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Distinguishing Servant Leadership from Transactional and Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

Problem

The scholarship of leadership abounds with the affordances, limitations, antecedents, and outcomes associated with the different theories in Human Resource Development (HRD) literature. However, a clear delineation between the host of individual leadership theories does not exist. Absent is a nuanced view of the similarities, differences, and any overlap between the various leadership theories. Without a clear understanding of the relationships between leadership theories, knowing when to apply which theories and when becomes difficult.

Solution

A systematic review of the literature surrounding servant leadership (SL) through 2022 was conducted to position SL among the more extensively researched transactional and transformational leadership theories. This article outlines the histories of the three theories, focusing on the characteristics, pervasiveness, antecedents, outcomes, and measurement of SL to distinguishing it from transactional and transformational leadership.

Stakeholders

Human resource development, human resource management, and organizational behavior scholars, practitioners, educators, and students. In addition, organizational leaders responsible for setting the organization's vision and practitioners responsible for designing leadership development programs will benefit from this article.

Keywords: servant leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership

Kumar (2018) and Kumar et al. (2014) highlighted the prevalence of leadership theories that exist. Among the consequences of such prevalence is the increasingly heightened need to properly distinguish, to thereby be able to understand, the various similarities, differences, and any overlap across the sum of theories. But the work of synthesizing, summarizing, and comparing is not as popular as advancing new tenets (Kumar, 2018; Kumar et al. 2014). This creates the current situation where a variety of theories exist, but without a clear way to leverage them.

Ciulla (1995) argued that leadership scholars need to be clear when they are describing, or prescribing, constructs of leadership. However, he contended that making these distinctions does not necessarily lead to understanding. The purpose of this article is to position Servant Leadership (SL) alongside transactional and transformational leadership research for a clearer understanding of their uniquely different contributions and how they may be leveraged in decision-making or problem-solving situations. In this article, key similarities, differences, and relationships of these leadership approaches will be examined and concludes by highlighting SL as a distinct approach to leadership. The implications for how this article contributes to human resource development theory will be discussed. The article will conclude by identifying opportunities to advance the research in SL.

Emergence of Transactional and Transformational Leadership Research

Looking at leadership historically, the two theories of leadership most frequently researched were transactional and transformational until the 1990's (Lowe & Gardner, 2001). In the mid 1990's, Ciulla (1995) distinguished three fundamental theories: transactional, transformational, and servant leadership (SL). Not surprisingly, articles focusing

on SL often introduce it by referencing SL to these two theories of leadership (see Russell & Stone, 2002; Sacavém et al., 2019; Stone et al., 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Prior to the late 1970's, the terms leadership and management were synonymous. Then in 1978 Burns proposed the typology of “transactional” and “transformational” leaders. Burns (1978) stated that transactional leadership is based on Maslow's (1943) lower-order needs: food, shelter, and safety. According to the transactional theory of leadership, leader-follower relationships are based on the collection of transactions between leaders and their followers (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Specifically, in order to obtain a desired performance from a follower, transactional leadership is characterized by behaviors such as goal-setting, articulating explicit agreements, providing task-specific feedback, and offering contingent rewards which are predicated on the follower's needs (Dvir et al., 2002; Vera & Crossan, 2004). The priorities of transactional leaders are to focus on pursuit of organizational objectives—namely, to strengthen the organization's strategy and structure (Vera & Crossan, 2004). As the distinctions began to take shape, the term management came to mean transactional leadership: management of contractual exchanges, agreements, and contracts (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). The term leadership would later become synonymous with transformational leadership (Conger, 1999). Table 1 depicts the key tenets of each leadership theory in this article.

TABLE 1 GOES HERE

Transactional Leadership: A Contingency Approach

Beginning in the late 1970's the theory of transactional leadership received considerable attention from researchers. Judge and Piccolo (2004) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered that across business, university, public, and military settings, the strongest correlations for transactional leadership were from samples taken from business settings. Podsakoff et al. (2006) analyzed the body of research on the relationships between leader reward/punishment behavior (i.e., transactional behaviors) and the followers' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of such behavior. First, Podsakoff et al. (2006) found that leader reward and punishment behaviors were independent of each other (i.e., displayed adequate discriminant validity). Second, in statistical regression a p-value that is less than the significance level (typically .05) indicates there is sufficient evidence in the sample to conclude that a correlation exists. Podsakoff et al. (2006) discovered leader reward behavior showed a strong relationship ($p=.61$) with follower perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Distributive justice refers to perceived fairness over an exchange between two people. Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness (i.e., consistent and unbiased) of policies and procedures used during negotiation. Interactional justice is the perceived fairness of treatment during conflict resolution (Blodgett et al., 1997). Third, contingent reward (i.e., based on performance) and non-contingent punishment (i.e., arbitrary; punishment administered independent of performance) behaviors showed a strong relationship with employee effort ($p=.65$). Last, Podsakoff et al. (2006) found that contingent reward ($p=.42$) and non-contingent punishment ($p=-.34$) displayed strong relationships with “all facets of employee satisfaction” (p. 127).

Transformational Leadership: A Humanistic Approach

While transactional theory initially received considerable attention in research, a group of practitioners and researchers emerged more concerned with a humanistic view of influence and change (Anderson, 2018; Conger, 1999), which was termed by Bass (1985) as transformational leadership. The premise of Bass' description is that transformational leaders help transform their followers by focusing on higher-order needs (i.e., esteem, self-actualization, and self-fulfillment). Employee motivation for high performance stems from the transformational leader's charisma and inspiration (Whetstone, 2002). Transformational leadership is characterized by inspiring and intellectually stimulating followers to overcome their own interests for a greater purpose instead (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Contrary to the transactional leader, the priorities of the transformational leader are to regard the follower over himself or herself as leader.

Bass (1999) and Avolio et al. (1991) identified four primary behaviors performed by transformational leaders: (1) idealized influence; (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual stimulation; and (4) individualized consideration. Research findings suggest that transformational leaders instill confidence in their followers to perform beyond expectations and/or their own immediate abilities (Podsakoff et al., 1996). This is accomplished as leaders assume the roles of teacher and coach for the follower (Graham, 1991 & 1995). As a result, a fundamental trait of a transformational leader is the attribute of self-confidence. But this trait is a double-edged sword in that self-confidence can easily become over-confidence and thus lead to destructive behaviors by the leader (Giampetro et al., 1998). Specifically, self-confidence can entice the transformational leader to succumb to the temptations of pride, authority, and power (Chewning, 2000).

