SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AS AN INFLUENCE ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICE AMONG SENIOR EXECUTIVES IN U.S. PUBLICLY TRADED COMPANIES

By

NANCY K. BOSIRE

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by

Nancy K. Bosire

Approved: [DATE]

Dr. Scott Quatro
Dissertation Committee Chair

Dr. Anthony Caito
Dissertation Committee Member

Dr. Robert P French II
Dissertation Committee Member

Dr. Kyle J. A. Small
Director, Center for Leadership and Organizations

ANDERSON UNIVERSITY

DEDICATION

This dissertation is affectionately dedicated to my late father, Charles Asuma Bosire, who held a deep passion for education and instilled in me the value of learning. To my beloved mother, Ursula Bosire, who taught me through her unwavering faith that all things are possible with God. To my cherished siblings—Edwin, Victor, Lucia, and Joan—with whom I have shared much laughter and life's many ups and downs. To my dear nephews and nieces, whose growth brings me great joy. And to my friends and family, whose steadfast support and encouragement have uplifted me throughout my academic journey, I am truly grateful.

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I would also like to recognize the unwavering support of my beloved mother, whose constant prayers have been a source of strength and guidance for me and whose prayers still surround me. To my dear sisters, who have always been there for me, offering a listening ear and a comforting presence, our talks nourish my spirit, and I am incredibly grateful. Additionally, I want to express my deepest appreciation to my cherished friends, who have served as invaluable springboards for ideas and a continuous source of encouragement throughout this journey. Your unwavering love and support have meant the world to me.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge God's steadfast presence in my life. To the One with whom "Nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37), for making the improbable possible. Your boundless grace and unwavering love have carried me through this project, reminding me that You have qualified me.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the influence of spiritual grounding on the practice of servant leadership among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the United States (U.S.). The research problem centers on the potential marginalization of individuals aspiring to practice servant leadership without spiritual grounding. The study aims to investigate whether spiritual grounding is foundational for servant leadership practice and to examine the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources. Through a comprehensive review and analysis of existing literature, this research identifies a gap in understanding the role of spirituality and authoritative sources in servant leadership practices. The methodology involves a quantitative analysis of the relationship between spiritual grounding, authoritative sources, and servant leadership practices, utilizing data from senior executives in U.S. public companies. The results demonstrate a significant influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practices, indicating a strong link between an individual's spiritual beliefs and their ability to practice servant leadership. The regression, Pearson correlation coefficient, and moderation analyses reveal that spiritual grounding plays a significant role in the practice of servant leadership among senior executives in publicly traded companies. The data indicates that personal spirituality and experiences are more influential in shaping servant leadership behaviors than traditional authoritative sources. These results align with existing literature that highlights the synergistic relationship between servant leadership and spirituality, emphasizing the importance of spiritual values in enhancing leadership practices. The regression analysis for the relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice shows no significant

positive influence of authoritative sources on servant leadership practice, with most p-values indicating non-significance, suggesting that while authoritative sources may influence spiritual grounding, they do not directly influence the practice of servant leadership among senior executives. This underscores the intricate relationship between servant leadership practices, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources, offering additional insights for leadership development programs. This dissertation contributes to the broader discourse on servant leadership. Recommendations for further study include exploring alternative foundations for servant leadership and investigating the implications of these results for leadership advancement programs in diverse organizational settings. This research opens avenues for a more holistic understanding of servant leadership, emphasizing the role of innate service and care characteristics over spiritual or authoritative affiliation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That's a new definition of greatness. By giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant."

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Feb. 4, 1968, Atlanta, Georgia

Not every servant leader has a spiritual grounding as a compass for leading, let alone in life in general (Fry, 2003; Neck & Milliman, 1994). In the modern business landscape, particularly within the finance and accounting sectors, there has been a notable trend where leadership priorities often emphasize maximizing revenue and enhancing shareholder equity (Pfeffer, 2010). While this focus is financially beneficial, it sometimes overlooks the holistic well-being of the organization and its employees (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Pfeffer, 2010). Such an approach can influence the productivity and morale of employees, who seek meaningful engagement in their work and a sense of purpose in their roles (Karakas, 2009; Mitroff, 1999).

Literature reveals that spirituality and servant leadership are sustainable and favorable for corporations looking to keep employees and improve their bottom line (De Silva et al., 2023). Through a review and analysis of existing literature, it has become apparent that there are three crucial propositions that underscore the spirituality-servant leadership construct, i.e., "(a) a leader's spiritual beliefs foster the development of certain behaviors associated with servant leadership; (b) servant leaders are effective, as perceived by their followers; and (c) a leader's spiritual practices moderate the perceived effectiveness of servant leaders" (Freeman, 2011). Servant leadership is often perceived as a practice that necessitates a strong spiritual foundation (Freeman, 2011). The belief that servant leadership can only be practiced by those with spiritual grounding may marginalize those who aspire to adopt servant leadership principles. This narrow association may engender uncertainty and doubt for those who do not identify as spiritual yet still wish to practice servant leadership.

Is it critical to recognize that servant leadership may not be limited to those who are spiritually grounded, but rather, it is a leadership style that can be adopted by anyone who wishes to prioritize the needs of others? By embracing a more inclusive perspective of servant leadership, will we foster a more diverse and collaborative community that empowers individuals from all backgrounds to lead with empathy and compassion and embody this powerful leadership style? Can you serve others without being tethered to any authoritative source?

Researching to determine if spiritual grounding or lack thereof could change the trajectory of how leaders lead and still maintain, if not exceed, productivity benchmarks will help organizations and individuals recognize the root cause of their leadership successes or inadequacies and embark on an endeavor to reckon what can be done to encourage and

incorporate servant leadership within their organization's leadership practices without necessarily yoking it with any religious affiliation. Instead of viewing servant leadership solely through a spiritual or religious lens, considering it as a leadership style that stems from service may encourage more leaders to recognize and promote it as an ideal approach to leadership that benefits both the organization and its employees holistically.

Background of Study

Statement of the Problem

This research investigates the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice among senior executives in U.S. publicly traded companies. The problem under investigation in this study is the potential marginalization of individuals who aspire to practice servant leadership but lack spiritual grounding. This issue is particularly pertinent in the context of globalization, which has led to an increasing diversity of people from various regions, cultures, and upbringings within organizations (Jokhio, 2023). The significance of this research lies in its potential to influence the leadership trajectory of those who choose to lead through service, irrespective of their spiritual grounding and background, especially as organizations continue to expand and diversify, necessitating leadership that holistically supports an organization and its employees (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). The motivations for this study lean towards the consistency and sustenance of leadership qualities and traits. While there are different theories and styles in leadership, the encounter with those who lead through service but do not consider themselves to be servant leaders because of the existing belief that servant leadership is tantamount to religion and Christianity (Shirin, 2015) instigated the need to investigate the influences on servant leadership practice.

History of the Problem

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1970 in his essay The Servant as Leader (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf (2002) emphasized the importance of leaders serving others and highlighted the positive influence such leadership can have on organizations (Greenleaf, 2002). However, the association of servant leadership with spirituality and religious beliefs has created the perception that it is only accessible to those with a specific spiritual grounding (Freeman, 2011; Sendjaya et al., 2008). This belief has potentially marginalized individuals who aspire to adopt servant leadership principles but do not identify as spiritual. As organizations become more diverse and globalized, it is crucial to investigate the historical development of this problem and understand its implications for leadership practices.

Current Status of the Problem

Currently, servant leadership continues to be associated with spirituality and religious beliefs, creating the perception that it is a leadership style exclusively accessible to those with spiritual grounding (Freeman, 2011). This association may hinder the adoption of servant leadership principles by individuals who do not identify as spiritual but still wish to prioritize the needs of others. The limited perspective on servant leadership may lead to the underutilization of this leadership approach in organizations and hinder the development of a diverse and collaborative community. Therefore, there is a need to examine the current status of the problem and investigate alternative perspectives that promote the practice of servant leadership beyond spiritual boundaries.

Theory and Action Related to the Problem

Previous research has highlighted the relationship between spirituality and servant leadership, emphasizing that a leader's spiritual beliefs can foster behaviors associated with

servant leadership (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Silingiene & Skeriene, 2016; Winston & Fields, 2015). Fry (2003) proposed a theory of spiritual leadership, suggesting that leaders' spiritual values and practices contribute to their servant leadership behaviors. Similarly, Sendjaya et al. (2008) found that spirituality is a significant dimension of servant leadership, influencing leaders' attitudes and actions toward their followers. Silingiene and Skeriene (2016) further supported this notion, stating that servant leaders' spiritual intelligence enables them to better understand and meet the needs of their employees. Additionally, Winston and Fields (2015) argued that servant leaders' spiritual well-being is a critical factor in their ability to prioritize the growth and development of their followers. However, there is a need to broaden the perspective on servant leadership and investigate its applicability beyond spiritual boundaries. Initiatives promoting the practice of servant leadership in organizations have primarily focused on fostering a strong spiritual foundation (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008). Nonetheless, there is a growing recognition of the need for a more inclusive approach that allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to embrace servant leadership principles (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Gotsis and Grimani (2016) argue that servant leadership should be viewed as a secular construct, accessible to leaders regardless of their spiritual or religious beliefs. Similarly, Liden et al. (2008) suggest that individuals from various backgrounds can practice servant leadership, as it is rooted in the fundamental principles of empathy, humility, and stewardship. According to Van Dierendonck (2011), the current empirical research on spiritual leadership lacks clarity regarding the specific behaviors associated with this leadership style. Fry's (2003) operationalization of spiritual leadership emphasizes organizational culture rather than actual leadership behavior. Van Dierendonck (2011) also emphasizes the need for a more inclusive understanding of servant leadership, one

that transcends spiritual or religious contexts and focuses on the core behaviors and attitudes that define this leadership approach.

By examining existing theories and actions related to the problem, this research aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of servant leadership and its implementation in various contexts. While previous research has primarily focused on the association between spirituality and servant leadership, the influence of reliance on authoritative sources has received limited attention. The theory suggests that individuals who practice servant leadership may draw upon authoritative sources such as religious texts, philosophical teachings, or ethical frameworks to guide their actions and decision-making (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). These authoritative sources provide moral and ethical guidelines that shape leaders' behavior and their approach to serving others (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). By aligning their actions with these sources, leaders aim to cultivate a sense of purpose, integrity, and ethical responsibility within their leadership practices. Organizations and leaders can implement various strategies to integrate authoritative sources into servant leadership practices by incorporating values and principles derived from authoritative sources into leadership training programs, developing ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, and fostering a culture that promotes the alignment of leadership behaviors with these sources. However, further study is needed to examine the extent to which reliance on authoritative sources is necessary for effective servant leadership. It is crucial to investigate whether individuals can practice servant leadership without being tethered to any specific authoritative source. By investigating the interplay between servant leadership, spirituality, and reliance on authoritative sources, this research aims to shed light on alternative perspectives and approaches to servant leadership that are inclusive and accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Understanding the theory and action related

to the problem in relation to authoritative sources is essential for organizations and leaders seeking to promote servant leadership principles in a way that accommodates individuals with varying spiritual beliefs or those who do not identify as spiritual.

Need for Further Study of the Problem

Despite the importance and relevance of motivation in servant leadership theory, this aspect has received little attention in research, and the motivational component of servant leadership has not been adequately investigated or incorporated into the multidimensional measures described in this article, leaving a gap in understanding the motivational factors behind servant leadership that could provide valuable insights into this leadership approach and its effectiveness in organizations, indicating a need for further research to investigate these aspects and integrate them into comprehensive assessment tools (Van Dierendonck, 2011). While previous research has investigated the relationship between spirituality and servant leadership, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded companies. Additionally, the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources remains under investigated. Further study is needed to understand the implications of spiritual grounding, or the lack thereof, on the adoption and effectiveness of servant leadership in diverse organizational settings and how authoritative sources may play a role. This research aims to bridge these gaps in knowledge and contribute to the understanding of servant leadership as an inclusive and effective leadership style that transcends spiritual boundaries.

Purpose of Study

This research aims to investigate the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practices among senior executives in publicly traded U.S. companies and to examine

the relationship between spiritual grounding, servant leadership practice, and authoritative sources within these organizations. The assertion regarding the beneficial effects of spirituality and servant leadership on organizational success and employee retention finds validation in Fry's seminal work (2003) on spiritual leadership. His research underscores that spiritual leadership, characterized by intrinsic motivation, values, and behaviors, correlates with heightened levels of organizational commitment, productivity, and enhanced financial performance (Fry, 2003). Today's organizations, which consist of an amalgamation of people from all over the world, must be equipped to handle a wide range of cultural nuances and individual personalities while still driving organizational success and growth (Fry, 2003).

Leadership motivations vary, with some individuals prioritizing the consistency and preservation of leadership qualities and traits (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Various leadership theories and styles exist, including those centered around service (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2021). However, it is worth noting that some individuals may not identify themselves as servant leaders due to the perception that servant leadership is closely associated with religion, particularly Christianity (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). A connection to an authoritative source and "the self" also plays a key role in guiding and maintaining grounded morals, ethics, and altruism, contributing to the flourishing of employees and, ultimately, the organization (Benefiel, 2005; Fry, 2003). Leadership stemming from a place of genuine selflessness can change everything about an organization and, ultimately, the follower experience (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008). Thus, the investigation to find out how spiritual grounding, or lack thereof, influences servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S.

The research question under investigation is, "What impact does spiritual grounding have on the practice of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.? The purpose of

this study is to examine how being spiritually grounded impacts the ability to lead through service, irrespective of one's spiritual beliefs. Organizations have the option to consider adopting servant leadership as an ideal and potentially proven leadership style (Greenleaf, 1977; Van Dierendonck, 2011). This approach can empower individuals to lead through service, offering them an opportunity for personal growth and fulfillment (Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010). The focus is on nurturing innate characteristics of service and care, which are regarded as essential aspects of human existence (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2014)

This research initiates conversations on a new perspective on the fundamental elements of servant leadership and how they influence leadership in the modern era. It will also investigate the potential links between servant leadership and spiritual grounding or authoritative sources. The results of this study will contribute to the mission of empowering individuals in the secular world who are drawn to lead through service, regardless of their spiritual background or belief in any authoritative source. As a result, individuals may experience a spiritual awakening, where serving others acts as a key to exploring existential questions more deeply, potentially leading to experiences often associated with spirituality, such as feeling a connection to a higher power or achieving a greater sense of spiritual satisfaction. Ultimately, the results of this research will contribute to the empowerment of individuals in the secular realm who are inspired to lead through service, irrespective of their spiritual grounding or belief in any authoritative source. Furthermore, this could facilitate a transformative journey for individuals, where engaging in acts of service becomes a pathway to determining a more profound connection with the divine and a significant sense of purpose.

Research Questions

1. What impact does spiritual grounding have on the practice of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.?

2. What is the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources?

3. Do spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources serve as foundational elements for servant leadership practice?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested are:

1. H_1: There is a relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

   - H_0: There is no relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

2. H_2: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

   - H_0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

3. H_3: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

   - H_0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

4. H_4: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice.

   - H_0: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources do not predict servant leadership practice

Current Research Gap

This paper intends to investigate the gaps below:

1. Investigation of the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources.

2. Investigating the influence of spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources on leadership effectiveness within publicly traded companies.

Theoretical Perspective

Greenleaf (1977), who is considered the "father" of servant leadership, introduced the concept of leading through service for the first time in corporate America in his initial book, *Servant Leadership* (1977). Greenleaf (2002) cited the benefits of servant leadership as improved and more robust companies. In his book, he also examines both the qualities of the leaders and the followers and expands on how leading through service also calls for the exercising of authority, a concept not linked with servanthood (Greenleaf, 2002). He recognizes that accepting the responsibility of being a servant leader may not be well received by some since it necessitates a dedication to serving others, especially in a world where individuals prioritize personal independence and criticism instead of making a constructive effort (Greenleaf, 2002). He proposes that the problems of modern society arise from the failures of individuals and advocates for a society that is molded by individuals who embrace the principles of servant leadership, where the primary focus is on personal growth with a positive influence on the less privileged, and emerge from those with servant hearts, and their leadership style should reflect their commitment to serving and uplifting others (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf's book, *Servant Leadership*, does not broadly investigate the explicit connections or correlations between spirituality, servant leadership, and authoritative sources. While Greenleaf (2002) discusses the principles and characteristics of servant leadership, he focuses more on the mindset and behavior of leaders rather than exploring the specific spiritual or religious dimensions of the practice. Thus, it does not provide an in-depth analysis or explanation of how spirituality, servant leadership, and authoritative sources intertwine.

Servant leadership practice, as the application of servant leadership principles and behaviors, has been theoretically and empirically associated with various positive organizational outcomes. Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (2010) have proposed that servant leadership can lead to increased employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, as well as improved individual and team performance. These relationships have been supported by empirical research, such as Liden et al. (2014) and Eva et al. (2019), who found positive associations between servant leadership and employee outcomes. Furthermore, Parris and Peachey (2013) conducted a systematic literature review and found that servant leadership is associated with increased employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance, while Peterson et al. (2012) demonstrated that CEO servant leadership is positively related to firm performance in technology organizations. These results provide a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the study of servant leadership practice as a dependent variable, influenced by factors such as spiritual grounding and authoritative sources.

