

Relational Leadership: An Exploration of Paul's Leadership to Timothy and Its Application to the 21st Century Leadership Challenges

Isaac Ademola ABIOYE¹
Fortunatus Godwin Pontifex ALABI, PhD²
Julius Olajide ADEMOLA, Ph.D³

¹ *Department of Politics and International Relations, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State*

^{2,3} *Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State*

¹ *abioye.isaac@lcu.edu.ng, +2348034944862*

² *alabig@run.edu.ng, +2348065688983*

³ *olajideishola5@gmail.com, +2348033828962*

Abstract

The sheer volume of literature on mentoring and leadership across a variety of disciplines is an indication of the high profile it has been afforded in recent years. However, though several studies have analysed Apostle Paul's readership style, the relational leadership model that Paul exhibits in Timothy is, in most cases, missing. The Apostle Paul's mentorship-relational leadership with Timothy, his young disciple, protégé, partner in ministry, and adopted son in the faith, is an exemplary model of Biblical leadership and discipleship model, one that is worthy of significant influence in the training and development of church leaders today. In this work, the authors consider the best global practices in mentor-mentee interaction and how this can affect both the leader and the follower. The relevance of the Paul-Timothy mentorship model to the Church and how this can cause church ministry expansion using leader-follower intimacy is the crux of this paper. The paper highlights and concludes with a discussion of critical issues that church administrators responsible for establishing mentorship relationships should consider to maximise the experience of mentoring for all stakeholders. Among others, this work recommends that church leaders should apply the Paul-Timothy relationship as a style of continuity in the ministry.

Keywords: Relational Leadership, Paul's Leadership, Timothy, 21st Century, Leadership Challenges.

Introduction

Leadership is a timeless concept that transcends historical and cultural boundaries. While leadership styles and contexts may evolve, certain principles remain relevant throughout the ages. In the New Testament, the relationship between the Apostle Paul and his young protégé Timothy provides a rich source of insights into effective leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). The Apostle Paul, one of the most influential figures in early Christianity, played a significant role not only in spreading the Christian faith but also in mentoring and equipping future leaders. One of Paul's notable mentees was Timothy, a young pastor and church leader. Paul's letters to Timothy, particularly the two letters known as 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, offer valuable insights into his leadership and mentorship (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). This exploration aims to analyze the principles of leadership, mentorship, and discipleship found in Paul's interactions with Timothy and to consider their relevance and application to the leadership challenges of the 21st century.

This study explores the leadership principles exhibited by the Apostle Paul in his mentorship of Timothy, as documented in the New Testament epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy. The study aims to identify and analyze the key leadership qualities, strategies, and principles employed by Paul in shaping Timothy's leadership development and its application to 21st-century leadership challenges. By examining this historical mentorship relationship, the

research aims to extract valuable insights into contemporary leadership theory and practice, addressing the unique leadership challenges of the 21st century.

The objective(s) of this study includes the following:

1. To explore the mentorship and leadership principles exhibited by the Apostle Paul as conveyed in the New Testament epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy, with a focus on the qualities, strategies, and approaches he employed to develop Timothy's leadership capabilities.
2. To identify and extract key leadership principles, values, and behaviours demonstrated by Paul during his mentorship of Timothy, as well as any specific challenges and context in which these principles were applied.
3. To assess the applicability and relevance of the leadership principles derived from Paul's mentorship of Timothy to contemporary leadership challenges in the 21st century.
4. To offer practical insights and recommendations for 21st-century leaders based on the analysis of Paul's leadership mentorship to Timothy.

Leadership is a multifaceted concept that involves the process of guiding, influencing, and inspiring individuals or groups to work together toward achieving common goals or objectives. It encompasses the ability to make informed decisions, provide direction, and motivate others to contribute their skills and efforts to a shared vision (Yukl, 2013). Leadership goes beyond formal authority or position and is often characterized by the capacity to build relationships, foster collaboration, and create a sense of purpose within an organization or community. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the direction, culture, and outcomes of groups, organizations, and societies (Northouse, 2018).