Like transactional leadership, transformational leadership has received considerable attention in research since the concept first appeared. Dvir et al. (2002) found that transformational leaders had a more significant impact on direct followers' development as well as on the performance of indirect followers than the leaders of a control group. Judge and Piccolo (2004) analyzed the relative validities of transactional and transformational leadership research from 626 correlations across 87 studies. First, they found that both constructs of leadership showed high overall validities. Second, transformational leadership displayed stronger relationships with criteria related to follower affect and attitude (i.e., satisfaction and motivation) than criteria related to performance. Since the mid-1980's and through the early 2000's, the stream of transformational leadership research has dominated the leadership field (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

Emergence of Servant Leadership Research

Numerous authors have recognized that the origin of servant leadership (SL) traces back 2000 years to the time of Christ. However, Robert Greenleaf developed his philosophy of SL in the late 1970's and into the 1980's by blending his Quaker religious beliefs, his work as an executive at AT&T, and his experience reading Herman Hess' *Journey to the East* with his views on leadership (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005). A synopsis of *Journey to the East* is told by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) and Sendjaya et al (2008). The central character, Leo, accompanies a band of men on a journey and acts as "servant" by performing their chores, singing, and so on. Later in the journey Leo separates from the group and as a result the order of the group instantly becomes disarrayed and the journey halts. To his surprise, the narrator later discovers that Leo was actually the noble leader of the sponsoring party for the group. In contrast to a person who is leader first, Greenleaf defined a servant leader in 1977, then refined the definition in 2002, as an individual that "is servant first" (2002, p. 27). He maintained that a servant leader helps the follower become "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servant leaders" (2002, p. 27). It was Greenleaf's early conceptualization that provided the foundation for SL as both a construct and emerging discipline (Irving & Longbotham, 2007).

In the early 1990's SL was considered a branch of transformational leadership (Graham, 1991 & 1995). Later, Stone et al. (2004) as well as Avolio and Gardner (2005) distinguished SL as a separate theory of leadership altogether. In their article comparing transformational leadership with SL, Stone et al. (2004) observed that the clearest distinguishing feature between the two theories of leadership is the focus of the leader: transformational leaders focus primarily on organizational objectives while servant leaders focus on the followers, with the achievement of organizational objectives being a secondary outcome.

SL is a multidimensional (Scott et al., 2020; Coetzer, 2017; Erhardt, 2004; Liden et al., 2008) construct that, above all else, espouses a value system of service to others (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). Additionally, like Greenleaf (1977, 2002) stipulated, service behavior is contagious in that the followers of servant leaders often continue passing on service to others (Graham, 1991). Further, current conceptions of SL place a specific value on human equality as it seeks the personal development (i.e., wiser, more autonomous) and improved contributions of all members of the team or organization (Russell, 2001). According to Whetstone (2002), SL entails developing followers who are capable of making and implementing their own ethical choices. Gandolfi and Stone (2018) described SL as the most interactive leadership style because it fosters leader-follower engagement.

Servant Leader Characteristics

Servant leaders demonstrate attributes and behaviors that distinguish them from leaders described by other theories of leadership. Frequently referenced in the literature is Spear's 1998 list which delineated ten servant leader characteristics: (1) listening; (2) empathy; (3) healing; (4) awareness; (5) persuasion; (6) conceptualization; (7) foresight; (8) stewardship; (9) commitment to the growth of people; and (10) building community. In Table 2 below, these ten servant leader characteristics are defined using a synthesis of meanings offered by Laub (1999), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Jackson (2008), Aziz et al., (2018), Khan et al. (2016), and Kumar (2018).

TABLE 2 GOES ABOUT HERE

Sendjaya et al. (2008) classified these distinguishing features of SL into two broad categories: (1) who the servant leader is (attributes) and (2) what a servant leader does (behavior). A servant leader attribute is an internal state and, by definition, not directly observable therefore requiring indirect operationalization (Mowday et al., 1979). For instance, empathy is an attribute of the servant leader that itself cannot be directly observed. Empathy is, however,

manifest in a variety of ways. So researchers have typically looked at proxies for empathy such as demonstrations of consideration, understanding, and empathetic responses or reactions from the leader (see the Servant Leadership Measurement section below). Conversely, servant leader behavior represents actions that are observable and therefore can be measured directly. For example, a leader listening and responding to the opinions of followers are overt behaviors that can be directly observed. The key is that the totality of attributes and behaviors is what defines a servant leader.

The primary attitude of the servant leader is best captured by the idea *I am the leader because I first serve* (Greenleaf, 1977, 2002; Sacavém et al., 2019; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Building on this attitude, the choice to serve is one that requires moral and emotional strength, stability, and conviction (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Further, Howatson-Jones (2004) stated that it requires maturity and humility to both serve and be influenced by others, thus becoming interdependent with those served. SL has also been conceptualized as simply the introduction of love-for-others into the work enterprise (Sausser, 2005). Stewardship is another tenet of servant leader behavior. In essence, servant leaders consider a follower as any individual over which they have been entrusted to watch (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Finally, reflection is another key feature of SL. Reflection is a way of demonstrating respect for and consideration of various stakeholders such as employees, consumers, and even members of the greater community (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998). Reflection is best achieved through active listening (Banutu-Gomez, 2004). Having discussed the tenets of SL and the characteristics of a servant leader, we shift focus to the pervasiveness of SL.

Pervasiveness of Servant Leadership

Combining Greenleaf's early conceptualizations of SL in the 1970's with the more recent scholarly advancement, SL becomes more than a theory of leadership. First, SL is not merely a collection of behaviors—like transactional leadership—but also includes a person's character attributes (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 1998). Therefore second, servant leaders are not limited to being those with delegated power or a title (Greenleaf 1977, 2002). Last third, SL is not bound by geographic border nor restricted to a particular culture (see van Dierendonck, 2011; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). As a result of the three reasons above, SL has also been conceptualized as a way of life (Center for Servant Leadership, n.d.). The literature, in fact, highlights how SL is practiced in a variety of environments and embraced across a range of organization types.

First, consistent with other theories of leadership, SL is found in business organizations. For instance, SL has been identified and researched using samples from grocery stores (Ehrhart, 2004), banks (Hu & Liden, 2011), the airline industry (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), and retail sales (Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2009a, 2009b). Beyond the United States, SL has been identified and researched across cultures in Africa (Hale & Fields, 2007), India (Carroll & Patterson, 2014), Australia (Sendjaya et al., 2008), Indonesia (Pekerti & Sendjaya, 2010), the Philippines (Udani & Lorenzo-Moto, 2013), China (Miao et al., 2014), and Taiwan (Chen et al., 2013). Furthermore, one study compared SL in the Netherlands and the UK (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), another compared Asian and European cultures (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012), while a third investigated SL in teams from Thailand and China (Yoshida, Sendjaya et al., 2014).

Second, Greenleaf (2002) stated that non-profit organizations are settings where SL is particularly espoused. The literature supports this claim. That is, non-profit organizations have been major sources of empirical data for SL scholarship (see Irving & Longbotham, 2007; Parolini et al., 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2013). For example, SL has been researched in health care (Howatson-Jones, 2004; Jackson, 2008; Jenkins, 2008; Jenkins & Stewart, 2010; Maglione & Nevile, 2021), education (Buchen, 1998; Bowman, 2005; Cerit, 2009, 2010; Hays, 2008; Kezar, 2001), intercollegiate athletics (Burton & Peachey, 2013; DeSensi et al., 2014), as well as at the community (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Parris & Peachey, 2013), government (Esen, 2015; Miao et al., 2014), and military levels (Fry et al., 2005). Moreover, Christian churches (Blanchard, 2003), religious schools (Thompson, 2002), and Bible colleges (Black, 2008; Joseph & Wintson, 2005) are environments where servant leaders are also commonly found.