Previous research reveals that spirituality and servant leadership are sustainable and favorable for corporations looking to keep employees and improve their bottom line (Van Dierendonck, 2011). After analyzing various studies, Freeman (2011) suggests that the spirituality-servant leadership construct can be summarized through three propositions. Firstly, a leader's spiritual beliefs can contribute towards the development of certain behaviors that are associated with servant leadership; secondly, followers perceive servant leaders as effective; and lastly, a leader's spiritual practices can influence the perceived effectiveness of servant leaders (Freeman, 2011). Franklin (2010) conducted quantitative research in her paper to determine the degree to which small businesses practice servant leadership and the relationship between their spirituality level and servant leadership (Franklin, 2010). The results revealed that a connection

between servant leadership and spirituality is not implicit (Franklin, 2010). However, the research fails to examine the effects of authoritative sources on the relationship between servant leadership and spirituality. Spiritual grounding, as a foundation for an individual's beliefs, values, and behaviors, has been theoretically linked to servant leadership practice. Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (2010) have suggested that servant leadership is rooted in a leader's spiritual orientation, emphasizing the importance of serving others and fostering their growth and well-being. This connection is further supported by Freeman (2011), who proposed that a leader's spiritual beliefs can nurture the development of servant leadership characteristics. Additionally, Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) demonstrated that servant leadership significantly predicts trust in leaders, with spirituality serving as a key component of servant leadership. These results suggest that spiritual grounding may be a significant predictor of servant leadership practice, with leaders who have a strong spiritual foundation being more likely to engage in servant leadership behaviors.

Jódar (2022) suggested that authoritative sources, such as religious texts, spiritual leaders, or personal experiences, can shape an individual's understanding and application of spiritual principles in their leadership practice. Phipps (2012) further elaborated on this idea, proposing that a leader's spiritual beliefs, which are often influenced by religious text, can serve as a filter and frame for information processing in leadership decision-making, e.g., a leader who draws upon the teachings of a specific religious text may exhibit different servant leadership behaviors compared to a leader who relies primarily on personal spiritual experiences. Blogowska and Saroglou (2013) investigated the relationship between religious fundamentalism and attitudes toward various targets, proposing that fundamentalists' attitudes may be influenced by the nature of the authoritative religious texts to which they are exposed. The results suggest that

fundamentalists' attitudes are uniquely dependent on religious authority (Blogowska & Saroglou, 2013). The reverence for sacred Scripture can be attributed to its status as a sacred text; when a text is regarded as a manifestation of divine revelation, both its expression and its content become significant (Jódar, 2022). Religions with core, unquestionable texts emphasize following those texts faithfully, depending on the content of the religious texts themselves (Blogowska & Saroglou, 2013).

Servant leadership is often closely associated with spirituality, leading to the potential marginalization of those who aspire to be servant leaders but lack spiritual grounding (Freeman, 2011). While previous research has revealed the relationship between spirituality and servant leadership (Franklin, 2010; Freeman, 2011; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010), there is a gap in understanding the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice and the effect of authoritative sources on this relationship. Authoritative sources may shape an individual's understanding and application of spiritual principles in their leadership practice (Blogowska & Saroglou, 2013; Jódar, 2022; Phipps, 2012). To that end, this study aims to determine the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice and the relationship between spiritual grounding, servant leadership practice, and authoritative sources, seeking to answer the question: Is it possible to lead through service without spiritual grounding?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates key elements of leadership, organization, and specific variables to investigate the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded companies. The framework builds upon the foundational work of Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (2010), who defined servant leadership and its key characteristics, as well as the research linking servant leadership to

positive organizational outcomes (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014). As defined by Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (2010), servant leadership prioritizes serving others and focuses on the growth and well-being of followers. This aligns with the spiritual aspect of selflessness and dedication to serving others (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

The framework also incorporates transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2021) to compare and contrast with servant leadership (Stone et al., 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2011). In addition to incorporating transformational and servant leadership theories (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2021), the framework also encompasses other relevant leadership theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics. Organizational factors, such as culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Schein, 2010) and design (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Burton et al., 2021), are included to examine their relationship with leadership and employee outcomes (Sørensen, 2002; Zheng et al., 2010) as well as organizational performance (Westerman et al., 2014). Additionally, the study will reference existing literature examining servant leadership within publicly traded companies (Akbari et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2012).

The primary variables of interest in this study are spiritual grounding (Gray, 2006; Reed, 1987), servant leadership practice (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013), and authoritative sources (Reitz, 2004; Westman, 2009). The framework investigates the relationships between these variables, drawing upon previous research that has found the connection between spiritual grounding and servant leadership (Freeman, 2011; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010) and the role of authoritative sources in shaping spiritual grounding and servant leadership (Freeman, 2011; Wallace, 2007).

To account for potential confounding factors, the conceptual framework incorporates a multiple regression analysis that controls for various demographic and organizational variables

(Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). These variables include age, organizational tenure, leadership tenure, number of direct reports, gender, being in a leadership role, considering oneself spiritual, ethnicity, education level, and religion. By including these control variables, the study aims to isolate the effects of the primary variables of interest and increase the explanatory power of the statistical models (Hair et al., 2019). This approach helps to mitigate the potential influence of confounding factors and enhances the robustness of the results (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016; Hair et al., 2019).

Variables

Spiritual Grounding: Spiritual grounding refers to the extent to which an individual's spirituality serves as a foundation for their beliefs, values, and behaviors (Reed, 1987). In this study it is measured using the Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS), which assesses an individual's spiritual beliefs and practices (Gray, 2006; Reed, 1987). Research has shown that spiritual grounding is positively associated with servant leadership behaviors. For example, Freeman (2011) found that a leader's spiritual beliefs can foster the development of servant leadership characteristics, while Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) demonstrated that servant leadership significantly predicts trust in leaders, with spirituality serving as a key component of servant leadership.

Servant Leadership Practice (Dependent Variable): Servant leadership practice refers to the application of servant leadership principles and behaviors in a leadership context and it is often measured using the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ), which assesses five dimensions of servant leadership: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013). Parris and Peachey (2013) conducted a systematic literature review and found that servant

leadership is associated with increased employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance, while Peterson et al. (2012) demonstrated that CEO servant leadership is positively related to firm performance in technology organizations, supporting that servant leadership practice has proven to have a positive impact on various organizational outcomes.

Authoritative Sources (Moderating Variable): Authoritative sources refer to the recognized and trusted sources of information or guidance that individuals rely upon (Reitz, 2004; Westman, 2009). In the context of spiritual grounding and servant leadership, authoritative sources may include religious texts, spiritual leaders, or personal experiences (Wallace, 2007). This study investigates whether authoritative sources play a moderating role in the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership.

While this study focuses on the relationships between spiritual grounding, servant leadership practice, and authoritative sources, it is essential to acknowledge the potential influence of other factors on servant leadership practice. Variables such as organizational size (Vaccaro et al., 2010), industry (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), leader tenure (Hambrick & Fukutomi, 1991), leadership experience (Mumford et al., 2000), and organizational culture (Schein, 2010) may play a role in shaping leadership behaviors and outcomes.

Organizational size and industry can impact the context in which leadership is practiced, as well as the resources and constraints leaders face (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Vaccaro et al., 2010). Leader tenure and leadership experience may influence a leader's skills, knowledge, and ability to effectively implement servant leadership principles (Hambrick & Fukutomi, 1991; Mumford et al., 2000). Organizational culture, which encompasses shared values, beliefs, and norms, can create an environment that either supports or hinders servant leadership practices (Schein, 2010).

However, due to limitations in data availability and the scope of this research, the survey instrument used to collect data did not gather information on organizational culture, size, or industry. These variables were not included in the current study. Additionally, assessing organizational culture would have required a more extensive and time-consuming data collection process, which was beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, respondents may not have been open to sharing sensitive organizational information, such as financial data or internal cultural dynamics, which could have affected the response rate.

The study's absence of these three variables may limit the generalizability of the results. The relationships between spiritual grounding, servant leadership practice, and authoritative sources may vary depending on the organizational context, leader characteristics, and cultural factors. For example, the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice may be more pronounced in certain industries or organizational sizes, or the role of authoritative sources may differ based on a leader's tenure or experience (Beck, 2014; Hale & Fields, 2007). Despite these limitations, this study provides insights into the interplay between spirituality, leadership, and authoritative sources, laying the groundwork for future research.

The population of interest for this study is senior executives from publicly traded companies in the U.S. Publicly traded companies were chosen because they represent a diverse range of demographics and are required to operate in a non-discriminatory manner, regardless of beliefs or religion; additionally, these companies have a significant societal and economic influence, playing a vital role in the American economy and the livelihoods of many individuals (U.S. SEC, 2022).

To facilitate data collection, the study utilized Centiment (2024), a well-established online survey platform that connects researchers with targeted survey respondents. Centiment is known for its comprehensive research platform, which is used by both enterprises and academics to create surveys and engage with specific audiences (Centiment, 2024). In addition, the study employed Qualtrics (2024), a versatile survey software tool that allows for the easy design and distribution of surveys. The survey was designed using Qualtrics (2024) and then distributed to the targeted respondents through Centiment (2024).

For data analysis, the study used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a widely recognized software program in research for conducting statistical analyses. SPSS provides a comprehensive set of tools for data management, analysis, and visualization, enabling researchers to draw meaningful insights from the collected data (IBM, 2023)

By focusing on senior executives from publicly traded companies and leveraging reputable data collection and analysis tools, this study aims to provide a representative and reliable understanding of the influence of spirituality on servant leadership practices within organizations that have a significant impact on the American economy and society.

This dissertation employs two established numerical scales to measure the constructs of spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. A quantitative analytical approach is utilized, incorporating regression, moderation, and correlational analyses to validate and investigate the relationships posited in the research questions and hypotheses (Hair et al., 2019). Specifically, moderation analysis is employed to determine whether authoritative sources mediate the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice (Hayes, 2018). Regression analysis is applied to assess the predictive relationships between independent variables (spiritual grounding and authoritative sources) and the dependent variable (servant

leadership practice) and to test hypotheses (Cohen et al., 2003). Correlational analysis, using the Pearson correlation coefficient, is computed to measure the direction and strength of the relationship between spiritual grounding and each of the servant leadership practice subscales, including altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

The research also incorporates a comprehensive literature review to contextualize the results within the broader fields of servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources (Randolph, 2019). The results chapter will present a summary of the data, including demographic information, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and the outcomes of the moderation and regression analyses.

Procedures

Survey questionnaires have proven to be an efficient method for gathering research and assessment data (Diem, 2002). These tools enable researchers to obtain insights into participants' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceptions as they attempt to measure a wide range of characteristics in individuals. Typically, quantitative surveys feature closed-ended questions where respondents are required to choose from a distinct set of responses (SAGE Publications, 2020). Rating scales are mostly used in online/web surveys where respondents are expected to rate an attribute. The rating scale is a type of multiple-choice question used to obtain relative information about a specific topic. The most frequently used scale and survey in scholarly articles in the area of research is the Likert scale (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Both the SLQ and the SPS use the Likert scale.

Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) servant leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) and Reed's (1987) spiritual grounding use rating scales, which are a 5-point Likert scale for the SLQ (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006) and a 6-point Likert scale for the SPS (Reed, 1987).

This research will be conducted utilizing two pre-existing assessment tools to measure servant leadership and spiritual grounding:

a) The Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) - The SLQ was developed by Barbuto and Wheeler in 2006 and has a reliability coefficient (Cronbach alphas) ranging from 0.82 to 0.92. The SLQ consists of 23 items and measures five dimensions of servant leadership, including altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. It's designed to be administered as a self-evaluation by the leader (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). It takes about 4 minutes to complete (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013). This instrument will be used to measure servant leadership practice.

b) The Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS) - The SPS was created by Pamela Reed (1987) and has been tested in both healthy and terminally ill adult populations, proving to be reliable, accurate, and relevant. Based on a comprehensive 10-item questionnaire that takes about 5 minutes to complete, we can accurately measure the depth of an individual's spiritual beliefs and level of involvement in spiritually related behaviors (Gray, 2006). It takes 7 to 10 minutes to complete the consolidated survey questionnaire. This instrument will be used to measure spiritual grounding.

Significance of Study

Uniqueness and Compatibility of the Research

This research is unique in its investigation of the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice among senior executives in U.S. publicly traded companies because,

firstly, unlike previous studies that have often linked spirituality with servant leadership (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008), this study seeks to understand if servant leadership can be effectively practiced without a spiritual foundation. This challenges the conventional belief that servant leadership necessitates a strong spiritual grounding, providing a fresh perspective on servant leadership and opening the door to a more inclusive understanding of leadership styles that prioritize the needs of others, regardless of their spiritual beliefs. The compatibility of this research with existing literature is evident as it builds upon the sustainable and favorable outcomes associated with spirituality and servant leadership in public and corporate settings (Karakas, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2013). The study aligns with the work of Greenleaf (1977), who proposed the theory of servant leadership, emphasizing the service of leaders towards their followers and the commitment to serve people.

Secondly, the research resonates with the views of authors like Spear (2004) and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), who suggest that servant leadership is more a way of life or a philosophical posture than a leadership theory. Harlos (2000) shares a different perspective that discusses spirituality's influence on teaching and learning, noting the growing interest in religion, meditation, and integrating spirituality with work. Despite the decline of organized religion, more people seek spiritual guidance, and spirituality has evolved from being associated with Christianity to a broader belief in a higher power (Harlos, 2000). This study's contribution to knowledge is significant as it investigates the influence of spiritual grounding and authoritative sources on servant leadership within publicly traded companies, addressing a gap in current research (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Theoretically, it challenges the conventional understanding of servant leadership and spirituality, offering a new perspective on how these concepts can be applied in leadership practices. In terms of practice, this research

potentially influences how senior executives in publicly traded companies approach leadership.

Exploring the possibility of practicing servant leadership without a spiritual foundation could

encourage a more inclusive leadership style that caters to the needs of all employees, regardless

of their spiritual beliefs (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Liden et al., 2008).

Contribution to Knowledge, Theory, and Practice

The study's contribution to knowledge is significant as it investigates the influence of

spiritual grounding and authoritative sources on servant leadership practices in public, thereby

bridging a gap in existing research (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). From a

theoretical standpoint, it challenges the conventional understanding of servant leadership that is

grounded in spirituality (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008) and presents a fresh outlook on how

these concepts can be incorporated into leadership practices. Testing the possibility of practicing

servant leadership without a spiritual foundation could encourage a more inclusive leadership

style that caters to diverse beliefs and values within the organization (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016;

Liden et al., 2008). Furthermore, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on servant

leadership and spirituality in leadership (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Sendjaya et al., 2008),

enriching the body of knowledge in this field. It provides a foundation for future research to

investigate further and understand the complexities and nuances of servant leadership and

spirituality in leadership roles (Karakas, 2009; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Delimitations and Limitations of Study

Assumptions

1. Not every servant leader has spiritual grounding: It is assumed that some individuals who

    practice servant leadership may not have a strong spiritual foundation or connection to

    any particular religious or authoritative source (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck,

2011). This assumption challenges the conventional belief that servant leadership necessitates a strong spiritual grounding (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008).

2. Servant leadership can be adopted by anyone who prioritizes the needs of others: It is assumed that servant leadership is not limited to individuals with spiritual grounding and can be embraced by anyone who wishes to prioritize the well-being and needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008). This assumption aligns with the idea that servant leadership is more a way of life or a philosophical posture than a leadership theory (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Spear, 2004).

3. Leadership driven by revenue and shareholder benefit affects followers' well-being: Leadership approaches focused on financial gains and shareholder equity may harm followers seeking meaning in their work (Karakas, 2009; Pfeffer, 2010). This assumption is consistent with the idea that a balanced leadership approach that values both financial outcomes and employee well-being is necessary for organizational success (Benefiel, 2005; Sheep, 2006).

4. Servant leaders are effective leaders regardless of their spiritual grounding or reliance on authoritative sources: This assumption suggests that the effectiveness of servant leadership is not dependent on the leader's spiritual grounding or connection to authoritative sources (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). It implies that the core principles and behaviors of servant leadership can be practiced effectively by individuals from diverse backgrounds (Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

5. Spiritual practices moderate the perceived effectiveness of servant leaders: It is assumed that the spiritual practices of leaders have a moderating effect on their effectiveness as servant leaders (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008). This assumption acknowledges the

potential influence of spirituality on servant leadership effectiveness while also

recognizing that servant leadership can be practiced without a strong spiritual foundation

(Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

6. Public companies provide a diverse and inclusive context for studying servant leadership:

It is assumed that publicly traded companies represent a diverse range of demographics

and operate in a non-discriminatory manner, making them a suitable context for

examining the influence of spirituality on servant leadership practices (U.S. SEC, 2022).

This assumption acknowledges the potential for public companies to provide insights into

servant leadership that are applicable across various organizational settings.

Limitations and Delimitation

This study has limitations that warrant consideration. The researcher acknowledges a

potential bias toward identifying a link between spirituality and servant leadership, as spirituality

is often associated with a belief in God or a higher being (Royer & Baize-Ward, 2020). These

inclinations could impact the interpretation of literature and the framing of research questions

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, the research was conducted based on empirical data, and

the results were derived from data analysis rather than personal beliefs or preferences. The

research design, methodology, and statistical analysis were selected to minimize the influence of

these biases and ensure objectivity in the results (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2011).