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership is a leadership approach that prioritizes building strong, positive relationships as a means of achieving common goals and fostering collective growth. This leadership style places a strong emphasis on communication, trust, empathy, collaboration, and the well-being of individuals within the group (Dinh, et al, 2014). Unlike some traditional top-down leadership models, relational leadership focuses on the leader's ability to connect with and influence others through relationships rather than relying solely on their positional authority (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005). Key Concepts of Relational Leadership includes the following:

1. **Building Trust:** Trust is a cornerstone of relational leadership. Leaders aim to build trust through open and transparent communication, consistency, and being reliable and honest. Trust is essential for creating a safe and cooperative environment (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005).
2. **Effective Communication:** Leaders practising relational leadership are skilled communicators. They actively listen, engage in dialogue, and provide feedback. Effective communication helps in understanding the needs, concerns, and aspirations of team members (Uhl-Bien et. al, 2014).
3. **Empathy and Compassion:** Relational leaders demonstrate empathy and compassion toward their team members. They seek to understand the emotions and perspectives of those they lead and provide support during challenging times (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007).
4. **Collaboration:** Relational leaders promote collaboration and teamwork. They encourage the sharing of ideas, resources, and expertise, fostering a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for achieving goals.

5. **Personalized Leadership:** This approach recognizes that each individual is unique and may respond differently to leadership styles. Relational leaders adapt their approach to fit the needs and preferences of team members (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005).
6. **Shared Leadership:** Relational leadership often encourages shared or distributed leadership, where multiple individuals within a group take on leadership roles and responsibilities, depending on their expertise and interests (Uhl-Bien et. al, 2014).
7. **Conflict Resolution:** Relational leaders are skilled at addressing conflicts constructively. They seek to understand the underlying issues, involve all relevant parties in the resolution process, and work toward mutually beneficial solutions (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007).
8. **Growth and Development:** Relational leaders are committed to the personal and professional growth of team members. They provide opportunities for learning, skill development, and advancement.

Relational leadership is a versatile approach that can be tailored to the unique needs and challenges of various leadership situations. It emphasizes the importance of people-centred leadership and is particularly relevant in today's interconnected and interdependent world.

Timothy, a young disciple of Paul, played a significant role in early Christianity and was entrusted with leadership responsibilities (Northouse, 2018). Paul's mentorship of Timothy is documented in his two epistles to him: 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, as well as references in the book of Acts. Paul's leadership to Timothy can be distilled into several key principles: (Yukl, 2013).

1. **Spiritual Development:** Paul recognized the need for Timothy's spiritual growth and development. He advised him to "not neglect the gift you have" (1 Timothy 4:14) and to "fan into flame the gift of God" (2 Timothy 1:6). This emphasis on nurturing spiritual gifts and potential remains a cornerstone of effective leadership.
2. **Teaching and Sound Doctrine:** Paul emphasized the importance of sound teaching and doctrine. He instructed Timothy to "teach what is in accord with sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:10) and "guard the good deposit entrusted to you" (2 Timothy 1:14). In the 21st century, the commitment to truth, education, and ethical leadership is paramount.
3. **Leading by Example:** Paul's leadership to Timothy was marked by personal example. He exhorted Timothy to "set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Authentic leadership through personal example is a timeless principle.
4. **Mentoring and Encouragement:** Paul consistently encouraged Timothy, addressing his fears and doubts. He urged Timothy to "fight the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12) and "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). The role of mentorship and encouragement is critical in modern leadership contexts.
5. **Resilience and Perseverance:** Throughout his letters, Paul conveyed the importance of resilience in leadership. He noted, "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3) and "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Leaders in the 21st century face numerous challenges and must exhibit similar resilience (Burns, 2003).

Paul and Timothy

Timothy is first referenced in the book of Acts about Paul's second missionary voyage. Paul established churches at Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe during his first tour, which was to the southern region of Asia Minor or Turkey. On his second tour, he reportedly encountered Timothy for the first time (Acts 15:36-41). According to 2 Timothy, Lois and Eunice,

Timothy's grandmother and mother, were among Paul's earliest converts from the Jewish neighbourhood of Lystra; Timothy must have accepted the Christian gospel in the intervals between Paul's visits. Paul was still moved by the women of this family when he was writing Timothy years later because he could see in them their genuine and enduring faith (2 Timothy 1:5).

Even just because Paul now requested that Timothy undergo the process of circumcision, Timothy found the transition to leadership with Paul to be difficult. Although his father was a Gentile and his mother was Jewish, Timothy had not yet undergone circumcision (Thurston, 2009). Acts 6:3 states that Paul "took Timothy and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (Acts 6:3). Timothy's circumcision was performed to make clear Paul's affirmation of Judaism in the context of Christian outreach, not to ensure his identity as a Christian. Paul confirmed Timothy in his ancestors' faith to honour Judaism and demonstrate to all onlookers that the Gospel of Jesus was excellent news for both Jews and Gentiles.