Focusing within the Christian community, churches have long emphasized an orientation toward SL (Greenleaf, 1982; Wong et al., 2007). Several authors have explicitly discussed the appropriateness for and advantages of practicing SL within church organizations (Blanchard et al., 1999; Graves & Addington, 2002; Miller, 1995; Wilkes, 1998). However, it is important to recognize that no single faith can claim a monopoly on SL; the principles of SL are embraced across theologies and denominations. For example, Jewish Rabbi Joshua Heschel (Greenleaf, 2002) demonstrated SL attributes and performed SL behaviors. Further, SL has been identified and examined in Native American Indian tribes (Humphreys, 2005).

Because SL extends beyond a theory of leadership to more of a way of life, it is apparent that its practice can be found in a variety of environments. The literature is clear in that whether it be within a business, a hospital, a school, government, a church, or in the US or abroad, SL has application to “people of all faiths and all institutions, secular and religious” (“Robert K. Greenleaf Biography,” n.d., para. 5).

Antecedents to Servant Leadership

Hunter et al. (2013) discovered that leader agreeableness was positively related to perceptions of SL while extraversion was negatively related. Thus, the individuals who are most likely to become servant leaders are those that demonstrate an agreeable personality and tend to be introverted. This further distinguishes SL from other forms of leadership as extraversion is positively related to transformational leadership (Hunter et al., 2013). Beyond these findings, in reviewing SL literature, Parris and Peachey (2013), Hunter et al. (2013), and Liden et al. (2014) highlighted the lack of existing research investigating the antecedents to servant leadership, or how individuals become perceived as servant leaders. In fact, Barbuto et al. (2014) posited that emotional intelligence would be a strong predictor of SL behavior but found, based on the ratings of followers, that it was not. Beyond this, there are several more antecedents that have been proposed. Drawing from the theoretical underpinnings of SL, Liden et al. (2014) proposed six leader characteristics which “arm leaders with the potential to engage in servant leader behaviors” (p. 362). The six characteristics they proposed were: (1) the desire to serve others; (2) emotional intelligence; (3) moral maturity and conation; (4) prosocial identity; (5) core self-evaluation; and (6) low narcissism. These six characteristics are discussed briefly next.

Desire to Serve Others

Ng et al. (2008) observed that servant leaders are motivated by a desire to serve. Liden et al. (2014) reasoned that it is this motivation—the desire to serve—that drives a servant leader’s behavior. They argued that the desire to serve “predisposes one toward servant leadership behaviors” (p. 363). In this way the desire to serve others became the first proposed antecedent of SL offered by Liden et al. 2014.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to a person’s ability to manage their own emotions and identify the emotions of others (George, 2000). Based on this premise, Liden et al. (2014) maintained that “individuals who possess a high degree of emotional intelligence are more likely to manifest servant leader behaviors” (p. 363). For example, emotional intelligence is required to demonstrate awareness of one’s own emotions and those of another person. That is, in order for a servant leader to be capable of providing healing for a follower, it is necessary that he/she first be aware of the need. Also, Liden et al. (2014) argued that in order to place the needs of another person before one’s own, it is necessary that a servant leader must be aware of and master his/her own negative emotions at times. Further, empathy, the ability to understand another’s feelings, is seen as a fundamental characteristic of emotional intelligence and is a vital feature of SL. Lastly, Carmeli (2003) found that emotionally intelligent leaders were more likely to engage in ethical altruism. Thus, for the reasons above emotional intelligence was the next antecedent of SL proposed by Liden et al. (2014).

Moral Maturity and Conation

Liden et al. (2014) borrowed from Hannah et al.’s (2011) taxonomy of moral processing. The Hannah et al. (2011) taxonomy consists of two categories: moral maturity and moral conation. There are three components to moral maturity. First, moral maturity is comprised of moral complexity—the capacity to recognize and classify moral phenomena. Second, moral maturity consists of metacognitive ability—the ability to refine the moral classifications. Last third, moral maturity involves moral identity—a person’s self-view as moral. Liden et al. (2014) stated that a moral identity extends beyond one’s thoughts about morality and instead captures “the extent to which being a moral person is central to an individual’s self-concept, thus compelling him or her to think, judge, and act in a moral manner (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hannah et al., 2011)” (p. 364). Together, moral complexity, moral metacognitive ability, and moral identity make up moral maturity, which is a proposed antecedent of SL by Liden et al. (2014).

Closely related, the second category of Hannah et al.’s (2011) taxonomy is *moral conation*. Moral conation is the harmony between an individual’s sense of moral responsibility and their subsequent ability to act in a moral way. Acting in a moral way often includes the presence of obstacles to moral behavior (Liden et al., 2014). Three

components make up moral conation. First, moral conation involves moral ownership—the responsibility one feels for moral action, for oneself or others. Second, moral conation is comprised of moral efficacy—the belief that one is capable of acting morally. Third, moral conation consists of moral courage—the strength and resolve to overcome any barriers that may impede moral action. The sum of moral ownership, moral efficacy, and moral courage comprise moral conation. To synthesize, Liden et al. (2014) claim that another antecedent to SL is the person’s sense of responsibility toward moral action, belief that they can indeed act in a moral way, and courage to overcome any barriers to moral conduct.

Prosocial Identity

Prosocial identity theory is “the aspect of the self-concept that is concerned with helping and empathizing with others” (Grant et al., 2009, p. 322). Liden et al. (2014) claimed that it is reasonable to expect that a prosocial identity predisposes a person to SL behaviors because an identity of service, helping, and empathizing with others are at the core of SL theory.

Core Self-Evaluation

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is comprised of four personality traits: self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. Liden et al. (2014) maintained that “individuals with higher CSE are more likely to manifest servant leader behaviors” (p. 365). Specifically, leaders with high self-esteem are less likely to be overly concerned with themselves while more likely to develop their followers and build the community (Liden et al., 2014). Next, leaders with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in leadership behaviors beyond those associated with traditional forms of leadership (Liden et al., 2014). Furthermore, Mujeeb et al. (2021) highlighted that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between SL and employee. Closely tied to self-efficacy, an internal locus of control (extent to which a leader believes he/she can control the events around them) should increase the likelihood that a leader engages in SL behaviors (Liden et al., 2014). Last, highly neurotic leaders spend less time focusing on their followers’ efforts (Bass, 1985). Therefore, leaders that are low on neuroticism are more likely to recognize follower needs, to then in turn focus on their development (Liden et al., 2014).

Low Narcissism

Narcissism refers to a person’s overrun sense of importance (Judge et al., 2006). A narcissist, by definition, focuses on self, possesses entitlement, and lacks empathy (Liden et al., 2014). These features collide with the basic tenets of SL. Therefore, Liden et al. (2014) maintained that leaders with lower narcissism are more likely to engage in SL behaviors.

Outcomes of Servant Leadership

Researchers have found positive outcomes associated with SL at the individual, team, and organizational levels. At the individual level, Barbutto and Wheeler (2006) found that SL was a more consistent and stronger predictor of the quality of the interaction between leader and follower than transformational leadership. Neubert et al. (2008) compared SL and initiating structure behavior. Initiating structure is leadership that defines expectations and constraints for a subordinate’s role, tasks, and overall performance. Initiating structure also indirectly communicates the importance of adhering to those expectations. In this way initiating structure closely aligns with transactional leadership (Neubert et al., 2008). Their study found that SL explained variance in helping and creative behavior more than initiating structure did. They also discovered that leaders who modelled initiating structure induced in employees a concern with avoiding negative outcomes, or a prevention-focus. Specifically, initiating structure encouraged a sense of obligation, loss avoidance, cost reduction, and security. Conversely, leaders who demonstrated SL behavior induced in employees a concern with the benefits of positive outcomes and success, or a promotion-focus. That is, servant leader behavior led to employee nurturance (i.e., help, service, and consideration of others) and aspiration (i.e., pursuit of growth).