The use of online self-scoring assessment instruments to measure servant leadership

among leaders in public companies presents limitations. These instruments can be influenced by

participants' honesty and accuracy in responding, as individuals tend to have an inflated view of

themselves and their abilities (Dunning et al., 2004; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). Moreover,

leaders may have preconceived notions or misunderstandings about the true meaning of servant

leadership, which can impact their survey responses (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Additionally, the presence of authoritarian, hierarchical structures and egotistical pride within public companies, commonly associated with traditional leadership models, can introduce biases that hinder the accurate measurement of servant leadership levels (Greenleaf, 1977; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The anonymous nature of the survey also prohibits follow-up validation or obtaining further insights from participants' responses.

Limited understanding of servant leadership among some leaders may affect survey responses; to mitigate this, clear instructions and definitions will be provided to ensure a common understanding (Northouse, 2019). The survey instruments used in this study did not capture certain factors that could influence servant leadership practice, e.g., organization size, industry, and culture. Consequently, the limited variance observed in the study can be attributed to the specific focus on these constructs, while other potentially relevant factors were not considered within the scope of the research. Also, the study focuses on senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S., which restricts the generalizability of the results to other populations or organizational contexts.

Key Terms

The selected key terms for this research have been defined using existing literature:

Spirituality: "…a quality that goes beyond religious affiliation, that strives for inspiration, reverence, awe, meaning, and purpose, even in those who do not believe in any good. The spiritual dimension tries to be in harmony with the universe, strives for answers about the infinite, and comes essentially into focus in times of emotional stress, physical (and mental) illness, loss, bereavement and death" (Murray & Zentner, 1989, p. 259).

Foundation: In the context of this research, the term "foundation" refers to factor(s) or variable(s) that contribute to or underlie the development or practice of: providing a base, grounding, or underlying support (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2024).

Authoritative Sources: Authoritative Sources are Sacred Books, the Constitution, Personal Experiences – "The Self", Customs or Cultural Traditions, and Codes of Conduct.

Servant Leadership: A theory that emphasizes the leader's responsibility to serve their followers and prioritize their needs above their own self-interest (Greenleaf, 1970).

Servant Leader: A leader who focuses on empowering and developing their followers, creating a culture of trust and collaboration, and fostering a sense of community within the organization (Greenleaf, 1970).

Publicly Traded Company: There are two commonly understood ways "…a company is considered public: first, the company's securities trade on public markets; and second, the company discloses certain business and financial information regularly to the public" (U.S. SEC, 2022).

Senior Executive: For the purposes of this research, senior executives are leaders who lead or head individual departments, divisions, or business units with direct reports. Titles include C-Suite, president, vice president, director, or controller.

This introductory chapter presents an overview of the study through a description of the background, purpose, approach, significance, delimitations, limitations, and vocabulary of the research. Chapter Two establishes the theoretical framework by conducting a comprehensive literature review on servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010), spiritual grounding (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008), leadership's influence on followers' well-being (Karakas, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2013), and the effectiveness of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008; Van

Dierendonck, 2011). Chapter Three outlines the research design, emphasizing the methodology, data collection techniques, and analysis methods used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Chapter Four presents the study's results, including data analysis outcomes, and provides an objective summary of the results. Chapter Five discusses and draws conclusions from the study's results, relating them to the research questions and existing literature. It investigates practical and research implications, considers limitations, and suggests future research directions in the field of leadership (Northouse, 2021).

Summary and Forecast

Chapter 1 introduces servant leadership, as developed by Greenleaf in 1977. Servant leadership emphasizes leaders serving others and their positive effect on organizations (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). However, linking servant leadership to spiritual grounding has created a perception of exclusivity (Sendjaya et al., 2008). This potentially excludes those who aspire to be servant leaders but do not identify as spiritual. The chapter presents the problem of the potential marginalization of individuals who aspire to practice servant leadership but lack spiritual grounding. It expounds on the investigation of whether spiritual grounding is a foundation for servant leadership and determines the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008), and reliance on authoritative sources. The aim is to provide insights into the adoption and implementation of servant leadership principles in organizations, irrespective of individuals' spiritual backgrounds. The chapter also outlines the research questions and hypotheses tested, which revolve around the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice, the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources, and whether spiritual grounding or relying on authoritative sources is a foundation for servant leadership. The chapter concludes by presenting

the approach of the study, which involves using quantitative research methods to collect and

analyze data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) from leaders/senior executives in publicly traded

companies.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, delves into the history and practice of leadership as

well as the broader history and evolution of leadership (Northouse, 2021). It presents a

theoretical and conceptual framework for the study and discusses the concept of spiritual

grounding in depth (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008). The chapter focuses on servant leadership,

exploring its origins, principles, and applications (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). The chapter

also analyzes cultural and social factors influencing servant leadership, the assumptions of

servant leadership, and the characterization of authoritative sources. It provides a comprehensive

review of existing literature on these topics, identifying gaps in knowledge and areas for further

research. The literature review provides a theoretical framework for the study, setting the stage

for the ensuing chapters on research design, data collection and analysis, and the discussion of

results.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The aim of this study is to investigate how being spiritually grounded affects the practice of servant leadership among senior executives at public companies in the U.S. The research examines the connection between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources and how these factors influence the effectiveness of servant leadership practice. The study is framed around the research hypotheses that aim to investigate if spiritual grounding is an essential element for servant leadership practice, if authoritative sources are central to establishing spiritual grounding, if there is a meaningful correlation between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice, and if relying on authoritative sources has a notable connection with servant leadership practice.

This chapter reviews literature addressing research and theory related to the study in the areas of leadership, servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources. The literature review investigates existing theories, models, empirical studies, and concepts related to these topics. On the topic of leadership as a whole, an in-depth review of transformational and servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources critically analyzes and synthesizes the literature, identifying prominent themes and results. A summary analysis of these themes and results is presented at the end of the chapter, providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge in the field. The literature review was instrumental in shaping the research question and limiting the scope of the project. The process helped to define the research question and provide a clear understanding of the scope of work. The literature review covered various aspects of leadership, including the history and evolution of leadership theories (Northouse, 2021), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010), spiritual grounding (Fry,

2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008), and the influence of leadership on followers' well-being (Karakas, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2013). The review also investigated the effectiveness of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011) and the role of authoritative sources in shaping leadership practices (Girardot, 2002; Jódar, 2022). The literature review identified limitations and gaps in current knowledge, leading to the development of a focused research question that contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

The literature was searched using keywords and variations of keywords such as leadership, servant leadership, spirituality, religion, authoritative sources, and public companies. The review revealed a gap in understanding the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual grounding, particularly in the context of public companies. Previous studies have often linked spirituality with servant leadership (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008), but there is limited research on whether servant leadership can be effectively practiced without a spiritual foundation. This gap led to the development of the main research question: How does spiritual grounding influence the practice of servant leadership among senior executives in U.S. public companies?

Furthermore, the literature review emphasized the need to investigate the role of authoritative sources in establishing spiritual grounding and their potential impact on servant leadership practices. The study aims to address these gaps by examining the relationships between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources, as well as their influence on the effectiveness of servant leadership in public companies. By addressing these limitations in current knowledge, the study contributes to the existing body of literature and provides new insights into the practice of servant leadership across diverse organizational contexts.

Exploring Leadership: Insights and Perspectives

Leadership plays a pivotal role in various fields, whether in business, government, education, or healthcare, influencing outcomes and shaping the direction of organizations, communities, and society at large (Northouse, 2022). Therefore, exploring the intricate relationship between leadership and society is crucial to understanding how we can enhance our organizations and the communities they serve (Kiral & Basaran, 2019). Effective leadership is essential in guiding individuals and organizations toward achieving their goals (Northouse, 2022). A good leader can inspire and motivate people, create a shared vision and purpose, and make informed decisions to solve problems (Kiral & Basaran, 2019). Lacking strong leadership would challenge the ability to achieve success on both individual and organizational levels, thus making it essential for any business to have strong and effective leadership to reach its full potential (Northouse, 2022). According to Yukl (2006), "Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 7). Northouse (2022) also defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 23). These definitions highlight the fundamental role of leadership in influencing and directing individuals and groups toward a shared purpose.

Effective leadership plays a crucial role in the success of an organization and the progress of society, and in tandem with this, ethics is a fundamental aspect of the discussion concerning effective leadership (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2021). By understanding the complex relationship between leadership and society, we can develop strategies to cultivate strong and effective leaders who can drive positive change and foster thriving organizations and communities (Kiral & Basaran, 2019).

Scholars and writers have studied the crucial role of leadership from various angles, and their analyses have yielded valuable insights into its significance. According to Northouse (2022), the concept of leadership has become increasingly captivating to the public over the past two decades, leading to high demand for information on what makes a good leader and how to become one, resulting in a proliferation of books and advice on the topic as individuals believe that leadership can enhance their personal, social, and professional lives, and corporations actively seek leaders as they perceive them to bring valuable assets to their organizations and improve financial performance, prompting academic institutions to offer leadership studies programs in response (Northouse, 2022). Masse (2022) of Siena Heights University outlines various reasons why leadership is vital in the workplace: improved communication, a better work environment, improved productivity and efficiency, employee motivation, inspiring others, and creating a strong vision and direction (Masse, 2022). According to Lyubykh et al. (2022), leadership is also vital in improving workplace safety and reducing the mental and economic consequences of unsafe work.

Northouse's (2022) *Leadership: Theory and Practice* is an insightful book. With great insights, it investigates and expounds on the different theories, types, methods, and leadership models, describing how each works, its strengths, weaknesses, and applications. More enlivening is that each chapter includes at least one case study and a self-assessment tool to help the user with real-world examples and discover their leadership style. Leadership theories explain why specific individuals emerge as leaders while highlighting the essential qualities and behaviors required for effective leadership (Northouse, 2022). They also provide valuable insights into the complex nature of leadership and the diverse approaches that can inspire, guide, and influence others toward achieving common goals (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2021).

The study of leadership within the finance and accounting sector will encompass an examination of its historical development, the role of leadership across the field, and a review of prominent leadership theories and their practical applications. The focus of this study leans towards the consistency and sustenance of leadership qualities and traits. While various theories and styles exist in leadership (Bass & Bass, 2009; Northouse, 2021), a connection to an authoritative source and one's true self plays a crucial role in guiding and maintaining grounded morals, ethics, and altruism, which contributes to the flourishing of employees and, ultimately, the organization as a whole (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The concept of servant leadership, which emphasizes leading from a place of genuine selflessness (Greenleaf, 1977), can transform an organization and, thus, is a significant area of study. Overall, the aim is to contribute to the understanding of leadership in the context of spirituality and authoritative sources, potentially influencing servant leadership practices in publicly held organizations.

The History and Practice of Leadership in Finance and Accounting

The consensus is that leaders can be born and made. The journal Point/Counterpoint: Are Outstanding Leaders Born or Made? by Boerma et al. (2017) had two groups debating whether leaders are born or made. One group debated that leaders are born and argued that certain innate traits are needed for one to develop into an outstanding leader when life experiences and circumstances present themselves, while the other group debated that leaders are made and that exceptional leaders are forged through rigorous training, persistent hard work, and valuable experiences. "The answer is likely not just one viewpoint or the other, but rather a combination of both. There is evidence to support a 30% genetic component to being in a leadership role" (Boerma et al., 2017). Leading in industry, finance, and accounting is critical to the stability of economies worldwide. The financial crisis of 2008 showed how critical leadership in this

industry is to the stability of our country. Bilgin (2019) points out that "it is reasonable to expect that the financial system orientation of a country is an important macroeconomic determinant of the external financing mix choices of firms operating in this country" (Bilgin, 2019). Devoting resources and time to developing leadership competencies is now more critical than ever for finance and accounting services firms (Ljungholm, 2014). In this era of uncertainty and change, it is, therefore, key to find leaders who are rooted in their beliefs and consistent in their leadership models to enhance security and trust in the organization (Zhu et al., 2011).

The report by Dellaert and Kernick (2019) highlights the significant disruptions faced by financial services organizations due to technological advancements, regulatory changes, and market shifts. These disruptions challenge traditional business models and raise questions about the critical leadership competencies necessary for success in the financial services industry. The report prompts a reflection on the leadership skills required to navigate this new landscape and how current industry leaders measure up to these evolving demands (Dellaert & Kernick, 2019).

Leadership theories have progressed through three distinct phases: the first from the 1920s to the 1980s, the second from the 1980s to 2000, and the current phase beginning in 2000, which continues to evolve with ongoing research into adapting to societal changes (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). In finance and accounting, phase one is still robust despite us being in the third phase of leadership theories. Innate and personality traits are analyzed to select candidates for leadership roles. This industry screens candidates for vital traits during the hiring process, which is rigorous compared to most industries. Needing up to, if not exceeding, five rounds of interviews with different panels, digging for technical, analytical, intellectual, behavioral, critical thinking, and communications skills, the first three are closely rooted in innate traits. In *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, the traits and characteristics are outlined chronologically to

illustrate an increase in the traits assessed in 2017 compared to those from 1948; however, we

see that, now, they lean towards traits that are in favor of the well-being of both followers and

leaders; consciousness, openness, agreeableness, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and

self-monitoring (Northouse, 2022, p. 31).

Gandolfi and Stone (2016) point out how the world is ingrained in a leadership crisis at

the moment and that leading has become ever more difficult and multifaceted for every

organization, big or small, everywhere; thus, asking who is the best type of leader in this era

(Gandolfi & Stone, 2016). Leaders in organizations appear to have undergone an evolution in

their leadership approach, adapting to changing circumstances and experiences (Avolio &

Gardner, 2005). There is an acknowledgment that leadership is a continuous journey rather than

a fixed destination, causing leaders to be less rigid, less inclined to exert power, and more

focused on engagements and building relationships with employees (Greenleaf, 1977; Van

Dierendonck, 2011). This change suggests a transformation in leadership styles, moving away

from classical authoritative methods towards more servant-oriented and interactive forms of

leadership. A 2021 survey revealed significant insights into employee perceptions and

expectations, highlighting that leaders and companies who genuinely care for their people and

exhibit authenticity are highly valued (Insigniam, 2021). The current era demands a change in

leadership styles to keep up with the needs of the current workforce (Anderson & Sun, 2017;

Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

The practice of leadership, while recognizing the innate qualities of historical figures like

Caesar, Gandhi, Lincoln, and Napoleon Bonaparte, also considers the principles of trait theories,

which propose that leadership traits may be inherent or developed through training and

experience (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Positivism's assertion that reality and facts are stable,

structured, and independent of theory (Trochim, 2020) is more aligned with traditional, trait-based leadership theories. Early leadership research often sought to identify stable and quantifiable leadership traits (Stogdill, 1948). However, this perspective can be limiting when considering the complexities of leadership in the real world (Osborn et al., 2002). The idea that leadership is solely determined by objective, measurable factors is increasingly challenged by post-positivist thinking in leadership studies (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Collinson, 2014).

Post-positivism claims and offers new conventions that reveal the truth (Trochim, 2020). The distinction between post-positivism and positivism in the realm of leadership theory is crucial in understanding how leadership is perceived and studied (Aliyu et al., 2014). Post-positivism's recognition of interpretive and unstructured reality aligns with leadership's evolving and context-dependent nature in modern-day leadership studies (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023). The post-positivist view recognizes the limitations of the positivist approach and acknowledges the complexity and context-dependency of social phenomena like leadership (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Leadership theories such as transformational and servant leadership recognize that leadership effectiveness depends on various factors without a one-size-fits-all solution, a view supported by post-positivism, which sees leadership as a flexible and context-dependent concept (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

Leadership has been historically dominated by men, with women facing significant underrepresentation in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The concept of leadership itself has been characterized as a gendered construct, influenced by societal norms and expectations (Yoder, 2001). In the finance and accounting industries, which have traditionally been male-dominated fields, this gender gap in leadership has been particularly distinct (Haynes & Fearfull, 2008). Lyness and Grotto (2018) studied the issue of women's representation in

leadership roles in the U.S., highlighting that despite research indicating women leaders perform equally or better than their male counterparts and that organizations benefit from having more women in senior leadership positions, women remain underrepresented in leadership literature and practice. This raises concerns about the progress being made in closing the gender gap in leadership, predominantly in sectors like finance and accounting. However, there are compelling incentives for promoting gender equality in leadership.

Organizations that adopt servant leadership principles, which emphasize empowerment, ethical behavior, and a dedication to the development of followers (Greenleaf, 1977), may be more likely to acknowledge the leadership potential of women who embody these qualities and facilitate the further cultivation of these aspects of leadership (Sims et al., 2020). Additionally, diverse leadership teams, including gender diversity, have the potential to enhance decision-making, innovation, and organizational performance (Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Torchia et al., 2011). As such, it is imperative for organizations, particularly in male-dominated industries like finance and accounting, to actively strive for gender equality in leadership by adopting servant leadership principles, challenging traditional gender norms, and providing equal opportunities for women to develop and demonstrate their leadership capabilities (Eagly & Carli, 2007). When it comes to leadership in finance and accounting, more women have joined the highest levels of leadership in this sector, with women now accounting for 18% of C-suite positions globally (Rogish et al., 2023). However, progress has been slow, and with a more concerted effort, the global growth in the share of women financial leaders may reach 25% by 2031 (Rogish et al., 2023). It is important to note that the research on women and leadership is still evolving, and there are a number of different perspectives on this topic. The line between feminine and masculine stereotypes has begun to blur, as evidenced by the leadership differences between Angela Merkel

and Jacinda Ardern and between Justin Trudeau and Emmanuel Macron, meaning we are embarking on a new era of leadership (Üste & Cem, 2023).