The relationship between the Apostle Paul and Timothy, as described in the New Testament, is one of mentorship, discipleship, and deep friendship. It's a significant and well-documented relationship that serves as a model for mentorship and Christian leadership. Paul served as a mentor to Timothy. He took Timothy under his wing, providing guidance, support, and instruction in matters of faith and ministry. This mentorship was essential for Timothy's growth and development as a Christian leader.

Also, Paul often referred to Timothy as his "son" in the faith, highlighting the deep spiritual bond they shared. This father-son metaphor underscores the familial and close nature of their relationship. Timothy's association with Paul provided him with valuable training and exposure to various ministry settings. He learned not only from Paul's teachings but also by observing Paul's actions and leadership style. Paul and Timothy often worked together in ministry. They partnered in spreading the teachings of Christianity, planting churches, and addressing issues in early Christian communities. Their collaboration was marked by a shared sense of purpose and mission.

Paul had great confidence in Timothy's abilities and character. He entrusted Timothy with important tasks, such as leading and overseeing church communities, and he expressed his trust in Timothy's faithfulness and competence. The letters written by Paul to Timothy, found in the New Testament (1st and 2nd Timothy), reveal a deep emotional bond between them. Paul provided encouragement, comfort, and reassurance to Timothy in his challenging leadership roles. Paul and Timothy maintained ongoing communication, both in person and through written correspondence. This communication allowed for the exchange of ideas, encouragement, and guidance.

Paul's circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3) reflects his sensitivity to cultural differences and his willingness to adapt his approach to effectively minister to diverse communities. This aspect of their relationship illustrates an understanding of the need for cultural adaptability in leadership. The relationship between Paul and Timothy exemplifies a model of leadership succession. Paul was intentional about passing on the mantle of leadership to Timothy, ensuring continuity in the mission and ministry. Beyond their mentor-disciple relationship, Paul and Timothy shared a deep friendship marked by mutual affection and care. Paul expressed his longing to see Timothy (2nd Timothy 1:4), revealing the emotional depth of their bond. The relationship between Paul and Timothy is celebrated for its combination of spiritual guidance, mentorship, friendship, and shared service in the early Christian church. It serves as a timeless model for how leaders can invest in the development of emerging leaders, ensuring the continuation of their mission and the growth of the faith community.

Application of Paul's Leadership to 21st Century Challenges

Application of Paul's Leadership to 21st Century Challenges are follows:

1. Spiritual Growth and Development

In the 21st century, leaders must recognize the need for continuous personal and spiritual growth. This is particularly relevant in a rapidly changing world with shifting values and priorities. Just as Paul urged Timothy to nurture his spiritual gifts, modern leaders should invest in self-awareness and personal development. Leadership development programs, coaching, and mentorship can help leaders "fan into flame" their innate talents and capacities (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000)

2. Education and Ethical Leadership

The 21st century presents leaders with complex ethical dilemmas and a demand for sound decision-making. Paul's emphasis on sound teaching and doctrine underscores the importance of education in leadership. Leaders today must invest in their intellectual and ethical capacities. Ethical leadership training, continuing education, and an unwavering commitment to truth are essential (Northouse, 2018).

3. Leading by Example

Leadership in the 21st century demands authenticity. Just as Paul urged Timothy to set an example in conduct and speech, leaders should exhibit the behaviours and values they expect from their teams. Authentic leadership fosters trust and credibility, which are foundational in contemporary leadership (Parolini & Patterson, 2011).

4. Mentorship and Encouragement

Mentorship plays a vital role in leadership development in the 21st century. Leaders, like Paul, should invest in mentoring the next generation. Encouraging and empowering emerging leaders, addressing their doubts, and challenging them to reach their potential is essential (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). This can be facilitated through formal mentorship programs and regular feedback mechanisms.

5. Resilience and Perseverance

The 21st century presents leaders with an array of challenges, from economic crises to global pandemics. Paul's exhortation to endure hardship and persevere as a good soldier resonates in contemporary leadership. Leaders should build resilience by embracing change, developing adaptability, and maintaining a sense of purpose in the face of adversity (Burns, 2003).

Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks for this study are transformation leadership theory and relational leadership theory:

1. Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership, as proposed by James MacGregor Burns and developed by Bernard Bass, emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve exceptional results. This theory is relevant to the study as it aligns with the inspirational and motivational qualities exhibited by the Apostle Paul in his mentorship of Timothy. It serves as a lens through which to analyze the transformational aspects of Paul's leadership.