Jaramillo et al. (2009a) concluded that SL related to employee performance by fostering a genuine customer-focus as well as extra-role behavior. In another study, SL was positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and intrinsic work satisfaction (Avolio et al., 2009). Additionally, Faizah et al. (2020) found that SL positively affected employee motivation and workplace performance. Joseph & Wintson (2005) found that employee perceptions of trust (from the servant leader) were positively related to their trust in both the servant leader and the organization.

Furthermore, Walumbwa et al. (2010) found that SL and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) were mediated by commitment to the supervisor, self-efficacy, procedural justice climate, and service climate. Saleem et al. (2020) discovered that servant leaders can effectively generate affective trust in subordinates consequently mediating the relationship between SL and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Sacavem et al. (2019) found that democratic leaders who demonstrate authenticity and paternal characteristics are the most effective in implementing SL in their organizations. Jaramillo et al. (2009b) and Qureshi et al. (2019) concluded that SL positively affects employee turnover intention. Brohi et al. (2018) further highlighted how in addition to reducing employee turnover retention, managers who demonstrate servant leadership positively affect the psychological safety of the employees. However, not all employees easily welcome SL; Slack et al. (2020) found that SL acceptance depended on the lack of employee familiarity with SL consequently affecting employee engagement, organizational ethical climate, and public sector reform.

Ja'afaru-Bambale (2014) further explored the relationship between SL and follower extra-role behavior and concluded that SL mediated OCB's. Building off this, Panaccio et al. (2014) found that the fulfillment of a psychological contract by the servant leader positively influenced follower initiative and boosterism. Due to the high job satisfaction and better work-life balance, the positive effects of servant leadership extended into the employee's work-family life (Coetzer et al., 2017). In fact, research has discovered a positive relationship between servant leadership and an employee's mental health, because the leader fosters a shared social identity while meeting the employee's needs using the resources of the organization (Rivkin et al., 2014). This is further supported by Alasadi et al. (2019) who concluded that SL positively affects intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Noland and Richards (2015) found that when professors demonstrated servant leader behavior, student learning and engagement increased but simultaneously experienced reduced motivation. Magniole and Neville (2021) found that nursing students had a high level of SL and spirituality, nurses demonstrate SL as they take a patient-centered approach in their practice and place their needs aside to serve those who are sick and disadvantaged. Servant leadership is also used to help with healthcare employee burn-out since Grant-Hewitt (2022) found that there is a negative relationship between perceived servant leadership of physical trainers and burnout. Furthermore Turner (2022) found that teachers also demonstrate SL even if they do not have a leadership role because of their altruistic orientation and need to serve others. Lastly, Vinson and Parker (2021) found that Christian athletic coaches who embody SL characteristics were able to adopt an athlete-centered approach and empower those they work with.

At the team level, Ehrhart (2004) examined the relationship between SL behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in 3914 grocery store employees. First, they found that in units or groups where servant leaders model service-oriented behavior for their followers, the unit experienced increases in perceptions of fair treatment. Second, the units that did experience collective fair treatment were themselves characterized as having increased levels of helping and conscientiousness behaviors. Additionally, Hu and Liden (2011) discovered that SL is an antecedent of team potency (i.e., members' shared belief about the general collective ability of the team). They also discovered that SL enhanced team effectiveness on tasks by elevating team potency. Their final conclusion was that the motivational effects of goal and process clarity (i.e., high transactional leadership) disappear when commitment to the goal is lacking (i.e., low SL). Liden et al. (2014) discovered that SL behaviors propagate a culture of service within a team and organization. This service culture then directly and positively influenced the performance of the organization as well as the behaviors and attitudes of the individuals. Additionally, Chunghtai (2016) found that in a food company with 174 employees, SL can deliver positive outcomes in the organization by increasing the employees' sense of psychological safety.

Additionally, Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) highlighted two illustrative examples of SL outcomes at the organizational level. First, revisiting Quick (1992), they attributed Southwest Airlines' established identity of caring and appreciative employees as the direct result of the organization's core value of SL. Next, they captured the observation of chairman of TD Industries, Jack Lowe (1998), in stating that the degree to which leaders of an organization behave in accordance with the principles of SL, trust increases and the basis for organizational excellence therefore exists. In the hospitality industry, Bavik (2020), pointed out that characteristics of the hospitality industry and servant leadership are mutually inclusive. Furthermore, Chon and Zoltan (2019) tied the hospitality industry and SL by highlighting how SL practices foster hospitality by empowering followers, providing direction, promoting interpersonal acceptance, authenticity, and stewardship. In education, Palta (2019) found that teachers' organizational commitment do not vary based on gender, tenure, branch, or seniority, rather organizational commitment depends on servant leadership perceptions.

At the global level, Carrol and Patterson (2014) found no significant differences in the perceptions of SL across cultures. Pawar et al. (2020) stated that although SL is being studied throughout different contexts and cultures, there is no consensus on the definition of SL it is still a viable theory that helps organizations. Similarly, Miao et al. (2014) discovered that SL was a strong influence of affective and normative commitment in China's public sector (using civil service employees). They concluded that affective trust (versus cognitive trust) was the vehicle through which SL induced higher commitment. Further, Yoshida et al. (2014) examined SL at multiple levels within firms in Indonesia and China. They concluded that SL promoted "relational identification" (i.e., identifying one's self in terms of his/her relationship with their servant leader) and "collective prototypicality" (i.e., the leader indeed embodies the team's norms, values, and beliefs). These in turn led to greater employee creativity and innovation. However, Qureshi et al. (2019) discovered that in third-world countries specifically SL should be investigated more due to the power distance in different cultures.

Distinctive Features of Servant Leadership Research

Ciulla (1995) pointed out how the study of ethics and morality is necessary for understanding the application and practice of leadership. However, ethics and morals, if mentioned at all, are only given superficial or obligatory recognition. Appendix A offers an overview of the studies contained in this review of SL research from 1991 to 2022. A salient view of SL that is distinctive in this review but absent in other leadership approaches is a moral-based approach that prioritizes the welfare of others over the satisfying personal needs or goals of the leader (Canavesi & Minelli). Furthermore, while transactional and transformational leadership studies may refer to ethical leadership, a distinctive of servant leaders is demonstrating an attitude for serving others through a values-based principle of stewardship (Reddy & Kamesh, 2016; Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Implications for HRD Theory

For multiple reasons, understanding the nuances of leadership theory is of significant value to both HRD scholars and practitioners (Kumar, 2018; Kumar et al., 2014). First, to be able to properly research the leadership construct, leadership theory helps scholars when the nuances of leadership theories, including their similarities and dissimilarities, are explicitly set forth. That is, scholars are better able to conduct research when better positioned through previously conducted synthesis work (such as this systematic literature review). Second, HRD practitioners are better able to assist organizations that desire to improve the leadership knowledge/skill/attitudes within their ranks, when unpacking the complexities across leadership theories is already done. In other words, when the similarities and differences of different leadership theories are clearly outlined, practitioners are then positioned to focus their attention on the more tactical and contextual elements of assisting organizations (e.g., consulting, coaching, etc.). Finally, Turner and Baker (2018) suggest that "in order for HRD to stay current, the literature that it produces must provide pragmatic solutions to relevant issues while pushing the limits to develop new emerging theories of leadership" (p. 486).