The History and Evolution of Leadership

Leadership, a complex and multifaceted concept, has been a subject of organizational and psychological research for centuries. The term "leader" was first noted in the 1300s, and the concept of leadership has existed since the late 1700s, but it was not until the 20th century that scientific research on the topic began in earnest (King, 1990). Over time, the study of leadership has evolved through several key eras, including the trait era (Great Man theory - 1840s and trait theories -1930s–1940s), which focused on the inherent characteristics of leaders; the behavioral era (behavioral theory - 1940s–1950s), which emphasized the actions of leaders; the situational era (contingent and situational theories - 1960s), which asserted that the best leadership style depends on the context; and the new leadership era (transactional, transformational theories - 1990s and others - 2000s), which recognized that focusing on one aspect of leadership cannot address all its complexities (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Despite numerous attempts to comprehensively understand leadership, no single theory has been able to provide a complete solution owing to the intricate and ever-changing nature of the subject (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). The study of leadership has become multidisciplinary, incorporating various fields such as social sciences, psychology, philosophy, and business. The current understanding of leadership is becoming more refined and intricate than the simplistic view often presented in popular discourse.

Servant leadership's focus on empathy, listening, and community building (Greenleaf, 1970) offers a comprehensive framework that addresses the intricacies of leading in a constantly evolving societal and organizational landscape (Schein, 2010), thereby embodying the

culmination of leadership's historical evolution towards more adaptive and people-centered approaches. In the classic era, leaders held authoritative positions and exerted power over their subordinates (Haq & Anwar, 2018). However, as societal and organizational needs shifted, the second phase, occurring from the 1980s to 2000, witnessed the rise of more participative and collaborative leadership styles (Heller, 2003). Leaders began to emphasize employee empowerment and engagement, recognizing the importance of building relationships and involving followers in decision-making processes. The current third phase, which began in 2000 and continues to evolve, reflects the ongoing transformation of leadership theories to adapt to changing societal needs and behaviors (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). In this phase, leaders prioritize flexibility, open communication, and the cultivation of positive relationships with their employees.

During the time period from the 1920s to the 1980s, known as the post-positive era, Phase One of leadership philosophy saw a shift between the two approaches. Firstly, the "Great Man" theory aimed to identify traits that constitute a leader. Later, the focus shifted to the actions required to develop a leader, which is known as the post-positive approach. According to a journal by Benmira and Agboola (2021), the development of the Phase One leadership philosophy has gone through various eras, i.e., the trait era (1840s) and trait theories (1930s-1940s), the behavioral era (1940s-1950s), and the situational era (1960s). In phase one, the leadership focus was on the inborn traits of a leader "and on identifying the personality traits and other qualities of effective leaders. The core belief of the Great Man theory is that leaders are born, not made or trained (Spector, 2016). As stated by Northouse (2021), "Traits refer to a set of distinctive characteristics, qualities, or attributes that describe a person. They are inherent and relatively unchanging over time… They are internal factors that comprise our personality and

make us unique" (Northouse, 2021, p. 28); his major leadership traits are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.

Phase 2 (the 1980s-2000) transitions to the social constructivist epoch of leadership that recognizes the environmental facets of leadership together with individualism, language, and ethos. The phase recognizes the complexity that comes with dealing with people (that individualism matters) and organizations. This phase looks into the new leadership era, which began in the 1990s, away from outdated leadership theories that view leading "...as a unidirectional, top-down influencing process, drawing a distinct line between leaders and followers" (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). To further investigate the phase that emphasizes the individual and their relationship with the environment or organization, we turn to the work of Kegan and Lahey (2002), two developmental psychologists from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Their book investigates the transformative power of language and its influence on work dynamics. Their book aims to bring the principles of adult learning into the institutional context, shedding light on the importance of communication and language in driving positive change within organizations (Kegan & Lahey, 2002). The book elucidates how most people and organizations are essentially immune to deep and lifelong transformation despite their genuine intentions to do so, suggesting that if we desire to completely understand change, we must first and foremost recognize our prevailing predisposition not to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2002). The authors discovered compelling ways to diagnose and overcome this immunity. In the words of a news editor's article at Harvard, "...their book shares a new "learning technology," enabling readers to make the same discoveries for themselves. The result is an unleashing of fresh energies and behaviors that truly foster growth and transformation in both individuals and organizations" (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2001). A quote that echoes from the

book is, "The leadership idea is that we are not able to effect any significant change until we recognize the dynamic immune system by which we continuously manufacture nonchange" (Kegan & Lahey, 2002). Self-examination is required to reach a diagnosis (Kegan & Lahey, 2002).

The third phase transitions away from methods not tailored to meet individual needs to practices grounded in research. In this phase, many areas are put into consideration, and no assumptions are made; previous phases are defined, and the focus shifts from leader to follower. Jencks (1987), in his article on postmodern and late modern definitions, describes post-modernism as "…one-half Modern and one-half something else (usually traditional building) in its attempt to communicate with the public and a concerned minority…" (Jencks, 1987). He also sees post-modernism, similar to modernism, as art that differs in both its motivations and lifespan (Jencks, 1987). Clahassey (1986) describes modernism as "the name given to that period of Western culture that has prevailed for the last hundred years" (Clahassey, 1986). She also believes that opinions, philosophies, and ideals that molded the primary structure of modernism have experienced a histrionic transformation that ushered in post-modernism (Clahassey, 1986). Just as in these articles, Kellerman's (2010) and Northouse's (2022) literature have expounded on the evolution of leadership from what it was to what it is now, where leadership needs to be inclusive and diversified and must incorporate followership to lead effectively. Phase three is significant for the unfolding practice of leading because it creates room for diversity and inclusion, focuses on followership, and necessitates a leader to be malleable, supportive, and, most importantly, compassionate. Effective leaders must be willing to adapt their leadership style to the specific situation and followers' needs, demonstrating flexibility and a focus on developing and empowering others (Randel et al., 2018). Fostering such an inclusive and

transformative leadership approach requires sustained effort, as transformational change takes a long time (Randel et al., 2018).

In conclusion, since 2000, leadership theories have undergone a transformative shift, emphasizing shared, collective, and collaborative practices. This evolution challenges the traditional top-down approach prevalent in previous eras and proclaims that organizational success hinges on coordinated leadership efforts throughout the organization (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Servant leadership, which prioritizes the needs and growth of followers, has regained prominence (Greenleaf, 1977; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Additionally, inclusive leadership has emerged, focusing on empowering followers while valuing diversity and fostering a sense of belonging (Randel et al., 2018). Furthermore, complexity leadership theory has been introduced to address the intricacies of the modern world, adopting a holistic, systems-based perspective and marking a shift from autocratic to more collaborative and inclusive leadership styles (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2007). The concept of leadership has undergone several changes, as evidenced by the evolution of leadership theories. Classical theories, such as the Great Man, trait, and behavioral theories, have given way to situational and contingency theories. Nowadays, shared, collective, and collaborative leadership, inclusive leadership, and complexity leadership are gaining prominence, representing a shift towards considering the interactions and interrelationships among the leader, followers, and situation rather than solely focusing on the leader's attributes. In the subsequent section, we will probe further into dominant leadership theories and more extensively into servant leadership.

Overview of Leadership Theories

Leadership theories have been studied over the years, and several theories have emerged. The historical evolution of leadership theories can be traced back to the 19th century with the

Great Man theory, which maintained that leaders are born to lead and possess certain inherent characteristics that determine them to lead (Maslanka, 2004). The trait theory evolved from the Great Man theory, specifying that leaders can be born or made and that a combination of certain characteristics is needed to be an effective leader (Hunt & Fedynich, 2018). Behavioral theory followed, thereafter, the modern era, which then resulted in theories that included shared, collective, collaborative, and inclusive leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

The Great Man Theory, as described by Spector (2016), suggests that leadership is an innate quality possessed by divinely ordained individuals. However, this theory has been critiqued for its lack of empirical evidence and failure to account for situational factors (Halaychik, 2016). Similarly, the Trait Theory, which emerged in the early 20th century, proposed that leaders possess inherent and stable traits that distinguish them from non-leaders (Maslanka, 2004). Despite efforts to identify a consistent set of traits, the theory faced criticism for its lack of empirical evidence and inability to account for situational factors (Horner, 1997). However, recent research using the five-factor model of personality has found that certain traits, such as extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness, are positively related to leadership (Colbert et al., 2012).

Participative Leadership Theory, also known as democratic leadership, involves team members in decision-making processes and encourages collaboration (Ismail, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). This approach aligns with Day and Harrison's (2007) emphasis on the importance of aligning leadership behaviors with the identities and values of followers. Situational Leadership Theory, proposed by Hersey and Blanchard, suggests that effective leadership behavior depends on the situation and emphasizes the importance of matching leadership styles to specific situations based on follower developmental levels (Ramakanth, 1988; Thompson & Glasø,

2015). Complexity Leadership Theory, introduced by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007), views leadership as a dynamic, emergent process within complex adaptive systems, emphasizing adaptability and distributed leadership. Finally, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory focuses on the unique relationships between leaders and individual followers, suggesting that high-quality LMX relationships lead to positive outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Harris et al., 2009).

The examination of leadership theories such as transactional, path-goal, authentic, behavioral, contingency, and charismatic provides a comprehensive understanding of leadership's evolution and its current significance. Transactional leadership focuses on leader-follower exchanges (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978), while path-goal theory emphasizes leader support in goal achievement (House, 1996). Authentic leadership values self-awareness and ethical behavior (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), sharing similarities with servant leadership's focus on leader self-awareness and regulation. Behavioral leadership theory suggests that effective leadership behaviors can be learned (Benmira & Agboola, 2021), moving beyond the idea that leaders are born with certain traits. Contingency theory posits that effective leadership is contingent upon the match between the leader's style and the situational context (Fiedler, 1964; Kuhn, 2007). Charismatic leadership focuses on the emotional relationships between charismatic leaders and their followers (House, 1976; Yukl, 1993).

Servant leadership, while not explicitly tied to these theories, can be linked to them through its emphasis on serving others and prioritizing follower development (Greenleaf, 1977). It aligns with the adaptive nature of contingency theory (Fiedler, 1964) and the ethical and self-aware approach of authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Servant leadership also

resonates with the learnable behaviors highlighted in behavioral leadership theory (Fleishman, 1953; Kavanagh, 1972) and the interpersonal dynamics central to charismatic leadership (House, 1976; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Understanding these theories helps leaders develop their unique leadership styles, contributing to their effectiveness within organizations (Northouse, 2019). Servant leadership, in particular, offers a concept that integrates insights from other theories, promoting an inclusive and open leadership style that addresses the needs of others and the demands of the organization (Greenleaf, 1977).

In summary, the array of leadership theories provides a rich tapestry of perspectives that have significantly evolved and been extensively researched over time (Northouse, 2019). Each theory offers unique insights but also has limitations, and no single theory can be universally applied to all leadership scenarios (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). Comprehending these theories equips leaders with the knowledge to refine their leadership approach, enhancing their effectiveness within organizations and roles (Northouse, 2019). Grasping the essence of these leadership theories aids in the cultivation of distinct leadership styles, enabling leaders to navigate the complexities of organizational environments more adeptly (Avolio, 2007). Servant leadership, in particular, integrates the strengths of these theories, advocating for a leadership style centered on a commitment to serving others, which is crucial for nurturing an inclusive and flexible organizational culture in today's ever-changing leadership landscape (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Exploration of Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory, developed by Burns in 1978 and enhanced by Bass (1985) and others, posits that leaders can motivate followers to achieve more than they thought possible by inspiring them, challenging them intellectually, and providing individualized consideration (Givens, 2008). Transformational leadership has been shown to have positive

influences on both personal (e.g., satisfaction, commitment) and organizational outcomes, e.g., change commitment and organizational conditions (Givens, 2008). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership theory focuses on the leader's ability to motivate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. The authors state that transformational leaders exhibit four characteristics, i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence refers to leaders who serve as role models and gain the trust and admiration of their followers; inspirational motivation involves leaders who articulate a compelling vision and inspire their followers to work towards shared goals; intellectual stimulation entails leaders who encourage creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving among their followers; and lastly, individualized consideration involves leaders who provide support, coaching, and recognition to individual followers, taking into account their unique needs and development (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Choudhary et al. (2016) found that transformational leadership has a significant influence on both employee growth and organizational performance, making it the most effective style of leadership for managing resources in challenging environments. The authors argue that transformational leadership inspires and motivates followers to work towards achieving organizational goals, making it particularly effective in fostering innovation and change in organizations' performance. When compared to servant leadership, transformational leadership has a stronger influence on organizational performance (Choudhary et al., 2012). The authors support the notion that this theory plays a critical role in advancing the organization's performance by empowering and motivating followers to achieve high levels of commitment and performance (Choudhary et al., 2012).

Research has shown that transformational leadership has a significant influence on various outcomes, among them its association with high job satisfaction levels (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), organizational commitment (Walumbwa et al., 2008), and performance (Wang et al., 2011). Transformational leaders create positive work environments that foster employee engagement, intrinsic motivation, and a sense of empowerment. They inspire followers to surpass their own expectations, challenge the status quo, and take ownership of their work and the organization's goals (Wang et al., 2011).

Transformational leaders enhance their followers' perception of self-efficacy by emphasizing positive visions, communicating high-performance expectations, and being confident in their capabilities to contribute to the mission and goals of their organization, which leads to a strong leader-follower relationship characterized by mutual trust, respect, shared vision, support, guidance, mentorship, empowerment, open communication, collaboration, and a sense of shared purpose (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

In summary, transformational leadership theory highlights the importance of leaders who inspire and motivate their followers through their charisma, vision, and support (Givens, 2008). This leadership theory has a positive influence on various organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, commitment, and performance, where the leader-follower relationship is characterized by loyalty, trust, respect, and shared goals (Givens, 2008). While transformational leadership is highly regarded due to its capacity to empower followers through the establishment of a shared vision, its vulnerabilities and the significance of situational or contextual factors are acknowledged by Chaplin-Cheyne (2021) in her literature review. Notably, Chaplin-Cheyne's (2021) study probes into the context of women versus men in educational management, revealing areas that necessitate further investigation. To mitigate the identified weaknesses of

transformational leadership, the author suggests that future research should compare this theory with alternative leadership styles and investigate the potential for a modified theory that better addresses the leadership needs of all genders across various educational leadership levels (Chaplin-Cheyne, 2021).

Exploration of Servant Leadership Theory

Greenleaf (1977), who is considered the "father" of servant leadership, introduced the concept of leading through service for the first time in corporate America in his initial book, *Servant Leadership* (1977). He theorized that servant leadership could lead to improved, more resilient companies and leaders who find greater joy in their lives and organizations (Greenleaf, 1977). His book analyzes the qualities of both leaders and followers and explores how leading through service also requires exercising authority, a concept not typically associated with servanthood (Greenleaf, 1977). Large corporations are eager to get answers to questions like "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants?" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27)

Greenleaf's (1977) concept of servant-leadership, introduced in his 1970 essay, *The Servant as Leader*, has had a profound and lasting influence on modern leadership principles and practices (Northouse, 2021; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). After spending 40 years at AT&T, culminating in his position as director of management research, Greenleaf founded the Center for Applied Ethics, later renamed the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (Spears, 2010). This transition marked the beginning of a 25-year second career as an author, teacher, and consultant, during which he authored several books and essays on servant leadership (Spears, 2010). In his essay, Greenleaf draws inspiration from Hermann Hesse's book *Journey to the East,* a story in which a band of travelers is led by a servant named Leo, who, despite his humble role, sustains

them with his spirit and song (Greenleaf, 2002). The story emphasizes that a great leader is first a servant, and that this servant nature is the core of their being (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf believes this concept is a beacon of hope for society, with the potential to challenge injustice and support more equitable, cooperative, and servant-led institutions (Greenleaf, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Greenleaf acknowledges that embracing the role of a servant leader can be unpopular, as it requires a commitment to serving others in a world where individuals prioritize personal autonomy and critique over constructive action (Greenleaf, 2002). He suggests that modern society's problems stem from individual failures and advocates for a society shaped by people who embrace the principles of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002; Parris & Peachey, 2013), highlighting the need for people to become creators and to "Create dangerously" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 25), as he believes creation and servant leadership can contribute to a better society.

Servant leadership defines itself as leading through service, and it starts with a leader taking up the position of a servant in his or her interaction with followers (Greenleaf, 1977). He continues to say, "A new moral principle is emerging, which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the evident servant stature of the leader" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 18).