2. Relational Leadership Theory

Relational leadership theory focuses on building strong relationships, trust, and collaboration. Given that Paul's mentorship of Timothy was marked by the development of a close and influential relationship, this theory serves as a lens through which to understand the relational aspects of Paul's leadership.

The present study was descriptive. This research was designed to apply Paul's leadership to Timothy to the leadership challenges in the 21st century. The population of this study was comprised of churches in Ede South Local Government Area, Osun State. The study was delimited to the CAC, Baptist Church, and RCCG in the Local Government Area. The sample of the present study consisted of 100 members and ministers, who were selected by simple random sampling technique from the selected churches in the Local Government Area. The method was used to give accuracy since all the churches in the Local Government cannot be used.

The research instrument used for this research is a structured questionnaire which was distributed to the selected respondent. The questionnaire was structured in the form of a four-point Likert scale coded as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD), and Disagreed (D).

Data was collected by using the survey method. Both questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher in an organized way. After filling the questionnaire by the respondents, the information gathered was analyzed using simple percentage and frequency counts.

Table 1: Respondent's Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	69	69
Female	31	31
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey 2023

The table above revealed that 69(69%) of the population were male and 31(31%) of the respondents were female. This shows that the majority of the respondents are males.

Table 2: Respondent's Age

Respondent's Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 20	5	5
21 – 30	56	56
31 – 40	25	25
41 – 50	13	13
51 and above	1	1
Total	100	100

Table 2 shows that 5(5%) of the respondents are between the age of 18 years and 20 years, 56 (56%) of the respondents are between the age of 20 years and 30 years, 25(25%) of the respondents are between the age of 31 years and 40 years, 13(13%) of the respondents are between the age of 41 years and 50 years, and 1(1%) of the respondents are 51 years old and above.

Table 3: Respondent's Academic Qualifications

Qualifications	Respondents	Percentage (%)
SSCE	23	23
OND/NCE	19	19
B.SC/HND	50	50
Master & above	8	8
Total	100	100

Table 3 shows that 23(23%) of the respondents are SSCE holders, 19(19%) of the respondents are OND/NCE holders, 50(50%) of the respondents are B.SC/HND holders and 8(8%) of the respondents are M.SC holders and above.

Table 4: Respondent's Marital Status

Marital Status	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	74	74
Married	25	25
Divorced	1	1
Widowed	0	0
Total	100	100

Table 4, shows the marital status of the respondents. 74(74%) of the respondents are single, 25(25%) of the respondents are married 1(1%) of the respondents are widowed and none of the respondents is divorced. This shows that the majority of the respondents are married seconded by single.

The mentorship and leadership principles exhibited by the Apostle Paul as conveyed in the New Testament epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy

Table 5: The mentorship and leadership of Apostle Paul exhibit trust and affection

Items	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	32	32
Agreed	38	38
Strongly Disagreed	25	25
Disagreed	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

According to the aforementioned table, it is evident that 70 respondents (70%) acknowledged that the mentorship and leadership of Apostle Paul exhibit trust and affection. Conversely, 30 respondents (30%) expressed disagreement with this statement. Moreover, 66 respondents (66%) agreed with the notion that Paul placed a strong emphasis on character development and ethical leadership in his mentorship of Timothy, while 34 respondents (34%) held a contrary opinion. Additionally, 75 respondents (75%) affirmed that Paul's mentorship approach was tailored to Timothy's unique needs and challenges. In contrast, 25 respondents (25%) disagreed with this statement. Lastly, 71 participants (71%) concurred that written communication was significance in their mentorship, with Paul using letters to provide guidance and instruction, whereas 29 participants (29%) expressed disagreement.

Table 6: Paul placed a strong emphasis on character development and ethical leadership in his mentorship of Timothy

Items	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	32	32
Agreed	34	34
Strongly Disagreed	20	20
Disagreed	14	14
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the aforementioned table, 70 participants (70%) concurred with the assertion that " Paul's relational leadership principles are evident in his actions and teachings," whereas 30 participants (30%) expressed disagreement. Additionally, 59 participants (59%) agreed with the assertion that "Paul's relation leadership shows that Paul have his mentee at heart," while 41 participants (41%) disagreed. Once again, 60 participants (60%) agreed with the assertion that " Paul's mentorship played a pivotal role in leadership succession in the early Christian church," whereas 40 participants (40%) disagreed. Similarly, 75 participants (75%) agreed with the assertion that " Paul always strived for the success of his mentee," while 25 participants (25%) disagreed.