Opportunities for Future Research

Several questions emerge based on this review of literature. First, a more complete picture of servant leader development is to be had (Eva et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2014). Research is required for organizations who hope to accelerate the development within their ranks. Further, additional research in a variety of contexts (i.e. atypical cases, non-religious non-profits, and for-profit organizations) would extend the understanding of how servant leaders develop. For example, Alimo-Metcalf (1995), Kolb (1999), and Hopkins et al. (2008) suggested that development happens different for female leaders. Therefore, more data would confirm or disprove any differences between genders (or gender-roles) in SL development.

Concluding Thoughts

Being able to distinguish SL from transactional and transformational leadership helps to advancing our understanding general leadership theory. As we clearly define each construct and more accurately position SL within the context of other leadership theories, we are then able to advance SL development. We began this article reviewing the literature for servant leadership up to 2022 and used that to distinguish SL from transactional and transformational leadership. Yet while SL has received increasing research in the past 15 years, there remains a fair amount unknown compared to its more traditional counterparts, transactional and transformational leadership.

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Appendix A

Matrix of SL Articles Reviewed from 1991 to 2022

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Graham	1991	Case study	Bring in morality and inspiration into the charismatic leadership to propose "servant" model	SL is distinct from charismatic and TL	Servant leadership (SL) model is set forth: SL = TL + a morality dimension
Thompson	2002	Dissertation; Empirical	To examine SL and job satisfaction at a religious college.	Bible ("Jesus of Nazareth"); Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1998)	The perception of servant leadership positively impacts job satisfaction.
Graham	1995	Conceptual	Highlight the motivational forces behind various forms of leadership, focusing on moral development and citizenship behaviors.	House (1971); Greenleaf (1977); Burns (1978)	N/A
Miller	1995	Book	To introduce a Christian perspective to the leadership construct.	Bible (Matthew, Luke, 1 and 2 Samuel)	N/A
Wilkes	1998	Book	To explore the leadership practices of Jesus Christ, through the lens of SL.	Jesus Christ (Bible)	N/A
Buchen	1998	Conceptual	Proposed model for applying servant leadership to faculty and their institutions: 1. Identity; 2.	Greenleaf (1977)	N/A

Leadership; 3. Reciprocity; 4. Commitment; 5.

The Future.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Brenneman	1998	Case description	Describe how the Shell Group transitioned into an organization with a servant-leader philosophy	Senge (1990); Tichey & Cohen (1997)	N/A
Giampetro-Meyer	1998	Conceptual	Distinguish transformational, transactional, and servant leadership	Spears (1995); Greenleaf (1977)	N/A
Laub	1999	Dissertation; scale development	Develop the OLA instrument	SL applies at individual, workgroup, and org levels. Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1994); DePree (1989, 1992)	The OLA instrument is validated

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Chewning	2000	Commentary	Promote a Christian-centered leadership style in academia (putting the emphasis on "servant" over "leadership in SL)	Biblical; Christ is the epitome of SL and the focus should be on Him	N/A
Russell	2001	Conceptual	Identify issues in <i>personal values</i> and <i>organizational values</i> with respect to SL.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1996)	<i>Trust, appreciation of others, and empowerment</i> are particularly worthy of emphasizing for servant leaders.
Kezar	2001	Case study	Provide empirical evidence from examining participatory leadership environments and their connection to organizational fit.		1) Those with power/influence in original leadership model discovered to have comparably less in the new SL model. 2) Those who lost power described feeling "disoriented" or "lost."

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Whetstone	2002	Conceptual	To highlight the importance of adding <i>virtue</i> to the discussion of business ethics	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1995)	N/A
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Russell	2002	Lit review	Review servant leader attributes to develop a researchable model of servant leadership	Most SL literature is philosophical. A researchable model is needed.	An attribute-based servant leadership model is set forth
Schwartz	2002	Conceptual	To advocate for the implementation of SL in Health Care organizations.	Greenleaf (1979)	SL in Health Care firms that are adaptive, creative, team driven, communicative, with flattened hierarchies.
Sendjaya	2002	Conceptual	To understand the conceptual roots of SL.	Greenleaf (1977); Jesus Christ (Bible)	Highlights primary intent" and "self-concept" as distinguishing features of servant leadership.
Whetstone	2002	Conceptual	Highlight SL as the leadership theory with best fit with <i>personalism</i> .	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1995)	SL is the theory ideally suited for personalistic philosophies.

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Blanchard	2003	Book, conceptual	To set forth the attitude, heart, mindset, and practices of a servant leader.	Bible (Matthew, Psalms, Corinthians)	N/A
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Carmeli	2003	Empirical	To empirically test the degree to which emotional intelligence plays a role in the success of senior managers in the workplace.	(Emotional intelligence was focus exclusively)	Emotional intelligence augments positive work attitudes, altruistic behavior, and work outcomes.
Pepper	2002	Conceptual	To explain how SL is appropriate for professional services firms.	Greenleaf (1970); Spears (1985)	N/A
Stone	2004	Conceptual	Compare/contrast Transformational Leadership and Servant Leadership.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1995, 1996)	In TL, leaders focus on organizational objective. Servant leaders focus on the people themselves.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Ehrhart	2004	Empirical	Test the relationship between SL behavior and OCB at the unit-level.	Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991)	SL is related to unit-level OCB.
Avolio	2004	Conceptual; theory building	Examine authentic leaders' influence over follower attitudes, behavior, & performance	(No connection to SL)	A model is proposed.
Banutu-Gomez	2004	Conceptual	Examine the relationship between exemplary followers and servant leaders and the roles the two play in creating a <i>learning organization</i> .	Greenleaf (1977); Posner & Kouzes (1993)	A model is set forth.
Howatson-Jones	2004	Conceptual	Advocate for SL to be used in HealthCare settings.	Greenleaf (1998); Spears 1995	N/A
Fry	2005	Empirical	To examine the relationship between OD & Spiritual Leadership.	N/A	A baseline model is established for Spiritual Leadership theory (SLT).
Cooper	2005	Conceptual; theory building	To warn and expose the challenges of advancing authentic leadership theory.	Bible (Jesus Christ)	Construct definition and measurement is needed before continuing with

					more theory development.
Joseph	2005	Empirical	To explore the association between employee perceptions of servant leadership and both leader- and organizational-trust.	Greenleaf (1977); Sendjaya & Sarros (2002); Spears (1996)	SL correlated positively with both leader- and organizational-trust.

