins or under the table, I bring you to sit at table like the children and share in the meal with them. The emphatic statement 'the demon has left your daughter' creates an impression which affirms the woman's earlier characterisation of Jesus as powerful, a healer, an exorcist and a mightier one. Jesus, like a good traditional Akan leader, although the Jewish cultural and traditional stereotypes and prejudices set against Syrophoenician ethnic group were fresh on his mind, he transcended them and then helped the gentile woman.

It is as if the woman reminded Jesus of a tradition, whereby slaves (dogs) 'gain' from being just that and he responded in the affirmative. The Syrophoenician woman inspired Jesus' leadership. The irony is that she uses the patron–client or

slave–master social practice to her advantage to get Jesus to act accordingly and ‘heal’ her child. The desperate mother brilliantly leads Jesus the Kyrios into acting for her to achieve her ultimate objective, for her child to be healed. Following her lead, Jesus takes action which has ramifications for social change.

Jesus-performed interactional leadership principles gleaned

Jesus had a witty interaction with the Syrophoenician woman from which five essential interactional leadership principles have been gleaned. These principles are not exacted by legislation and enactment but what the leader says and does.

Leadership as transformation

A distinguishing factor of leadership demonstrated by Jesus in his interactions is giving himself to reforming the social and traditional value system, traditional thinking and social action. He corrected defective traditional value systems, engineered a rethinking of traditional thought patterns and inspired new social action through his social action and interactional decisions. Jesus challenged traditional and long-held societal views with new insights. He wisely and courageously expanded the frontiers of traditional limits which served as barriers to the purpose of the kingdom of God. Thus, Jesus can be described as a reformer and barrier breaker leader for the common good. In creative ways, he made changes which rewrote and turned negative narratives that existed amongst the neighbours into positive narratives of acceptance of each other. Jesus’ approach coalesces with Burn’s notion of transforming leadership, which tries to elevate members’ self-centred attitudes, values and beliefs to higher, altruistic attitudes, values and beliefs (Starratt 1993:7).

We can deduce that for Jesus, leadership is making a difference in the lives of those who the social system rejects or alienates. He personally reached out and welcomed those ostracised by traditions, suffered social systems alienation, traditional leadership rejection as well as organisational culture estrangement. Similarly, another significant leadership attitude demonstrated by Jesus is challenging and seeking reformation of negative social tendencies such as abusive, demeaning and discriminatory stereotypes and prejudices in the community. He defied human artificial barriers to act for the good of fellow humans. He showed leadership when he moved beyond the lures of cultural partiality and delivered fair, equal and just judgement in all matters.

Leadership is advancing and increasing territorial influence

Jesus shows that leadership involves taking territories and making incursion into uncharted areas. He made strategic moves to reach out to unchartered territories in his leadership and religious influence. For instance, he projected a friendly disposition in a social setting deemed hostile by all for persons in that social setting to respond to him positively.

Jesus can be said to be a conqueror-leader in a non-violent way. Jesus expanded the scope of influence by reaching the unreached and by touching the untouched.

Leadership is humility

Jesus demonstrated humble leadership when he demystified leadership by condescending to the level of the everyday people at the fringes of society. His unique ability to shuffle between the elite and the non-elite, in essence, positioned him as a leader who is no respecter of status or class. To him, leadership must touch all. He met everyone at his or her own level.

Leadership is producing great results

Jesus lived out a leadership which exuded confidence to his associates and followers, hence achieving legitimacy of leadership and leadership credibility not by means of law but by means of interactional results.

He was received according to what the followers heard him say and saw him do. This created a sense of trust and acceptance in them. As a true leader, the followers believed in what he offered and could offer them.

Leadership is being credible and motivational

In his social interactions, Jesus presents himself as a credible leader. He ensured his words and actions (character) connected to make his words trustworthy. His words did not only connect actions; they were also powerful, inspiring hope and delivering confidence to the followers. His words and declarations were realised according to the way he made them. Jesus acknowledged the efforts of his followers by using words of affirmation and commendation whenever they had acted appropriately. He was a motivational leader. Nyiwung (2010:392, unpublished dissertation) has rightly observed that effective leaders are those who know their mission and vision, and consequently supervise the motivation of their following in such a way that they are not lured into error by their enthusiasm or because of pressure.

Conclusion

This study employs social interactionism of Goffman, Mead and Blumer to re-imagine Jesus’ social interaction. The advantage of this approach is that besides Christological approaches that see Jesus as divine, the approach makes us realise that Jesus, ordinarily, interacted with people. Through his interaction, he transformed cultural barriers and motivated people. Interacting with totally different persons from another region and of particular gender, the interaction would have proved impossible. However, by engaging the woman into social processing and hospitality, Jesus was able to meet the social needs of people beyond his gender, class and ethnicity. Through the story, Jesus demonstrated interaction leadership principles of motivation, humility, transformation and kindness.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally to this work.

Ethical consideration

This article followed all ethical standards for carrying out a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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