Drawing on the insights of other authors, Wallace (2007) discusses how a unified worldview can address these divisions and compares servant leadership with five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism). The development of this theory has been gradual, with researchers exploring its attributes, values, and models and comparing it to other leadership theories (Wallace, (2007). Despite various attempts to provide a

philosophical base for servant leadership, few have succeeded in anchoring it within a specific worldview, although some have linked it to Christianity and the teachings of Jesus Christ Wallace, (2007). Wallace's literature review highlights the challenges in establishing a philosophical foundation for servant leadership, despite its connections to Christianity and Jesus' teachings, and critiques the use of Aristotelian virtue ethics due to gender bias and the argument that virtues without theological grounding are merely social constructs, yet reaffirms servant leadership's importance in fostering community and serving others (Wallace, 2007).

In the journal, Gandolfi and Stone (2018) state that "One of the best-recorded examples of servant leadership is derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ among the Jewish culture nearly two thousand years ago" (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Servant leadership, my focus practice of leading, embraces the components of the phase three leadership era, though there is still room for more research on the outcomes of servant leadership practice, and social insights stand at the center of discussion. Servant leadership seeks to nurture individuals in a manner that is specific to their needs and experiences; therefore, one-size-fits-all will not work; the focus and influence of leading are on the follower and facilitating their desired goals and purpose in life. Northouse (2022) describes followership as "a process whereby an individual or individuals accept the influence of others to accomplish a common goal" (Northouse, 2022, p. 353). For an individual to grant a leader followership, the follower must trust that the leader has their interests at heart (Shamir & Lapidot, 2003).

The purpose of Gandolfi and Stone's theoretical paper "…is to demystify leadership and to bring clarity to what leadership and leadership styles are, identify critical attributes of effective leadership, and demonstrate that servant leadership meets the criteria for effective leadership" (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). From research, these authors reveal that "…a combination

of philosophical assumptions as well as tangible and empirical evidence suggest that servant leadership not only "work," but can be touted as effective and desirable. Servant leadership works because it incorporates a proven element of effective leadership" (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). The authors name Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa as examples of servant leaders used by Greenleaf (1970) to illustrate the importance and viability of leading through service which worked then and can work now (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018).

Servant leadership is a leadership theory that prioritizes the needs and development of followers over the self-interest of the leader (Greenleaf, 1970). As expounded on by Liden et al. (2008), servant leaders strive to create an organizational culture centered on trust, empowerment, and strong ethical principles, exhibiting key behaviors such as empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. These leaders prioritize the needs of others above their own self-interests, striving to empower and develop their followers while cultivating a supportive organizational climate founded on trust, ethical behavior, and a strong sense of community (Parris & Peachey, 2013). As described by Van Dierendonck (2011), servant leaders nurture an environment conducive to trust and empowerment and provide subordinates with opportunities for personal and professional development, displaying authentic behavior built on humility, courage, accountability, and forgiveness. Ultimately, by focusing on follower development, facilitating a shared vision, and placing followers' legitimate interests as the highest priority, servant leaders aim to unlock the full potential of organizational members while fostering a shared commitment to success.

Ebener (2010) emphasizes that servant leadership provides a framework for leaders to live out their faith through their actions and decisions. He argues that leadership roles, whether in a business, church, or any other organization, present opportunities to put one's beliefs into

practice on a daily basis, suggesting that faith should not be compartmentalized from work and other aspects of life. Servant leadership offers a chance to integrate faith seamlessly into every situation that leaders encounter, and by embracing this mindset, leaders can practice their values and beliefs by prioritizing service, empowering others, and making ethical choices that align with their spiritual principles (Ebener, 2010). Ultimately, Ebener (2010) positions servant leadership as a means for leaders to embody their faith through their leadership approach and decisions.

Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) examine the philosophical foundation of servant leadership, drawing from the principles outlined by Greenleaf (1970) and the teachings of Jesus Christ (American Bible Society, 2020). The authors argue that the distinctive features of servant leadership are the leader's primary intent and self-concept, which focus on serving others first rather than leading (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The authors argue more empirical research is needed to develop servant leadership into a solid theory, though they note that the servant leadership approach has gained considerable traction without strong research support, highlighting the paradox that servant leadership is popular in organizations already, even though empirical evidence is still needed to firmly ground it theoretically (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002).

Gandolfi et al. (2017) aimed to demonstrate that servant leadership is not merely a utopian philosophy without merit in today's organizations, but rather, they posited that it can be a highly desirable leadership style that can be examined, understood, and applied from a philosophical, tangible, and quantitative holistic perspective. Their study investigated the influence of servant leadership behaviors on followers' trust in their leaders across two educational institutions. The results revealed that servant leadership significantly predicts trust, with covenantal relationships, responsible morality, and transforming influence as key

contributing behaviors (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). The results also provide evidence that spirituality and servant leadership encompass structures and principles that holistically support an organization and its employees (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Sendjaya et al. (2008) have demonstrated how their proposed model of servant leadership builds upon and extends transformational, authentic, and spiritual leadership approaches through their holistic servant leadership model, which incorporates follower-oriented, service, spiritual, and moral dimensions, which are greatly needed in today's organizations. The authors agree with Bass (2000) that the servant leadership movement, with its focus on follower growth and autonomy, will likely play a role in future learning organizations (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

Reddy (2019) touches on organizations staying competitive by retaining employees and fulfilling employees through service. He encourages commitment to the spiritual growth of employees through servant leadership that focuses on spiritual values, i.e., trust, humility, love, and service to others (Reddy, 2019). Shirin (2015) clarifies that servant leadership, which was established in modern leadership literature, is widely accepted among Christians and not inherently Christian. She also provides examples of institutions that lead through service, such as Toro Company, Herman Miller, Synovus Financial Corporation, ServiceMaster Company, Men's Warehouse, Southwest Airlines, and TD Industries, stating that they embraced the leadership style because it is profitable and creates a pleasant work environment (Shirin, 2015). A recent paper by Nauman et al. (2021) also underpins the effects of servant leadership on team performance in Pakistan, thus supporting servant leadership benefits in fostering collaboration and culture, giving us a perspective of the effects of servant leadership from a different religious sect (Nauman et al., 2021).

Tenets of Servant Leadership

In his seminal essay, Greenleaf (1970) introduced the concept of servant leadership, arguing that true leadership is rooted in serving others first. He posited that leaders who embody this servant-first approach can have a transformative effect on their followers (Greenleaf, 1970). Building upon Greenleaf's (1970) foundational work, Spears (1995) identified ten key characteristics of servant leadership: awareness, listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, building community, stewardship, and a commitment to the growth of people. Greenleaf (1977) envisioned a society where individuals could find greater joy in life by cultivating servant characteristics in their leadership roles and fostering more servant-oriented organizations. One of the essential principles underpinning servant leadership is the idea of actively listening to and deeply understanding the needs of others, transcending personal interests and ambitions, and serving others by facilitating their professional and personal growth (Ebener, 2010).

Servant leadership is branded by a focus on the growth and well-being of followers, prioritizing their needs. It creates an atmosphere of trust, respect, and collaboration, emphasizing the leader's role in serving and empowering followers (Northouse, 2019). Servant leaders actively listen to their followers, demonstrating a genuine desire to understand their needs, concerns, and aspirations (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Additionally, servant leadership involves empathy and a deep understanding and consideration of each team member's individual perspectives and experiences (Eva et al., 2019). Another critical tenet of servant leadership is the emphasis on ethical and moral behavior. Servant leaders strive to make decisions that are not only realistic but also principled, considering the broader societal and ethical implications of their actions (Liden et al., 2014). They actively cultivate an organizational culture rooted in

integrity, transparency, and accountability, serving as role models for their followers (Winston & Fields, 2015). Servant leaders also recognize the importance of stewardship, ensuring the responsible and sustainable use of resources to benefit the organization and its stakeholders (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

The most distinctive aspect of servant leadership is the commitment to followers' personal and professional growth. Servant leaders actively invest in the development of their team members, providing guidance, support, and opportunities for growth (Liden et al., 2008). They encourage creativity and innovation, thus fostering an atmosphere where individuals can learn, grow, and reach their full potential (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017). This commitment to growth ultimately contributes to the success and sustainability of organizations (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

The Proliferation of Servant Leadership Across Sectors

Servant leadership has gained widespread attention in recent years, particularly in business, where it has improved employee satisfaction, engagement, and organizational performance (Hale & Fields, 2007). The theory has been found to be positively related to employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors in studies across different industries (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014). The healthcare system needs to restore public trust by identifying improvements in care value and adopting effective leadership roles towards patients. Trastek et al. (2014) advocate for servant leadership as the ideal model for healthcare organizations, emphasizing teamwork, trust, and patient-centered service. Servant leadership has been shown to improve patient satisfaction, employee engagement, and retention and promote an ethical organizational culture in healthcare (Coetzer et al., 2017; Demeke et al., 2024; Eva et al., 2019).

In educational settings, servant leadership by principals and teachers has been linked to improved student engagement, higher teacher job satisfaction, and a more positive school climate (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016; Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014). Black (2010) provides evidence for the effectiveness of implementing servant leadership principles in Catholic schools to create a positive school climate and foster holistic student development. Servant leadership has also gained traction in government agencies and the public sector, as its principles have reported improved public service motivation, organizational trust, and employee performance (Kiker et al., 2019; Schwarz et al., 2016).

Non-profit organizations have found servant leadership principles to be highly aligned with their mission-driven cultures and commitment to serving communities. Sharp (2023) found that senior leaders who truly embodied servant leadership in Christian non-profit organizations experienced growth in service projects and numerical growth for the organization. Ngah et al. (2021) revealed that job satisfaction serves as a significant predictor of volunteer retention, with job satisfaction mediating the relationship between servant leadership and both volunteer retention and organizational citizenship behavior in non-profit organizations.

Generally, servant leadership theory represents a shift from traditional, hierarchical leadership models towards a more inclusive, collaborative, and community-oriented approach. By giving priority to the needs of their followers and creating a culture of trust and collaboration, servant leaders can create more engaged, motivated, and productive organizations.

Comparing Transformational and Servant Leadership

The study by Smith et al. (2004) compares transformational and servant leadership theories by examining their conceptual overlaps and distinct contributions to understanding. It suggests servant leadership fosters a spiritual generative culture more suitable for static

environments, while transformational leadership cultivates an empowered dynamic culture better suited for high-change contexts (Smith et al., 2004). While both servant leadership and transformational leadership focus on inspiring and motivating followers (Northouse, 2016), there are notable differences between the two. Servant leadership places a stronger emphasis on the leader's selflessness and commitment to serving others (Van Dierendonck, 2011), while transformational leadership focuses on the leader's ability to inspire and motivate through vision and intellectual stimulation (Northouse, 2021). Additionally, servant leadership highlights the importance of building relationships based on trust and empathy (Van Dierendonck, 2011), while transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to challenge and transform followers' thinking and behavior (Stone et al., 2004).

Mulinge's (2018) manuscript investigates the concepts of servant leadership and transformational leadership, highlighting their contrasting approaches. According to the paper, servant leadership emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing power in decision-making (Mulinge, 2018). On the other hand, transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who possess strong internal values and ideals, motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interest (Northouse, 2016).

While both servant leadership and transformational leadership share the common view that leadership is about selflessness for the sake of others, they differ in their emphasis. Servant leadership highlights the importance of service, community, and shared decision-making, fostering a sense of responsibility towards others (Greenleaf, 2002). On the other hand, transformational leadership focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good (Kelly, 1999). Both approaches acknowledge the significance of

altruism and the motivation to enhance the welfare of others. However, servant leadership places more emphasis on nurturing a sense of community and shared responsibility, while transformational leadership focuses on inspiring followers to act in ways that benefit the greater good (Mulinge, 2018).

Understanding the distinction between selflessness in servant leadership and mutual self-interest in transformational leadership is crucial for accurately measuring these constructs (Northouse, 2021; Stone et al., 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). As described by Van Dierendonck (2011), servant leadership is fundamentally about the leader's selflessness and dedication to serving others, often involving personal sacrifice for the greater good. This contrasts with transformational leadership, which, while also aiming to inspire and motivate followers, does so through a vision that can align with the leader's and followers' self-interests, creating a mutually beneficial relationship (Northouse, 2021). The key distinction between servant leadership and transformational leadership lies in the leader's selflessness versus mutual self-interest, with servant leaders prioritizing follower needs through sacrifice, while transformational leaders align personal and follower interests in a reciprocal exchange, though the two styles can interconnect with leaders exhibiting qualities of both (Stone et al., 2004). Similarly, servant leaders can incorporate transformational leadership attributes by inspiring and motivating their followers toward a shared vision and challenging them to reach their full potential (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership is more closely associated with the anticipated fulfillment of followers' psychological needs, while transformational leadership has a stronger connection to the perception of being a leader (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014).

Drawing from the presented data, transformational leadership has been shown to have positive influences on personal and organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction,

commitment, and performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2011). It creates positive work environments and enhances followers' perceptions of self-efficacy, leading to strong leader-follower relationships characterized by mutual trust, respect, shared vision, support, guidance, empowerment, open communication, collaboration, and a sense of shared purpose (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

In conclusion, servant leadership and transformational leadership both aim to inspire and motivate followers to achieve organizational goals, and leaders can exhibit qualities of both (Stone et al., 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Understanding the similarities and differences between these theories is crucial for effective leadership and creating a positive work environment.

Synthesis of Leadership Theories

Across various leadership theories, common themes emphasize leadership's multifaceted and developmental nature, the need for adaptability, effective leader-follower interactions, and ethical conduct. These theories encompass diverse approaches, such as trait-based models, behavioral models, and contingency models (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 1993). These theories highlight essential aspects of understanding followers, considering situational factors, and promoting positive organizational climates (Northouse, 2022). Challenges in leadership practice arise from integrating diverse theories, selecting appropriate styles, and measuring values-based leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The leadership paradox, adaptability in complex environments, empirical evidence, ethical decision-making, and balancing leadership styles pose challenges for leaders and organizations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2006).

Future trends in leadership encompass ethical, digital, inclusive, sustainability, authentic, and continuous learning characteristics (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 1995). Ethical and digital leadership (leadership in the tech era) will continue to gain importance, while inclusive leadership will emphasize diverse perspectives (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Northouse, 2022). Sustainability leadership will incorporate principles that foster sustainability and corporate social responsibility (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Authentic leadership will emphasize genuine, self-aware, and transparent leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Greenleaf, 1970). Continuous learning will be crucial for leaders to adapt to evolving theories and organizational changes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Leadership development will focus on cultivating skills through training and mentorship, with an emphasis on ethical practices, technology adaptation, diversity and inclusion, and complexity in leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2022).

In summary, leadership theories lay the groundwork for understanding how one can become an effective leader; as new challenges and trends continue to emerge, they will have a significant influence on the future of leadership practices (Northouse, 2022). As organizations and the world progress over time, leadership theories must adjust and address the changing needs and complexities that arise. Leaders can successfully steer their organizations toward success by focusing on areas such as development, ethics, technology, diversity, and adaptability as they navigate the constantly evolving landscape of leadership.

Review of Leadership Assessments

It is important to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of leadership assessment tools since this study employs two pre-existing research instruments for the same purpose, such as the *Strengths-Based Leadership* book from Gallup Inc., which aims to help people identify and

sharpen their leadership strengths (Gallup, Inc., 2019), and the Clifton Strengths-Finder assessment, which helped Norwood (2005) identify her top talent themes and leverage them in her role as a principal. However, self-scoring assessments like the Clifton Strengths Assessment have limitations, such as the assumption that questions are answered definitively and the influence of the participant's current state of mind or motives (Norwood, 2005). While leadership assessments can provide accurate reflections of capabilities, constructive feedback, and strategies for improvement (Barnes, 2021), many rely too heavily on self-reports and peer perceptions, which can be biased and fail to capture a leader's full (Church, 2014; Day et al., 2014). To truly aid leadership development, assessments must go beyond rating scales and provide qualitative insights through multi-rater feedback, assessment center exercises, and reflective practices (Seemiller & Murray, 2013). However, assessments of servant leadership traits, measuring qualities like empathy, stewardship, and commitment to growth, offer a unique insight into a leader's orientation toward service, ethical behavior, and genuine care for followers (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Servant Leadership in Global Religions

Assumptions About Servant Leadership Among Global Religions

Looking at servant leadership across different global religions, we see that the concept has its roots in Christianity, where Jesus Christ is often cited as the archetype of a servant leader (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). However, the idea of servant leadership can also be found in other religious traditions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism (Irving & Longbotham, 2007). Each of these religions has a unique perspective on servant leadership, shaped by its cultural and historical contexts (Lingam & Thatchenkery, 2006a). For example, in Islam, the Prophet Muhammad is often considered a servant leader who led by example and served his

followers (Sultana, 2018c). In Hinduism, the concept of seva, or selfless service, is considered a form of leadership that emphasizes serving others (Lingam & Thatchenkery, 2006b). In Buddhism, the Bodhisattva ideal emphasizes the importance of serving others and promoting their well-being (Jung & Avolio, 2000).

Assumptions about servant leadership among the various global religions vary based on cultural, philosophical, and historical influences. One assumption is that servant leadership is deeply embedded in many religious traditions, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and tribal religions (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Another assumption is that servant leadership emphasizes putting the needs of others first and serving the community rather than seeking power and personal gain (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). Potential tensions exist between servant leadership and other cultural values, such as individualism and hierarchical structures (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014).