Lead Author	Year	Article Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Humphreys	2005	Conceptual	To evaluate the support for the idea that the specific cultures associated with transformational and/or servant leadership would be applicable.	Graham (1991); Bass (2000); Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1998)	Chief Joseph is an example of servant leadership.
Bowman	2005	Conceptual	To set forth teachers as an appropriate use case for applying the principles of SL.	Greenleaf (1970); Jennings & Stahl-Wert (2003); reference made to Bible	N/A
Avolio	2005	Theoretical	Authentic leadership theory development	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1995)	Lays out construct definitions and ways to proceed with theory
Gardner	2005	Theoretical	Authentic leader and follower development	(N/A; no direct connection to SL)	A model (with a series of propositions) is proposed for authentic leadership

Sauser	2005	Conceptual	To increase awareness to advantages of ethics, corporate responsibility, and values into management practices.	Greenleaf (2002)	SL is a theory that successfully integrates ethics, values, and corporate responsibility into management.
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Dyck	2005	Conceptual	Develop an ideal-type of management that is characterized by SL and de-emphasizes materialism and individualism.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1998); Weber's (1958) four ideal-types; Christianity	SL is an example of "radical management" in that it is low-materialistic and low-individualistic in nature.
Hamilton	2005	Qualitative study of cultural enactment of SL	Explore issues of context and national culture to understand leadership development.	Greenleaf (1970, 1977)	It is possible to implement a SL focus in the UK after originating in the US.
Barbuto	2005	Scale development	Synthesize literature and then develop & validate an instrument all aimed at definition clarification of SL	Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991); Spears (1995);	Developed the SLQ scale. Synthesized the attributes of SL 5 factors.
Mattsson	2006	Conceptual	Successful corporate strategy is built by managers who interact with customers and employees, making SL an ideal model.	Hunter (2008)	N/A

Wong	2007	Conceptual	To highlight to opportunity and need for SL to be implemented in a higher ed context.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1994); Spears & Lawrence (2004); Jesus Christ (Bible)	Provides a framework and a set of best practices for implementation of SL.
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Hale	2007	Empirical	Explore the extent to which followers from Ghana & the US can attribute three servant leadership dimensions to overall leadership effectiveness.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1995)	Respondents from Ghana experienced less SL than US respondents. Vision had a significantly stronger relationship to leader effectiveness from Ghanaians.
Black	2008	Mixed methods empirical	Identify the relationship between principals' and teachers' perceived practices of SL and school climate.	Greenleaf (1970 & 1977); Spears & Lawrence (2004); Russell & Stone (2002)	Significant positive correlation.
Hays	2008	Conceptual	To compare and contrast traditional lecture/course format with one that embodies teaching with servant leader principles.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1998); Carroll (2005)	N/A

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Neubert	2008	Empirical	To test a model in which employee regulatory focus mediates the influence of leadership on employee behavior.	Greenleaf (1977, 2002); Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, Browne, & Kubasek (1998); Barbuto & Wheeler (2006); Basss (2000); Graham (1991)	1) SL explained variance in <i>helping</i> and <i>creative</i> behavior more so than initiating structure did. 2) Leaders perceived to have a SL style evoke a promotion focus in employees.
Mayer	2008	Empirical	Examine link between SL and satisfaction of employee needs.	Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991)	Support is found for a model linking SL to job satisfaction with organizational justice and need satisfaction serving as mediators.
Jackson	2008	Conceptual	Provide a framework for developing a research capacity in Nursing using SL.	Russell & Stone (2002); Spears (2004);	SL provides an ideal framework from which to research nursing, for

both the leaders being
investigated and the
researchers themselves.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Liden	2008	Scale development	To develop a servant leadership scale	Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991); Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	A 28-item SL scale is produced.
Sendjaya	2008	Scale development	To develop the SLBS measure	Greenleaf (1977)	A 35-item, 6-dimensional measure is produced
Jenkins	2008	Empirical	To test the impact of nurse managers' servant leadership orientation on nurse job satisfaction.	Greenleaf (1977)	SL behaviors and attitudes do impact nurse job satisfaction.
Parolini	2009	Empirical; Lit review	To investigate how TL and SL are distinct.	Burns (1978); Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991); Bass (2000)	Five statistically significant ($p=0.000$) discriminant items were found that differentiated between transformational and servant leadership.

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Avolio	2009	Conceptual	To review the current theories of leadership	Greenleaf (1991); Spears (2004)	N/A
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Jaramillo	2009a	Empirical	To test a model a model of SL that measures turnover retention.	Russell (2001); Ehrhart (2004)	1) SL does affect employee turnover intention. 2) SL increases in importance when the organization is viewed as unethical.
Jaramillo	2009b	Conceptual, but borrows from the same data set as the Jaramillo (2009a) above.	The SL aspect of manager-salesperson relationships are considered in terms of drivers of deeper customer focus behaviors from the salespeople.	Greenleaf (2002); Ehrhart (2004)	SL relates to performance in two ways: 1) creating genuine customer focus and a related chain of positive outcomes; and 2) by contributing to higher employee wellbeing.
Cerit	2009		To examine the effects of servant leadership behaviors of primary school principals on teacher job satisfaction.	Greenleaf (1977); Whetstone (2002)	Strong positive relationship was revealed between SL

behaviors of school
principals and teachers'
job satisfaction.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Sauser	2009	Conceptual	To propose seven recommendations for employee owned companies. A SL approach is one way to get at implementing these recommendations.	Greenleaf (1977)	N/A
Jenkins	2010	Conceptual	To test the impact of nurse managers' servant leadership orientation on nurse job satisfaction.	Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	Nurse manager behaviors and attitudes do have positive impact on nurse job satisfaction.
Cerit	2010	Empirical	To examine the effects of servant leadership behaviors of primary school principals on teachers' school commitment.	Greenleaf (1977)	A significant and positive relationship between servant leadership behaviors of principals and the teachers' commitment to school.
Pekerti	2010	Empirical	Explore SL across Australia and Indonesia.	Sendjaya & Sarros (2002); Stone, Russell,	Australian and Indonesian both

& Patterson (2004); practice SL, and
Greenleaf (1977) endorse SL practices as
self-sacrificial models.
Culture influences
perceptions of SL.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Walumbwa	2010	Empirical	Test the influence of SL on <i>employee attitudes</i> and <i>OCB</i> .	Hale & Fields (2007); Graham (1991); Ehrhart (2004)	Commitment to the supervisor, self-efficacy, procedural justice climate, and service climate partially mediate the relationship between SL and OCB.
Chon	2011	Empirical	To examine the role of leader's spiritual values in terms of the "servant leadership" in the process of promoting employee's autonomous motivation and eudaemonic well-being.	Greenleaf (1977)	Spiritual values perceived by the subordinates, as well as the discrepancy between leader-subordinate perceptions.
Reed	2011	Scale development	Develop and validate an executive SL scale (ESLS).	Greenleaf (1970, 1977); Graham (1995);	ESLS instrument is produced

Hu	2011	Experiment	Examine the antecedents of team potency and team effectiveness (looking specifically at servant leadership)	Avolio & Gardner (2005); Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991)	Servant leadership moderated the relationships between both goal and process clarity and team potency.
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
van Dierendonck	2011	Review & synthesis	Review historical background, key characteristics, available measurement tools, and results of studies. To produce a conceptual model, and develop/validate a multi-dimensional instrument	Greenleaf (1977); Graham (1991); Stone et al. (2004)	Model for servant leadership
Mittal	2012	Experiment	Examine servant leadership across cultures.	Greenleaf (1970)	Dimensions of empathy and humility received strong endorsement from Southern Asia cultures and least from European cultures
Udani	2013	Conceptual	To analyze the leadership style of former Philippine president, Corazon C. Aquino.	Greenleaf (1977)	The proposal of a model of SL-for-business.
Parris	2013	Systematic Lit Review (SLR)	To conduct the first systematic lit review on Servant Leadership. To explore empirical research, specifically.	Greenleaf (1977); Spears (1995)	N/A