Table 7: Paul's mentorship approach was tailored to Timothy's unique needs and challenges

Items	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	20	20
Agreed	55	55
Strongly Disagreed	9	9
Disagreed	16	16
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

As per the aforementioned table, 77 participants (77%) agreed that contemporary leaders and organizations can adapt Paul's leadership principles to address 21st-century challenges by embracing adaptability, whereas 23 participants (23%) disagreed. Furthermore, 86 participants (86%) agreed that contemporary leaders and organizations can adapt Paul's leadership principles to address 21st-century challenges by embracing ethical leadership, while 14 participants (14%) disagreed. The survey revealed that the majority of respondents (89%) concurred that contemporary leaders and organizations can adapt Paul's leadership principles to address 21st-century challenges by embracing effective communication, conversely, 11% of respondents expressed disagreement with this notion. Similarly, a significant number of respondents (86%) agreed that the challenges surrounding mentorship can be solved by applying Paul's relational leadership between the mentor and the mentee. On the other hand, 14% of respondents expressed dissent.

Table 8: Written communication was significance in their mentorship, with Paul using letters to provide guidance and instruction

Items	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	23	23
Agreed	48	48
Strongly Disagreed	7	7
Disagreed	22	22
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The aforementioned table has demonstrated that 89 participants (89%) concurred that Paul's relational leadership to Timothy serves as a wellspring of leadership wisdom that can be applied to address the leadership challenges of the 21st century, conversely, a total of 11 participants (11%) expressed disagreement. Additionally, the same table exhibits that 83 participants (83%) agreed that mentorship and leadership principles found in the New Testament offer a blueprint that is relevant to faith-based and secular leadership contexts, on the other hand, 17 participants (17%) dissented. Similarly, a total of 72 participants (71%) concurred that Paul's relational leadership to Timothy provide a valuable framework for leadership development, in contrast, 28 participants (28%) expressed disagreement. Moreover, 80 participants (80%) agreed that Paul's relational leadership to Timothy provide guides for contemporary leaders to navigate the complexities of the modern world, conversely, 20 participants (20%) disagreed.

The discussion of findings are follows:

Findings indicate that Paul's mentorship of Timothy was a robust model for leadership development. The depth of their relationship, characterized by trust and affection, underscores the importance of nurturing leaders through mentorship. Also, the study reveals that Paul placed a strong emphasis on character development and ethical leadership in his mentorship of Timothy. The moral and spiritual dimensions of leadership were central to their relationship.

The findings highlight Paul's adaptability in his mentorship approach, which was tailored to Timothy's unique needs and challenges. This adaptability is relevant in today's diverse and rapidly changing leadership contexts. In the same vein, the study underscores the significance of written communication in their mentorship, with Paul using letters to provide guidance and instruction. Effective communication is a critical leadership skill in the digital age.

Paul's relational leadership principles, evident in his actions and teachings, were found to be a guiding force in his mentorship of Timothy. Relational leadership remains a valuable concept in contemporary leadership theory. The findings also demonstrate that Paul's mentorship played a pivotal role in leadership succession in the early Christian church. Lessons drawn from this can inform leadership succession planning and the cultivation of emerging leaders in various organizational settings.

Contemporary leaders and organizations can adapt Paul's leadership principles to address 21st-century challenges, such as globalization, multiculturalism, and the digital age, by embracing adaptability, ethical leadership, and effective communication.

Conclusion

The exploration of Paul's relational leadership to Timothy serves as a wellspring of leadership wisdom that can be applied to address the leadership challenges of the 21st century. The mentorship and leadership principles found in the New Testament offer a blueprint for ethical,

adaptable, and faith-inspired leadership that is relevant to faith-based and secular leadership contexts. These findings provide a valuable framework for leadership development and succession planning, guiding contemporary leaders to navigate the complexities of the modern world while remaining grounded in enduring ethical and spiritual principles.

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the leadership principles derived from Paul's mentorship of Timothy remain remarkably relevant in the 21st century. Leadership that emphasizes spiritual growth, sound teaching, authenticity, mentorship, and resilience addresses many of the challenges faced by leaders in a dynamic and ever-changing world (Greenleaf, 2002) By applying these principles, modern leaders can navigate the complexities of their roles with wisdom and effectiveness, just as Paul guided Timothy in his time (Parolini & Patterson, 2011) In a rapidly evolving world, the enduring lessons from this biblical mentorship offer valuable insights for leaders of the 21st century.

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