In Christianity, servant leadership is rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, who modeled humility and service to others (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). Similarly, in Islam, the Prophet Muhammad is seen as the ultimate servant leader who puts the needs of his community above his own (Kamaluddin & Citaningati, 2023). In Buddhism, the bodhisattva emphasizes serving others and alleviating their suffering (Tsomo, 2012). In Hinduism, the notion of seva emphasizes selfless service to others (Singh & Awasthy, 2023). In Confucianism, the concept of ren emphasizes cultivating a moral character that prioritizes the welfare of others (Wong, 2014). In tribal religions, the communal values of serving the tribe and caring for each other are central to their beliefs (Garroutte et al., 2014). However, it is important to note cultural and contextual differences in how servant leadership is practiced and perceived among different religions. For example, in some Eastern cultures, servant leadership may be viewed as a duty rather than a

choice, and leaders are expected to serve their community without question (Irving, 2010).
Although leaders may demonstrate cultural awareness and sensitivity through various leadership
styles or philosophies, servant leadership offers a framework that allows for the consideration of
the unique cultural perspectives of both leaders and their followers, thus enabling an
environment where the diverse cultural backgrounds and viewpoints of those being led can be
acknowledged and integrated into the leadership approach (Irving, 2010). In contrast, in some
Western cultures, servant leadership may be seen as an optional leadership style that is more
focused on personal growth and development (Sultana, 2018a).

Servant leadership is recognized across different global religions as being grounded in
altruism and a sincere commitment to serving others (Farrukh & Ahmed, 2018; Alrubaiee &
Alrubaiee, 2016a). The influence of servant leadership is particularly notable in Christianity,
where the exemplary servant leadership of Jesus Christ is often considered the ultimate model for
leaders to emulate in their service to others (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Similarly, in Hinduism,
the concept of seva, or selfless service, is a vital aspect of the religion and is closely tied to
servant leadership (Sultana, 2018b). Another postulation is that servant leadership emphasizes
the development and empowerment of followers (Lingam & Thatchenkery, 2006a). This is seen
in Islam, where the concept of khidma, or service, is closely tied to the idea of servant leadership
and where leaders are expected to prioritize the needs of their followers over their own
(Abdullah, 2019). In Confucianism, the concept of ren, or benevolence, is often associated with
servant leadership and emphasizes the importance of treating others with compassion and respect
(Pan & Zhou, 2018).

Finally, an assumption about servant leadership among the various global religions is that
it is not limited to formal leadership roles but can be practiced by anyone in any position (Jung &

Avolio, 2000). This is seen in tribal religions, where leadership is often viewed as a collective responsibility rather than an individual one and where the role of the leader is to serve the community's needs as a whole (Lustig & Koester, 2013). The deduction here is that cultural, philosophical, and historical factors influence assumptions about servant leadership among various global religions. While there are common themes of humility and service to others across religions, there are also differences in how servant leadership is practiced and perceived (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2014). Leaders need to be aware of these cultural and contextual nuances when applying the principles of servant leadership in different settings.

Global Perspectives Concerning Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a theory that transcends cultural boundaries and has been studied in different global contexts (Eva et al., 2019). Researchers have investigated the application of servant leadership in various cultural and organizational contexts and noted similarities and differences in its manifestation across cultures (Wallace, 2007). A study by Liden et al. (2008) found that servant leadership behaviors were positively related to employee trust in the U.S., China, and Taiwan. Similarly, Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) found that servant leadership was positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment in a sample of Dutch workers. Furthermore, Choudhary et al. (2013) found that servant leadership was positively related to job satisfaction and employee creativity in a sample of Pakistani organizations.

Studies have shown that while there are commonalities in how servant leadership manifests across cultures, there are also notable differences (Okoro & Washington, 2016; Alrubaiee & Alrubaiee, 2016b). For instance, Okoro and Washington (2016) found that servant leadership was perceived as less effective in African contexts due to cultural factors such as

high-power distance and collectivism. Similarly, Alrubaiee and Alrubaiee (2016b) discovered that although servant leadership behaviors were valued in the Arab world, certain aspects of the concept were not culturally appropriate in that context.

These results suggest that while servant leadership can be a universal approach, its manifestation and effectiveness may be influenced by cultural factors (Hale & Fields, 2007). Therefore, when applying servant leadership in different global contexts, leaders should consider cultural nuances and tailor their approach accordingly (Han et al., 2010). Leaders who work in multicultural environments must be aware of the cultural gradations that can influence how servant leadership is perceived and practiced (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2014). Second, this essay suggests that leadership development programs should be tailored to the cultural contexts in which they are implemented (Liden et al., 2014). Future research directions include investigating the connection between servant leadership and other cultural constructs, such as collectivism and individualism (Han et al., 2010). Additionally, more research is needed to examine the effectiveness of servant leadership in different cultural contexts (Hale & Fields, 2007).

Servant leadership is a concept that has been embraced by many religions worldwide (Sendjaya et al., 2008). The concept of servant leadership is grounded in the idea that leaders are servants to their followers and that by serving them, they can achieve their full potential (Greenleaf, 1970). The different religions have varying interpretations of servant leadership, but they all agree it is an essential aspect of leadership (Hale & Fields, 2007). The concept of servant leadership is not limited to any particular religion or culture; it is a global concept embraced by leaders of different religions and cultures (Sendjaya et al., 2008). However, cultural and social factors influence how servant leadership is practiced in different religions and cultures (Van

Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). For example, servant leadership is not highly regarded in some cultures, while in others, it is highly valued (Hale & Fields, 2007). Additionally, historical and philosophical influences have also played a significant role in developing the concept of servant leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Therefore, conceptualizing the servant as a leader amongst the various global religions highlights the importance of understanding cultural, social, and historical factors that influence the manifestation of servant leadership (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Although servant leadership has its roots in Christianity, it can also be found in other religious traditions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Therefore, when implementing servant leadership in different world regions, it is essential to consider the nuances between cultures, contexts, and worldviews (Hale & Fields, 2007).

Overall, the conceptualization of the servant as a leader amongst the various global religions has highlighted the importance of servant leadership in promoting a collaborative and inclusive leadership style that focuses on the needs of followers (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

Leadership Literature: Results and Themes

This literature review has investigated various leadership theories, including trait-based, behavioral, and contingency models, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of leadership and the need for adaptability, effective leader-follower interactions, and ethical conduct (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 1993). The analysis has highlighted the significance of understanding followers, considering situational factors, and promoting positive organizational climates (Northouse, 2022). Furthermore, the essay has discussed the importance and relevance of the Great Man Theory and servant leadership in today's world. Although critiqued for its focus on inherent traits, the Great Man Theory acknowledges the potential influence of exceptional individuals in shaping outcomes and inspiring others (Northouse, 2022).

Servant leadership, exemplified by Robert K. Greenleaf's work, emphasizes the leader's role as a servant to others and the importance of empathy, humility, and ethical conduct in leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 1995). Additionally, the literature review has emphasized the importance of leadership flexibility. The challenges faced by leaders in integrating diverse theories, selecting appropriate styles, and measuring values-based leadership necessitate a flexible and adaptive approach (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

In conclusion, it is essential to emphasize the significance of leadership development. As society and organizations continue to evolve, future leaders need to reinforce and acquire skills through training and mentorship, especially in adapting to new technologies, moral practices, diversity and inclusion, and complex leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2022). Leaders who are continuously learning are better equipped to handle new challenges and adapt to emerging trends. They will need an understanding of the diverse theories discoursed herein, an appreciation for the importance of individual and servant leadership, the ability to adapt and adjust one's method or strategy, and a commitment to ongoing development. By embracing these principles, leaders can navigate the intricacies of the modern world and drive positive change in their organizations and communities. It is crucial to recognize that servant leadership is a philosophy that is widely embraced by many religions around the world. However, its practice can be influenced by cultural and social factors.

Spirituality and Workplace Spirituality

Spirituality has become synonymous with religion, and many use the term interchangeably (Watkins et al., 2013). Beliefs that are spiritual in nature involve a connection with a supreme being and a philosophical outlook on the nature of existence and mortality (Watkins et al., 2013). On the other hand, religious beliefs encompass observances, such as

prayer and meditation, as well as social interactions with members of a particular religious group (Watkins et al., 2013). Baier (2010), in his journal, summarizes the variations in the understanding of spiritual authority in a modern Christian spiritual path in six points, one of them being how, in the contemporary field of spiritual power, different religions meet (Karl Baier, 2010). Therefore, interreligious spiritual competence and trans-religious guidance have become part of spiritual authority (Baier, 2010). As the word "spirituality" today is increasingly used as a synonym for forms of religious life that are not or only loosely connected to certain religious communities or churches, it is entirely likely that the profile of spiritual direction and spiritual authority, in general, will also become increasingly unspecific, not related to one religion only" (Baier, 2010).

Currently, spiritual authority is not specific to a particular Christian denomination and has become an ecumenical singularity (Litonjua, 2016). Taylor (2007), in his book, *A Secular Age*, does not understand secularization as the inevitable decline or disappearance of religion but as the emergence of pluralism in the ways of human flourishing or fullness, including exclusive humanism (Taylor, 2007). Religion and spirituality are traditionally linked together, with the latter being a more profound aspect of the former (Litonjua, 2016). With the growing disaffection from institutional religion and the more expansive understanding of spirituality, a growing number of people are saying that they are spiritual without necessarily being religious, a seeming paradox; thus, being spiritual without being religious is a subject and an experience that can stand on its own and has its own integrity (Litonjua, 2016).

Baier defines spiritual authority as "…the power to support the opening of the entire universe… toward union with the redeeming ultimate reality. Christian tradition knows several holders of this power: God, Jesus Christ, the angels, the saints and priests… every Christian and

person of goodwill" (Baier, 2010). They are seen as spiritual authorities that collectively generate a liberating power with multiple interdependent centers (Baier, 2010). The concept of spiritual authority in Christianity is viewed as a complex interaction among these different forces (Baier, 2010). This definition summarizes spirituality as not being private but only material to the extent to which it is passed to others; spirituality cannot be dominated (Baier, 2010). The Bible, as an authoritative source for Christianity, gives power and the fruit of the Spirit that evoke a sense of selflessness and genuine concern for others (Dessy, 2021). The aforementioned attributes are credited to spiritual beliefs, which are rooted in the presence of the Holy Spirit (Del Colle, 2001).

In the article by Freeman (2011), "spirituality includes two essential elements in a person's life: (a) transcendence of self, manifesting in a sense of calling or destiny, and (b) belief that one's activities have meaning and value beyond economic benefits or self-gratification" (Freeman, 2011). There are similarities and differences between servant leadership and spiritualism concepts:

> One could posit that servant leadership is contained within the construct of spirituality, in that servant leadership is a manifestation of altruistic love in the action of pursuing transcendent vision… However, one could argue the contrary, whereby spirituality is the motivational basis for servant leaders to engage others in authentic and profound ways that transform them to be what they are capable of becoming… Both the servant leadership and spirituality constructs appeal to virtuous leadership practices and intrinsic motivating factors to cultivate a sense of meaning and purpose. Both constructs attempt to facilitate an integrated workplace where individuals engage in meaningful and intrinsically motivating work (Freeman, 2011).

According to Freeman's article, research proves that a leader's continued engagement in spiritual practices, like reading scripture, prayer, and/or meditation, will result in increased motivation to lead; this is not specific to Christianity or any other religion (Freeman, 2011). Therefore, spirituality in this research is not specific to Christianity and will use the definition by Murray and Zentner (1989), who defined spirituality as "...a quality that goes beyond religious affiliation, that strives for inspiration, reverence, awe, meaning and purpose, even in those who do not believe in any god. The spiritual dimension tries to be in harmony with the universe, strives for answers about the infinite, and comes essentially into focus in times of emotional stress, physical (and mental) illness, loss, bereavement, and death" (p. 259).

Spiritual leadership in the 20th century often fell short in the face of systemic violence (Small, 2013). Further investigation reveals the narrative of spirituality and leadership formation, which provides insights into the diverse religious sects, teachings, and approaches to piety (Small, 2013). The study encompasses leaders from various backgrounds, including pastors, imams, rabbis, monks, vowed religious, and lay people. Through this examination, a clear understanding emerges of spirituality's influence on faith communities and its potential influence on social change and justice (Small, 2013). The incorporation and dissection of diverse perspectives, ethnicities, and religions demonstrate how spirituality transcends societal barriers (Small, 2013), making it crucial in leading a public company with varied groups of people, norms, and beliefs.

Harlos (2000) outlines using spirituality in management education by exploring its meaning, examining spiritual perspectives and practices, and illustrating spirituality's value as an analytic tool and course topic. He cites increased interest in religion, growing statistics of those seeking spiritual grounding through practices like meditation, and employees integrating

spirituality and work (Harlos, 2000). This hints at sociological trends showing a decline in organized religion despite growth in spiritual seeking (Harlos, 2000), highlighting spirituality's evolution from being associated mainly with Christianity to a belief in a higher power (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). However, more research is needed to define spirituality (Harlos, 2000; Mitroff, 1999). According to Mitroff (1999), spirituality should be studied more seriously in organizations and academia, as it is a fundamental human need.

A journal by Phipps (2012) encompasses the reflection of spirituality and leadership on the turf of strategic leadership. He states that progress in the area of spirituality and leadership will be contingent on better clarity regarding the level of scrutiny, necessitating a clear differentiation between individual and shared spirituality (Phipps, 2012). He proposes a framework that defines how the personal spiritual beliefs of a senior leader operate in strategic decision-making, like a plan to sieve and frame information, therefore providing an initial point for considering the various expressions of spirituality in corporations, as it also serves as a basis for a tiered theory of spirituality and leadership (Phipps, 2012). He extends the thought of spirituality and leadership to the level of strategic leadership by offering a context for understanding how a strategic leader's personal beliefs affect decision-making (Phipps, 2012).

The literature reviewed by Samarasinghe et al. (2023) suggests that spirituality and servant leadership have a cyclical relationship. As leaders cultivate a deeper sense of spirituality within themselves, they become more inclined to display the qualities and actions associated with a servant leadership approach, and when leaders adopt servant leadership behaviors and philosophies, this lived experience allows them to further develop and expand their own spiritual understanding and growth over time (Samarasinghe et al., 2023). This perspective suggests a

need for a balanced leadership approach that equally values financial outcomes and the welfare of the organization's human resources (Benefiel, 2005; Sheep, 2006).

Incorporating spirituality in the workplace has been shown to have positive effects on employee well-being, organizational commitment, and overall performance (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Karakas, 2009). By nurturing the whole person and considering the ethical implications of workplace spirituality, leaders can create a more engaging and purposeful work environment (Neck & Milliman, 1994; Sheep, 2006). Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010), in their article examining servant leadership as an antecedent of trust in organizations, emphasize the role of spirituality as a key component of servant leadership. They state that spirituality in servant leadership encompasses four main features: a clear sense of purpose, a feeling of wholeness, a recognition of interconnection, and religiousness. By highlighting these aspects, the authors demonstrate the importance spirituality and servant leadership play in comprehensively supporting an organization and its workforce (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Ultimately, building sustainable organizations requires a focus on the human factor and a leadership approach that balances financial goals with the well-being and spiritual needs of employees (Pfeffer, 2010).

Spirituality at work is defined as the recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work within a community context (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Spirituality in the workplace has gained increasing attention in recent years as organizations recognize the importance of addressing employees' holistic needs beyond mere financial compensation. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) discuss this trend, highlighting how the demoralization caused by extensive downsizing and layoffs, coupled with a decline in traditional community structures, has led employees to seek meaning and community within their work environments. They argue that spirituality at work transcends religious affiliations, focusing

instead on fulfilling the human spirit through meaningful work and fostering a sense of community among workers (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). They emphasize that this concept does not equate to religious practice in the workplace but rather pertains to the broader nurturing of the human spirit. The authors introduce an empirical measure of spirituality at work, developed through a survey administered across four hospital systems, which supports their conceptual framework, including dimensions such as the inner life of employees, the meaningfulness of their work, and their sense of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

The potential benefits of integrating spirituality into the workplace are significant, including increased employee loyalty, enhanced morale, and overall organizational effectiveness (Quatro, 2002). Recognizing and nurturing the spiritual aspects of employees can result in more comprehensive organizational practices that promote both personal welfare and business objectives (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Spirituality at work often involves fostering an environment where employees can bring their whole selves to work, including their spiritual beliefs, which can enhance their sense of purpose and satisfaction (Mitroff et al., 2009).

Servant leadership, emphasizing employees' well-being and holistic development (Greenleaf, 1977), complements the incorporation of spirituality by promoting a supportive and respectful work environment. Ortiz-Gómez, Ariza-Montes, and Molina-Sánchez (2020) explore the impact of servant leadership on work engagement within a Spanish Catholic organization, emphasizing the mediating roles of authenticity and spirituality at work. Their results reveal that while servant leadership alone does not directly increase work engagement, it does so through fostering environments that enhance authenticity and spirituality among employees (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2020).