Burton	2013	Conceptual	To propose that athletic directors demonstrating servant leadership will successfully support the development of student-athletes & employees within their athletic departments.	Greenleaf (1977); van Dierendonck & Patterson (2010)	N/A
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Rivkin	2014	Empirical	To test the positive relationship between servant leadership and employees' psychological health.	Avolio & Gardner (2005)	That SL is best taught by setting examples. SL positively affects employees' psychological health.
Panaccio	2014	Empirical	To examine the relationship between the psychological contract (PC) associated with SL behaviors and (1) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and (2) innovative behaviors.	Greenleaf (1977)	PC mediated and moderated certain OCB's and innovative behaviors.
Carroll	2014	Empirical	To examine Patterson's (2003) model of servant leadership, which consists of seven characteristics: agápao love, altruism, humility, trust, vision, empowerment, and service.	Patterson's (2003) model of servant leadership; Greenleaf (1977); Liden et al. (2008)	There are no differences in perceptions of servant leadership cross-culturally except for the characteristic of <i>vision</i> .
Yoshida	2014	Empirical; multi-level	To examine how servant leadership affects (1) employee creativity and (2) team innovation.	Neubert et al. (2008); Giampetro-Meyer et al. (1998)	SL promotes individual identification and collective

prototypicality with the
leader and fosters
creativity and team
innovation.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
DeSensi	2014	Conceptual	To educate those who are or will be in roles affiliated with intercollegiate sport by developing an ethical awareness of their moral values and creating a legacy of action based on servant leadership.	van Dierendonck (2011); Burton and Welty- Peachey (2013)	NA
Ja'afaru Bambale	2014	Conceptual, Lit review	To consider the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).	Liden et al. (2008); Ehrhart (2004); Hu & Liden (2011); Hunter et al., (2013); Liden et al. (2008)	SL and OCB were significant contributors to effective functioning in human organizations.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Miao	2014	Empirical	To examine the mechanisms of trust by which SL influences organizational commitment within the public sector of China.	Greenleaf (1977); Sendjaya et al. (2008); Graham (1991)	SL strongly influences affective and normative commitment; no impact on continuance commitment.
Kim	2014	Lit Review	To review the existing literature of servant leadership. SL is compared with the existing leadership.	Greenleaf (1977); Bible; Spears (1995)	N/A
Noland	2015	Empirical	Examine the veracity of a servant approach to teaching by exploring its impacts on student learning, engagement, and motivation.	Greenleaf (1977)	SL in teaching is positively associated with student engagement and indicators of learning.
Kunz	2015	Conceptual	To explore the life of Helen Holt and how she has demonstrated SL.	Greenleaf (1970)	Holt's charismatic SL has a unique effect on followers which has helped her accomplish change.

Green	2016	Quantitative	Explore data related to 6 major instruments and provide summary of emerging empirical base for Servant Learning	Greenleaf (1970)	Servant Leadership Survey which measures 8 dimensions in SL.
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Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Khan	2016	Lit Review	Leadership literature reveals that theories have been modified with time and no theory is completely irrelevant.	Greenleaf (1970)	N/A
Reddy	2016	Lit Review	Reviews servant leadership and ethical leadership models and offers a blended model of serving that fits into the organizational context.	Greenleaf (1977)	New model: leaders must be trained in morals to promote the common good.
Chughtai	2016	Empirical	To explore the effects of SL on employees' life satisfaction.	Van Dierendonck (2011)	Psychological safety partially mediated the effects of servant leadership on voice and negative feedback seeking behavior.
Coetzer	2017	Lit Review	To identify the main functions of a SL and develop effective servant leaders while assisting organizations to cultivate a SL culture within companies	Jesus Christ (Bible); Greenleaf (1970)	SL is multidimensional; is researched internationally, measured by different instruments.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Aij	2017	Lit Review	Review literature on lean leadership, SL, and health care and performed a comparative analysis.	Spears (1998); Stone (2004)	N/A
Turner	2018	Lit Review	To answer: how current are the leadership theories provided in HRD literature compared to research that is reported from other external leadership fields?	Raes et al. (2015); Gardner et al. (2010); Hoffman & Lord (2013)	HRD should call for more longitudinal and multi-level research efforts to be conducted as opposed to cross-sectional studies.
Anderson	2018	Conceptual	To marry the literature for authentic leadership with the National Health Service (specifically nursing) in the United Kingdom.	Authenticity	Reviews the research literature that explores the dialogue between leadership and nurse role.
Kumar	2018	Lit Review	Identify research presenting SL as a theoretical concept, as a leadership model, and as a predictor for behavioral factors at an individual, group, and organizational level.	Greenleaf (2002)	Discusses 6 dimensions of SL: Voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental

spirituality, and
transforming influence

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Aziz et al.	2018	Empirical	This study aimed at examining the impact of servant leadership on organizational citizenship behavior and the mediating role of psychological contract breach and employee cynicism.	Greenleaf (1977)	SL is an efficient source to reduce psychological contract breach and employee cynicism.
Andersen	2018	Lit Review	To question the usefulness of comparisons between theories of SL and Transformational Leadership.	Suddaby (2010)	N/A
Brohi	2018	Conceptual	To examine the impact of SL, an employee and community focused leadership style on followers' attitude and behavior.	Greenleaf (1977)	Promotion focus moderated the mediating effect of psychological safety on servant leadership and employee turnover.
Gandolfi	2018	Conceptual	To demonstrate that servant leadership meets the criteria for effective leadership.	Greenleaf (1970)	Servant leadership is increasingly being seen as the most interactive style of leadership when it comes to leader/follower engagement.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Eva	2019	Empirical	To examine the extent to which organizational strategy and structure affect the relationship between servant leadership and organizational performance.	Greenleaf (1977)	Liden updated the SL-6 instrument to SL-7
Alasadi	2019	Empirical	To examine the extent to which perceived servant leadership of the supervisors impacts the intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction of the followers.	Greenleaf (1977)	Job satisfaction significantly affects many behavioral aspects related to the performance.
Chon	2019	Conceptual	To determine the possible role of SL in critical issues in contemporary hospitality industry by synthesizing literature on SL, examining benefits, and deriving future research propositions.	Van Dierendonck (2011)	The effects of SL from previous research and their connections to contemporary issues in hospitality.
Palta	2019	Empirical	Investigate teachers' perceptions on SL and organizational commitment	Greenleaf (1977)	Teachers' perceptions about servant leadership and organizational commitment do not vary.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Sacavém	2019	Lit Review	Analyze literature to understand if leaders could be influencers of the level of innovation of an organization.	Greenleaf (1970)	N/A
Qureshi	2019	Lit Review	Examine existing literature addressing SL theory and identify SL interaction with different organization and behavioral variables.	Greenleaf (1970)	Impact of SL can be seen in different school settings.
Slack	2020	Empirical	To explore how SL affects public sector employee engagement, organizational ethical climate, and public sector reform.	Greenleaf (1977)	Different levels of employee acceptance of SL of both enterprises, which affected employee engagement.
Bavik	2020	Lit Review	Review and synthesize SL literature in management and hospitality.	Greenleaf (1970)	The attributes of the hospitality industry reflect the qualities that define a servant leader.
Faizah	2020	Lit Review	To examine the influence of SL, organizational safety culture and work environment on OCB in the application of patient safety with affective organizational commitment in hospital.	Greenleaf (1970)	SL has a positive and significant effect on employee performance

and employee work
motivation.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Pawar	2020	Lit Review	To identify empirical studies that explored the theory of servant leadership by involving a sample population to evaluate and synthesize the mechanisms, results, and impacts of servant leadership.	Barrow (1977)	There is no consensus on the definition of servant leadership; the theory of SL is being studied in a variety of contexts, cultures, and themes.
Saleem	2020	Empirical	To examine the mediating mechanism of bi-dimensional trust, namely affective and cognitive trust, between servant leadership and individual performance.	Van Dierendonck (2011)	There was strong support for affective trust to intervene and mediate positively in the relationship between servant leadership and individual performance.
Scott	2020	Lit Review	To explore the intersection of leadership and well-being as they are expressed in profound leadership.	Torraco (2005); Avolio (2005); Greenleaf (1973)	SL self-awareness and integration of wellness may produce long-lasting, deep change in followers' lives.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Vinson	2021	Empirical	To present empirical evidence to explore the philosophies, intended practices and sociocultural factors influencing how Christian coaches sought to lead in competitive sporting environments.	Greenleaf (1970)	Empirical evidence for ways in which Christian coaches' might frame their leadership behaviors within the context of competitive sport.
Canavesi	2021	Qualitative	To understand the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement in a large Italian consulting firm.	Greenleaf (1970 & 1977); Liden et al. (2014)	Employee engagement is positively influenced by servant leadership.
Maglione	2021	Empirical	To study the relationship between the characteristics of SL and spirituality in both undergraduate and graduate nursing students.	Greenleaf (2002)	Nursing students may inherently possess characteristics of servant leadership and spirituality.
Mujeeb	2021	Empirical	To investigate the impact of key antecedents on employee performance in the banking industry.	Van Dierendonck (2011)	Confirmed that both self-efficacy and benevolence mediate

the relationship between
SL & employee
performance.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Mcquade	2021	Lit Review	Reviews empirical studies from the search on Google scholar and attempts to ascertain if servant leadership has an impact on attitudinal and behavioral outcome of the followers and also whether the concept suitably fits for profit and non-profit organizations.	Greenleaf (1970)	SL enhances job satisfaction and motivation among followers leading to lowering employee turnover.
Mixon	2021	Lit Review	To examine the impact of research published in the two academic journals in SL.	Greenleaf (1970)	<i>Spears Center for Servant Leadership</i> has produced the most impactful research in servant leadership, followed by Regent University, and Utah Valley University.
Edu-Valsania	2022	Empirical	To present the adaptation and validation of the Spanish version of the Multidimensional Servant Leadership Scale (MSLS).	Luthans & Avolio (2003); Liden et al. (2008)	Several dimensions of the MSLS were significantly related to the ID of the employees

with their organization
and supervisors.

Lead Author	Year	Study Type	Purpose	Conceptual Framework	Result & Findings
Turner	2022	Lit Review	To investigate psychological capital (PsyCap) as an antecedent of servant leadership.	Van Dierendonck (2011)	Higher education teachers' application of servant leadership's altruistic principles at work may mitigate some of the stress which they are currently experiencing due to COVID-19.
Grant-Hewitt	2022	Empirical	To analyze servant leadership style of physician trainers and burnout among PIRTs in academic medical centers in the United States to ultimately increase wellness and thereby mitigate burnout.	Greenleaf (1977)	Showed the implications for positive social change include educators and leaders in academic medical centers potentially use servant leadership characteristics to

mitigate burnout among
PIRTs.

Table 1

Comparison of transactional, transformational, and servant leadership theories across key dimensions

Dimension of Leadership	Transactional Leadership Theory	Transformational Leadership Theory	Servant Leadership Theory
Priority of Leadership Focus	1. Organization needs 2. Leader needs (self) 3. Follower needs	1. Organization needs 2. Follower needs 3. Leader needs (self)	1. Follower needs 2. Organization needs 3. Leader needs (self)
Role of Leader	To elicit a target or expected performance from followers; goal congruence	To inspire followers to pursue organizational goals through performance beyond expected level	To lead followers through service. To help follower holistic development & well-being (i.e., follower learning, growth, autonomy, & commitment to service)
Role of Follower	To perform at the expected level	To pursue organizational goals	To become more autonomous
Target of Follower Development	Undefined	That they become leaders first	That they become servants first
Level of Ethical Development	Low & unspecified. Compliance of exchange agreements is height of moral/ethical concern	Moderate & unspecified. Only as far as utilitarian determination dictates	High and explicit. Discern and apply universal principles
Ethical Referent	Egoism; enforceable contracts and job descriptions	Utilitarianism; costs-benefits for all stakeholders	Altruism; principles of justice
Who Determines Common Good	Organizational leaders	Organizational leaders	Servant leaders & followers both do own thinking
Additional Form of OCB's	Dependable task accomplishment	(Any number of OCB possibilities)	Constructive participation in organizational governance
Dangers	Lack of relative organizational commitment; satisfaction with less-than-exemplary performance	Exalts the leader: tyranny; cultism	Manipulation by those served; Lack of trust if leader is insincere in service of followers

*This table was formed by combining the literature of all three leadership theories.

Table 2

Servant leader characteristics with a synthesis of associated meanings

Servant Leader Characteristic	Meaning
Listening	Servant leaders listen to the views, ideas, and suggestions of others—however outlandish the ideas may be. They devote time to reflecting on what they have heard.
Empathy	Servant leaders try to understand the needs of others. While not necessarily accepting behavior/performance, not rejecting them as people either.
Healing	Servant leaders help others cope with emotional pain, disappointment, or failure. Able to recognize vulnerability in others as well.
Awareness	Servant leaders demonstrate sensitivity to what is taking place. Ability to pick-up on environmental cues. Includes self-awareness also.
Persuasion	Servant leaders seek to discuss and convince others without resorting to compulsion or depending on formal authority.
Conceptualization	Servant leaders demonstrate an ability to think beyond day-to-day terms. Mental models and visioning skills are a part of a leaders’ ability to conceptualize.
Foresight	Servant leaders combine lessons from past and present, while anticipating the future.
Stewardship	Servant leaders hold in trust the people and resources of the organization. They maintain the belief that people and organizations have responsibility to contribute to society.
Commitment to the growth of people	Servant leaders value people above simply their employee contributions. They demonstrate concern for personal, professional, and spiritual growth. Followers develop with a positive trajectory.
Building community	Servant leaders create a sense of unity, family, or community among organization members.
Voluntary Subordination	Servant leaders willfully consider others’ needs before their own. The word ‘voluntary’ highlights the leaders’ willfulness to subordinate themselves to serve others.

*The left column represents the characteristics of SL borrowed from Spears’ (1998) and Kumar (2018). The right column represents a combination of associated meanings offered by Laub (1999), Barbuto & Wheeler (2006), Jackson (2008), and Kumar (2018).