Karakas (2009) reviews approximately 140 articles to synthesize how spirituality benefits employees and supports organizational effectiveness. The review identifies three main ways spirituality impacts the workplace: enhancing employee well-being and quality of life, providing employees with a sense of purpose and meaning at work, and fostering a sense of interconnectedness and community among workers (Karakas, 2009). The article suggests that organizations that embrace this shift and integrate spiritual practices, such as meditation, reflection, and community-building activities, enhance employee satisfaction and well-being and potentially improve overall organizational performance (Karakas, 2009).

Salem et al. (2023) investigate the influence of workplace spirituality on employee engagement, innovative work behavior, and employee well-being, emphasizing the mediating role of employee engagement and the moderating role of individual spirituality. Their results indicate that workplace spirituality significantly enhances employee engagement, fostering innovative work behavior and improving employee well-being (Salem et al., 2023). The study also reveals that the positive effects of workplace spirituality on employee engagement are strengthened when individual spirituality is high, suggesting that personal spiritual values play a crucial role in enhancing work engagement (Salem et al., 2023).

Integrating spirituality in the workplace represents a significant shift in our understanding of work's impact on human life. It suggests that employees who find spiritual fulfillment can contribute significantly to a company's success. Organizations can enhance innovative work behavior, employee well-being, and overall organizational effectiveness by nurturing workplace spirituality and supporting employees' spiritual needs. This holistic approach to employee management considers both professional and spiritual dimensions, fostering a more engaged, motivated, and fulfilled workforce.

Spiritual Grounding, Servant Leadership, & Authoritative Sources: A Synthesis

In recent years, the relationship between spirituality and leadership has garnered significant attention, particularly in the context of servant leadership. Servant leadership, a philosophy that emphasizes service to others, ethical behavior, and a focus on the growth and well-being of followers (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010), has been found to be influenced by various factors, including spiritual grounding and authoritative sources. This review analyzes the literature on the chemistry between these three variables – spiritual grounding, authoritative sources, and servant leadership – drawing from a diverse range of literature to shed light on their interconnections and implications for servant leadership practice.

Gill's (2022) research on the relationship between leadership and spirituality emphasizes the importance of clearly defining these terms to avoid confusion and enhance the effectiveness of research in this field. He discusses Fry et al.'s (2017) model of spiritual leadership, which includes elements like vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love, aiming to create value congruence across an organization (Gill, 2022). The model aligns with the concept of spiritual grounding in servant leadership, as it highlights the importance of meaning, purpose, beliefs, and values in motivating and fulfilling individuals. However, Gill (2022) critiques Fry et al.'s (2017) model for its lack of a clear definition of spirituality and its failure to adequately integrate spirituality with leadership practices (Gill, 2022). This critique underscores the need for further empirical research to refine the theoretical foundations of how spirituality and leadership interrelate and to explore the impact of spiritual leadership on organizational outcomes.

The synthesis of literature on spiritual grounding, authoritative sources, and servant leadership can be enriched by incorporating insights from Craun and Henson's (2022) article, which explores the implementation of servant leadership within organizations through the lens of

Jesus' teachings from the book of Matthew 20:20-28. The authors stress the need for a focused approach to transitioning to a servant leadership model, highlighting five key themes: organizational order of change, everyone matters, new identity and values, implementation without compromise, and emphasizing the new over the old (Craun & Henson, 2022). This perspective integrates biblical teachings to frame servant leadership and demonstrates how spiritual principles can be applied to modern organizational challenges. Craun and Henson (2022) use Jesus' teachings as authoritative texts to guide and justify the servant leadership model, suggesting that the spiritual dimension is crucial for a holistic implementation of this leadership style. This approach reinforces the importance of authoritative sources in shaping and informing servant leadership practices, as it draws upon the wisdom and guidance of religious teachings to foster a culture of service, commitment, and improved organizational outcomes.

According to Reave (2005), spiritual grounding refers to the principles, values, and beliefs that serve as an anchor for an individual's spiritual journey. Studies have investigated the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership, highlighting the potential influence of spirituality on leadership practices. Fry's (2003) theory of spiritual leadership posits that spiritual grounding is a critical component of servant leadership, fostering a sense of purpose, meaning, and interconnectedness that motivates leaders to adopt a servant-oriented approach. Empirical evidence supports this notion, with studies by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) and Sendjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008) revealing positive associations between spiritual grounding and servant leadership behaviors. These results suggest that leaders who report higher levels of spiritual grounding are more likely to exhibit characteristics such as empowerment, accountability, and humility – attributes central to servant leadership. Interestingly, the specific nature of an individual's spiritual grounding may influence the

manifestation of servant leadership behaviors. Benefiel, Fry, and Geigle (2014) found that leaders with a spiritual grounding rooted in Eastern philosophies tended to exhibit higher levels of servant leadership compared to those with a Western, Judeo-Christian spiritual grounding. This finding highlights the potential impact of cultural and religious influences on the expression of servant leadership.

The concept of spiritual grounding has also been explored in various contexts, including adult education, healthcare, and social activism. In adult education, English (2008) reflects on the integration of spirituality into teaching practices, drawing from inspirational sources such as the Antigonish Movement, Christian mystics, and the writings of Sharon Butala. English advocates for a spiritually grounded approach to adult education, where spirituality is woven into the fabric of educational practices and content, enriching the learning experience and fostering deeper personal growth and understanding among adult learners. In the context of church-related healthcare, Giganti (2002) describes spiritual grounding as the ability to reflect and call upon the spiritual resources of the Catholic healthcare tradition, the leader's own personal faith, and the faith of coworkers. Spiritually grounded leaders demonstrate personal meaning in their work, show care and concern for the well-being of others, and integrate reflective exercises into group meetings. This form of spiritual grounding provides leaders with the deep motivation and resolve necessary to carry out their ministry effectively and offers a broader context of meaning for day-to-day work within healthcare.

Kinsel (2005) highlights the role of spiritual grounding as a significant internal resource that contributes to resilience in older women. Spiritual grounding serves as a vital source of strength and support, enabling these women to navigate and adapt to various life adversities effectively. It provides them with a sense of purpose and meaning, enhancing their ability to

cope with and overcome challenges. In the realm of social activism, Sheridan introduces the concept of "spiritual activism" or "engaged spirituality," which involves drawing from spiritual worldviews and practices to sustain both the activists themselves and their work. Spiritual grounding in this context encourages actions that are born out of awareness, compassion, and love rather than reaction, fear, and anger. It provides a foundation for activism that is not only sustainable but also transformative, allowing activists to engage in social change efforts that are deeply rooted in spiritual values and practices.

Spears (2023), a prominent scholar in the field of servant leadership, provided a comprehensive overview of the concept's evolution and its growing influence on organizations and thought leaders worldwide. His works highlight the paradoxical nature of the term "servant-leader," which challenges traditional notions of leadership and emphasizes the importance of serving others first. Spears (2003) also addresses the potential initial negative connotation of the word "servant" due to historical oppression. However, he argues that upon closer analysis, many come to appreciate the inherent spiritual nature of what Greenleaf intended by pairing "servant" and "leader." This aligns with the concept of spiritual grounding, as servant leadership is rooted in a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of life and the responsibility to serve others. In his recent article, Spears (2023) presents commentary from various women leaders on servant leadership, demonstrating its relevance and applicability across genders. These leaders emphasize the importance of servant leadership principles such as humility, interconnectedness, and a sense of purpose, which resonate with the characteristics of spiritual grounding and the desire to serve others.

The study by Fuller (2022) explores the core characteristics of servant leadership, emphasizing humility and vulnerability as essential qualities for creating an environment where

followers feel safe to bring their whole selves to work. He argues that servant leaders have an obligation to champion organizational diversity, actively seeking out diverse candidates and fostering open discussions to gain diverse perspectives. The article not only illustrates the practical application of servant leadership principles and the importance of humility and vulnerability, but it also speaks to forgiveness and creating authentic and inclusive environments for others.

Spears'(2023) and Fuller's (2022) insights reinforce the transformative potential of servant leadership and its ability to transcend traditional barriers and inequities. It highlights the servant-leader's responsibility to champion diversity, engage in open discussions, and cultivate a forgiving and restorative approach to leadership. By embracing servant leadership principles, cultivating spiritual grounding, and embodying these qualities through leading by example, servant-leaders can foster more inclusive, compassionate, and purpose-driven organizations that prioritize the growth and well-being of all individuals.

Incorporating insights from Buddhist perspectives by Ng (2019) enriches this review as he examines servant leadership through the lens of Mahayana Buddhism, drawing upon core teachings such as dependent arising (paticcasamuppāda) and selflessness (anatta) to offer new meanings to the leader-follower relationship. Ng's (2019) study cites other authors to demonstrate the strong correlation between servant leadership and positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, trust, team performance, and fulfillment of employees' psychological needs. The article also addresses the potential downsides of servant leadership, such as the risk of leaders becoming martyrs or followers becoming overly dependent on the servant leader. The article suggests that leaders should offer their compassion and wisdom for the benefit of others without any conception of being leaders or carers, transcending traditional identities (Ng, 2019). This

aligns with the concept of spiritual grounding in servant leadership, where leaders serve with mindfulness, selflessness, and compassion, focusing on the interdependent nature of all beings. The article does not explicitly discuss authoritative texts in Buddhism, but it draws on Buddhist scriptures and principles to inform its analysis of servant leadership.

In the broader context of spirituality, authoritative sources can include sacred texts like the Bible, Quran, Bhagavad Gita, or other religious scriptures; the teachings and traditions of various religious or spiritual communities; and influential spiritual leaders or figures whose lives and works are looked to for guidance (Pargament, 2007; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). These sources serve as a foundation for individuals' beliefs, values, and practices as they navigate their spiritual paths (Pargament, 2007). Zinnbauer et al. (1997) proposed a framework that considers the role of authoritative sources, distinguishing between traditional religious sources (e.g., sacred texts, religious leaders) and non-traditional sources (e.g., nature, personal experiences) in the development of spiritual grounding. Streib and Hood (2016) examined the impact of authoritative sources on spiritual grounding among individuals from various religious and non-religious backgrounds, revealing a diversity in the sources relied upon. While traditional religious sources played a significant role for some, others relied heavily on personal experiences, intuition, and non-traditional sources. This diversity highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of spiritual grounding. On the other hand, Pargament (2007) argued that sacred texts and religious traditions provide a structured framework for spiritual development, offering guidance and direction that can contribute to a deeper sense of spiritual grounding. This perspective suggests that authoritative sources rooted in established religious traditions may play a more significant role in shaping spiritual grounding compared to non-traditional sources.

While the relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding has been explored to some extent, the direct link between authoritative sources and servant leadership has received relatively less attention in the literature. However, some scholars have proposed potential connections and implications. Graham (1991) argued that servant leadership, in its essence, is grounded in the teachings and principles found in various religious and philosophical traditions. Individuals may develop a deeper understanding of the servant leadership philosophy and its underlying values by drawing upon authoritative sources such as sacred texts, religious leaders, or philosophical works (Graham, 1991). This perspective suggests the potential for these traditional and moral foundations to shape the adoption and practice of servant leadership within organizations, promoting a leadership style that is both inspirational and morally grounded.

Winston and Ryan (2008) view the authority for traditional beliefs in servant leadership as having come from various cultural and religious sources. For example, in Jewish culture, the Talmud emphasizes virtues like brotherly love, humility, and charity, reflecting aspects of servant leadership models. Similarly, Hindu beliefs, as seen in the Bhagavad Gita, promote compassion, generosity, and serving others, aligning with servant leadership principles. These cultural and religious teachings provide the foundation for the values and practices associated with servant leadership across different traditions (Winston & Ryan, 2008). Their article challenges the idea that servant leadership belongs exclusively to Western cultures. By referencing the GLOBE study's humane orientation construct and cultural concepts from Africa (Ubuntu, Harambee), East Asia (Taoist, Confucianism), the Mediterranean (Jewish), and India (Hindu), the authors argue that servant leadership's principles like altruism, benevolence, kindness, love, and generosity resonate with diverse global cultural values. They point out the similarities between servant leadership and these cultural concepts, highlighting their shared

emphasis on humaneness, caring, community, mutual social responsibility, respect, and the will to serve (Winston & Ryan, 2008). The authors conclude that servant leadership is not limited to the West but is a global leadership model, suggesting its incorporation into leadership development programs worldwide, including Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean, to nurture humane leaders.

All in all, the review of literature on spiritual grounding, authoritative sources, and servant leadership reveals a complex and multifaceted relationship between these variables. Spiritual grounding has been found to positively influence servant leadership behaviors, with leaders who report higher levels of spiritual grounding exhibiting characteristics such as empowerment, accountability, and humility. It has been explored in various contexts, and in each of these domains, spiritual grounding is seen as a valuable resource that provides individuals with a sense of purpose, meaning, and resilience, enabling them to navigate challenges and engage in their work with greater depth and integrity. The specific nature of an individual's spiritual grounding, shaped by cultural and religious influences, may also impact the manifestation of servant leadership; further research is needed on authoritative sources and their role in shaping spiritual grounding in both traditional and non-traditional practices. While the direct link between authoritative sources and servant leadership has received less attention, some scholars suggest that the teachings and principles found in religious and philosophical traditions could potentially shape the adoption and practice of servant leadership.

Overall, the interplay between these three variables highlights the importance of considering the spiritual dimension in leadership practice. By drawing upon the wisdom and guidance of authoritative sources and cultivating a deep sense of spiritual grounding, leaders may be better equipped to embody the principles of servant leadership, prioritizing the growth, well-

being, and empowerment of those they serve. Further research is needed to explore the nuances

and implications of these relationships, with the aim of fostering more spiritually informed and

ethically grounded leadership practices across various domains.

The Interplay Between Leadership and Organizational Studies

The culture of an organization may be described as one thing on paper, but it may be

something else on the ground (Schein, 2010). The day-to-day mannerisms, behaviors, and how

people feel and treat each other encapsulate the culture of an organization (Schein, 2010). While

it may seem vague and intangible, it holds significant power and influence that can be felt

throughout an organization, influencing its success; thus, the need to track and address any

emerging issues related to it (Schein, 2010). For an organization to stay relevant and competitive

in this ever-changing world, it has to recognize and respond to the evolving needs of its various

stakeholders, which include employees, customers, shareholders, and the general community

(Robbins & Judge, 2013). According to Schein (2010), culture is characterized by stability,

depth, breadth, and integration of patterns. Culture is a combination of climate, rituals, values,

and behaviors that work together as a whole (Schein, 2010). Organizational behavior is basically

how people behave in organizations and how these relations affect the organization's general

performance (Robbins & Judge, 2013). The behavior of an organization has a significant impact

on various aspects like leadership, culture, motivation, communication, and decision-making

within the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Organizational change is a significant

transformation that affects the entire organization, involving the transition from the current state

to a desired state to increase effectiveness, productivity, and performance, e.g., altering the

mission statement, restructuring operations, or implementing new technology that impacts the

majority of employees (Burke, 2018). It is usually triggered by external factors like cutting costs

or market changes, but it can also be initiated by internal factors like changes in leadership or company culture. The goal of organizational change is to achieve a desired outcome (Burke, 2018).

In a nutshell, organizational culture, behavior, and change are fundamentally intertwined (Anderson & Anderson, 2012; Burke, 2018; Kotter, 2007; O'Reilly, 2008; Schein, 2010). An organization's culture reflects the shared values, assumptions, and behaviors of its members (Schein, 2010), which shapes employee attitudes and behaviors by providing a set of guidelines for how to think and act (O'Reilly, 2008). However, organizational cultures are not static; as external conditions change, organizations must also change and evolve their cultures to succeed (Burke, 2018). Organizational change efforts aim to move the organization from its current culture to a more effective culture by altering shared assumptions, norms, artifacts, processes, and structures (Anderson & Anderson, 2012).

Leaders play a key role in shaping culture and driving organizational transformation by communicating vision, modeling desired cultural values, and embedding changes into organizational systems and practices (Kotter, 2007). For high-level performance, effective organizations should be prepared for any of these events so that they can navigate through challenges and emerge stronger (Schein, 2010). The theoretical foundations of organizational culture, behavior, and change are the fundamental concepts, models, and frameworks that provide a basis for understanding how organizations function and adapt (Schein, 2010). The relationship between leadership and organizational studies is crucial for understanding how organizations evolve and succeed (Schein, 2010). Leadership theories, particularly servant and transformational leadership, are not isolated from the organizational context; they are embedded within the structures and cultures of organizations (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021; Parris & Peachey,

2013). Servant leadership, with its focus on the growth and well-being of people, is interwoven with the structures and cultures that define an organization (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021). Characterized by its prioritizing of the needs of followers over personal gains, servant leadership has garnered increasing attention over the past decade for its positive impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, accentuating its transformative potential within organizational settings (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Organizational Culture and Design

Organizational culture and design theories provide insights into the values, norms, and structures that influence how organizations function (Schein, 2010). Theoretical foundations like structural contingency theory (Donaldson, 2013; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1986) and institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 2010; Mohamed, 2017), Schein's model of organizational culture (Schein, 2010), and Galbraith's information processing concepts (Galbraith, 1974) provide insights into the values, norms, and structures that influence how organizations function, suggesting the need for alignment with environmental demands and institutional norms for effectiveness. In publicly traded companies, organizational culture and design significantly impact performance, competitiveness (Sørensen, 2002), strategic decisions, the ability to adapt to changing market conditions (Sørensen, 2002), financial performance, and overall effectiveness, as centralization and formalization can influence these factors (Zheng et al., 2010). Leadership, especially servant leadership, plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and design (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Peterson et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). Servant leaders prioritize followers' needs, influencing adaptability, collaboration, and ethical behavior cultures while evolving structures, assumptions, and values for alignment across cultures and design elements (Schneider et al., 2013). Marreiros et al. (2023) found public

organizations characterized by bureaucracy, rules, hierarchy, and internal focus, needing change and innovation for quality and flexible services, and Peterson et al.'s (2012) servant leadership research provides insights into promoting commitment, cohesion, and serving others, aligning with identified needs.

Organizational Identity and Strategy

Defining Organizational Identity: An organization's mission is typically to drive the success of the organization; its values should be reflected in the company's organizational identity, which in turn shapes its culture, behavior, and strategic decisions (Schein, 2010; Whetten, 2006). Organizations build their identity based on their mission, values, and beliefs, which are communicated to employees through artifacts (Schein, 2010) and various channels. Research has shown that organizational identity is closely linked to organizational performance (Whetten, 2006; He & Brown, 2013). He and Brown (2013) found that organizational identity, characterized by a focus on innovation and passion for customers, significantly impacted innovation performance, mediated by employee innovation behavior. Organizational identity and organizational culture are closely intertwined; identity refers to the central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics defining the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985), while culture involves shared assumptions, values, and beliefs underlying policies, structures, and behaviors (Schein, 2010). Organizational identity provides a foundation for organizational culture, shaping the type of culture that emerges through communicating core values and emphasizing certain behaviors and perspectives (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). He and Brown (2013) concluded that companies with strong organizational identities have a competitive edge, suggesting others could benefit from developing a clear and consistent identity supporting innovation and performance. Servant leadership contributes to articulating a clear and compelling organizational identity,

which informs strategic direction (Akbari et al., 2014), aligning organizational strategies with broader societal values, and creating a positive correlation between job involvement and organizational identity direction (Akbari et al., 2014). Roh et al. (2023) underscore the integral role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in complementing servant leadership and impacting employee behavior, with CSR engagement amplifying the positive effects of servant leadership on psychological safety and reducing negative employee behaviors.

Classical and Modern Organization Theory

Organizational culture and design are important interdependent and mutually reinforcing aspects of modern organizations that influence employee behavior and performance (Ferdous, 2016; Ferdous, 2017). From a classical perspective, organization theory views organizations as machines to be designed and managed scientifically to maximize efficiency, productivity, and control through standardization, specialization, and hierarchy, leading to bureaucratic organizations with rigid, rule-bound cultures (Ferdous, 2016). However, modern organization theory recognizes organizations as complex social systems influenced by factors like culture, power, and politics, shifting towards a more humanistic approach focused on creating supportive, empowering cultures that encourage innovation, creativity, and collaboration (Ferdous, 2016; Ferdous, 2017). Servant leadership emphasizes the needs and well-being of employees, customers, and stakeholders, offering a compelling lens that aligns with the evolution from mechanistic to humanistic perspectives, advocating for a supportive, empowering, growth-centered leadership style (Ferdous, 2016; Ferdous, 2017). Integrating servant leadership can create environments fostering employee engagement, job satisfaction, shared identity, and purpose while ensuring strategy alignment with societal values, reinforcing the interdependence of organizational culture, design, and leadership (Ferdous, 2016; Ferdous, 2017). This transition

has driven U.S. public companies to embrace more flexible, collaborative cultures and modern designs like flatter hierarchies and cross-functional teams to better respond to market disruptions, foster innovation, and align with customer and stakeholder needs (Westerman et al., 2014).

Aligning Organizational Theories with Servant Leadership

Servant leadership offers a compelling framework for understanding and addressing organizational culture and design dynamics, as it intersects with several influential theories in this domain. Contingency theory posits that organizational structures and cultures should align with external environmental demands to achieve optimal performance (Donaldson, 2013). Servant leadership's adaptable and responsive nature can guide organizations in aligning their internal practices with these external contingencies. Furthermore, servant leadership enhances the employee-organization relationship by fostering trust and mutual respect, resonating with the principles of social exchange theory (Zhou et al., 2022). Additionally, by prioritizing the needs and interests of stakeholders, servant leaders can strategically navigate external dependencies, as emphasized by resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

Servant leadership also plays a pivotal role in mitigating internal tensions arising from conflicting interests, values, and personalities within organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Hatch, 2018; Schein & Schein, 2016). Its emphasis on ethical practices and community engagement equips leaders to effectively navigate external pressures, such as industry changes, competitive dynamics, and shifts in customer preferences (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). This leadership approach fosters a culture of trust, reciprocity, and mutual respect, which is essential for managing the complexities of organizational subcultures and aligning them with the overall organizational culture (Bellot, 2011; Schein, 2010).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an organizational development approach that emphasizes identifying and leveraging organizational strengths during change efforts, aligns closely with the principles of servant leadership (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). This alignment is evident in the shared focus on meeting the needs of others, including employees, customers, and stakeholders, by actively seeking their input and implementing their ideas (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). Servant leadership's commitment to serving rather than leading from a position of authority complements AI's participatory and collaborative process (Parris & Peachey, 2013). By integrating AI, organizations can effectively navigate internal and external pressures while fostering a culture that values diversity, creativity, and continuous learning (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Kotter, 2007).

Contingency, social exchange, and resource dependence theories underscore the complexity of organizational dynamics and the need for adaptive leadership (Donaldson, 2013; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Servant leadership, with its emphasis on listening, empathy, and stewardship, provides a framework for leaders to navigate these dynamics effectively (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). The influence of servant leadership extends to the design of organizational structures and processes, as by fostering a culture of service, organizations can create systems that support flexibility, innovation, and ethical decision-making (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Leaders and organizations are inseparable entities that influence each other profoundly, and the synthesis of leadership and organizational studies, particularly through the lens of servant leadership, offers valuable insights into how organizations can develop cultures, strategies, and structures responsive to employees, stakeholders, and the broader community (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Schein, 2010).

Characterization of Authoritative Sources

Westman (2009) considers an authoritative source to be a managed repository of valid or trusted data recognized by appropriate governance entities that support their business environment without defaulting to a single centralized repository. Reitz (2004) states that "an authoritative source is a work known to be reliable because its authority or authenticity is widely recognized by experts in the field." World Agents (2020) further categorizes authoritative sources or references as:

- *Recognized sources:* include credible publications, established institutions, and industry experts, such as government and educational/university materials, and respected publications like Smithsonian magazine or Harvard Business Review.

- *Scholarly sources:* Archived in academic and publicly accessible databases like JSTOR, Gale, Sage Journals, EBSCO, etc. These undergo evaluation by qualified scholars and field experts before publication.

- *Credible news sources:* Though consistency varies, trusted publications like The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and Bloomberg are considered credible news sources.

Some authoritative sources are governed by law or a regulatory body; an occupation guides some and is therefore regulated by an association, e.g., in finance and accounting or nursing (Westman, 2009). Authoritative sources are also defined as "a managed repository of valid or trusted data that is recognized by an appropriate set of governance entities and supports the governance entity's business environment" (Westman, 2009), with each governing entity establishing its criteria for data collection, data quality, data usage, assurance requirements, and compliance requirements (Westman, 2009).

Sacred Books

Sacred books are revered as authoritative sources of guidance, wisdom, and divine revelation within religious groups (Girardot, 2002). Sacred books are viewed by religious organizations as divinely inspired or authoritative sources and statements of faith, history, and practices (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2024). These texts play a vital role in shaping the beliefs and practices of their respective religious communities, serving as primary sources of religious teachings, commandments, and ethical conduct (Girardot, 2002). The normative role of these books is reflected in their authority as sources for worship, conduct, and right belief, and they are considered crucial to the preservation and transmission of religious traditions and values across generations (Girardot, 2002). The article by Jódar (2022) explores the significance of the Bible as a literary work and its influence on literature throughout history, emphasizing its relevance not only as a culturally significant religious text but also as a literary masterpiece. The article reflects on how theologians, who regard the Bible as a sacred text, can benefit from its literary dimension and discusses the role of literary language in conveying spiritual experiences and representing historical events within theological contexts (Jódar, 2022).

By making Eastern religious thought accessible to the West, Max Müller's monumental project fostered new understanding and dialogue between different faiths while also shaping Western perceptions of the Orient (Girardot, 2002). The *Sacred Books of the East* translated Eastern religious texts into English, sparking the birth of comparative religion as an academic discipline in the 19th century (Girardot, 2002). Examining the process of how the sacred scriptures were written and how their authority has been established and reinforced over time, the article by Long and Long (2017) provides an in-depth insight. The book, authored by leading experts in their fields, chronicles the evolution of the scriptures from being passed down orally to

being written down and how they were received, highlighting the measures taken by religious communities to protect the stability of oral accounts, showcasing how they have maintained their assembled parchments and scrolls with reverence, and comprising notable essays on the scriptures of key religions in the world (Long & Long, 2017). In this research, a sacred book is "Any book (as the Bible) regarded by a religious body as an authoritative source or divinely inspired statement of its faith, history, and practices" (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2024).

The self

Defining the "self" is a complex question that has occupied philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists for centuries; there's no single, universally accepted definition, as different disciplines approach it from their perspectives (Northoff et al., 2006). As per Chu and Vu (2021), "the self" concept is complex and subject to varying interpretations. Their article highlights the importance of holistically understanding the self, considering social and cultural influences, and providing empirical evidence from various cultural contexts to support its claims). The study by Chu and Vu (2021) challenges the traditional individualistic view of the self and its role in moral action, offering a more nuanced and culturally informed perspective (Chu & Vu, 2021). The influence of the concept of "the self" on moral behaviors is emphasized by the authors when they expound on the relationship between the importance of the self and prosocial behaviors, despite the dominant models being criticized for largely portraying the self as an individualistic concept rather than a social one (Chu & Vu, 2021). To address this, Chu and Vu (2021) draw from various cultural perspectives, such as the Confucian relational self and Buddhist non-self, to present an alternative model highlighting how constraining the individual can foster moral action. This research expands our understanding of the self by providing empirical evidence of the mechanisms involved in self-regulation and its influence on moral action (Chu & Vu, 2021).

Although "the self" is often perceived as a strong source based on personal experiences, its lack of substantial supporting literature (Sheikh, 2007), coupled with the current definition of authoritative sources not acknowledging it, represents a limitation of the study.

Customs or Cultural Traditions

Across cultures, people hold diverse and powerful beliefs about themselves, others, and their interconnectedness. Each perspective is predicted to have distinct consequences for thought, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). People often turn to their cultural traditions to shape their behaviors, perspectives, and decision-making processes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Customs or cultural traditions, ethnic or indigenous, are an authoritative source that encompasses the cultural and ethnic practices that individuals draw upon for guidance (Matsumoto & Juang, 2016). Cultures carry a wealth of knowledge, rituals, and values embedded in specific ethnic or indigenous communities (Samovar et al., 2013). Whether it involves rites of passage, traditional ceremonies, or age-old customs, individuals within communities find a source of authority that reflects their identity and collective heritage (Kottak, 2022). An understanding of the customs and cultural traditions, whether ethnic or indigenous, plays an important role in providing insights into the various ways in which cultural contexts influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals (Feyereisen, 1993). Therefore, it is considered an authoritative source for this research.

Codes of Conduct

The article by Erwin (2010) defines corporate codes of conduct as "…a practical corporate social responsibility (CSR) instrument commonly used to govern employee behavior and establish a socially responsible organizational culture" (Erwin, 2010). The study investigates the influence of code of conduct quality on ethical performance, revealing that companies with

high-quality codes are more likely to be highly ranked in corporate citizenship, sustainability, ethical behavior, and public perception, highlighting the importance of code quality in shaping organizational culture and seeing code quality, rather than simply having a code, as crucial for its effectiveness in driving ethical behavior and shaping corporate culture (Erwin, 2010). For this research, a code of conduct, as an authoritative source for an individual, is a set of ethical guidelines or principles that define acceptable behavior and standards of conduct in a specific context, such as a profession, organization, or community, thus serving as a framework for guiding individuals on how to behave, make decisions, and interact with others in a manner consistent with the values and expectations outlined in the code.

Authoritative sources can simply be defined as a source of reliable information; some are governed by law or a regulatory body, and some are guided by an occupation and, therefore, regulated by an association (Hjørland, 2011). In order to conduct thorough and credible research, it is necessary to rely on established and recognized commanding sources (McKenzie, 2003; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). Based on the definitions herein, authoritative sources may vary. The authoritative sources that guided this research are:

a) Sacred Books – According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2022), a sacred book is "Any book (as the Bible) regarded by a religious body as an authoritative source or divinely inspired statement of its faith, history, and practices." Examples of sacred books recognized by different religions include: 1) Judaism: The Tanakh; 2). Christianity: The Bible, 3) Islam: The Quran, 4) Confucianism: The Analects of Confucius, 5) Hinduism: The Vedas/Upanishads/Puranas; 6) Buddhism: The Dhammapada, etc.

b) The Constitution – The U.S. Constitution is the supreme law, and no legislation may oppose or contradict its principles (Cornell Law School, 2023).

c) Personal Experiences – "The Self"

d) Customs or Cultural Traditions – Ethnic or Indigenous

e) Codes of Conduct

On Publicly Traded Companies

Companies often choose to go public not solely to finance future growth but to rebalance their financials after high investment and growth periods, bringing benefits such as lower credit costs and increased turnover control (Pagano et al., 1998). The research by Pagano et al. (1998) underscores that the decision to go public is influenced by factors like the industry's market-to-book ratio, indicating that companies might strategically time their IPOs to capitalize on favorable market conditions.

Jennings's (2023) article on public companies explores the public's perception and understanding of public companies within the context of American corporate law. It researches how these perceptions influence debates over corporate responsibilities and governance. The idea of a "public company" goes beyond its legal definition. It includes a complex set of public beliefs and expectations that influence discussions about how companies should be responsible and governed. As Jennings (2023) explains, while the technical criteria for classifying a company as public are well-defined, the public's understanding of a public entity extends beyond legal boundaries and includes ethical obligations towards society and non-shareholder interests. These perceptions, as evidenced by a survey, indicate that the public perceives public companies as having substantial responsibilities toward employee rights, environmental concerns, and community welfare. These expectations can significantly influence corporate practices and public policy. The challenge lies in navigating this gap between legal definitions and public

values, a task that is pivotal in comprehending the evolving landscape of corporate governance and accountability (Jennings, 2023).

The aforementioned results can shed light on the over twenty thousand U.S. public companies that have joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) since its launch in July 2000. The study by Barrese, Phillips, and Shoaf (2020) probes into the motivations propelling U.S. public companies to join the UNGC, exploring whether ethical considerations to enhance Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices or economic incentives are the primary drivers. Using Haack et al.'s (2020) conceptual framework, the authors find that U.S. firms joining the UNGC tend to have poorer initial CSR performance but show improvement over time, supporting the idea of ceremonial adoption evolving into substantive adoption as transparency increases (Barrese et al., 2020). While the article does not directly compare public and private companies, the focus on U.S. public companies joining the UNGC implies that these public companies are subject to higher levels of public scrutiny and pressure to demonstrate commitment to CSR principles, which could drive substantive improvements in their CSR performance over time. Overall, the study provides empirical evidence for Haack et al.'s (2020) model while underscoring the influence of leadership changes and international business reliance on UNGC participation motivations.

Building on the idea that public companies face heightened expectations and scrutiny regarding their corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, other research has explored how embracing organizational spirituality can positively influence the organizational culture and financial performance of public companies. The study by Quatro (2002) on Fortune 500 firms argues that organizational spirituality, which he defines as the alignment of a company's activities, behaviors, and practices with widely held spiritual norms, can significantly impact the

success of public corporations. His results suggest that Fortune 500 companies with higher levels of organizational spiritual normativity tend to exhibit better long-term profitability and return on assets (Quatro, 2002). This research complements the previous results by Barrese et al. (2023) on public companies joining the UN Global Compact, which showed that increased transparency and organizational learning can lead to substantive improvements in CSR practices over time. Quatro's (2002) work highlights the potential for organizational spirituality to positively influence the organizational culture and financial performance of public companies, aligning with the broader societal expectations and scrutiny surrounding these corporations' ethical and responsible business practices. By embracing spiritual norms and values, public companies can not only enhance their CSR efforts but also potentially drive better overall organizational outcomes.

Research examining the tangible financial consequences of unethical corporate behavior further underscores the importance of ethical and socially responsible practices for public companies. In her article, Gunthorpe (1992) investigates how financial markets respond to unethical actions by public companies. The study finds that public corporations experience statistically significant negative abnormal returns upon revelations of unethical behavior, such as being under investigation for misconduct, suggesting that financial markets penalize firms for unethical practices, highlighting the economic incentive for public companies to maintain high ethical standards and engage in responsible business conduct (Gunthorpe, 1992). This evidence complements the previous discussions on the role of organizational spirituality (Quatro, 2002) and UN Global Compact participation (Barrese et al., 2024) in driving substantive improvements in corporate social responsibility (CSR) for public companies. Gunthorpe's (1992) study adds a

crucial financial dimension, demonstrating that unethical behavior can directly impact a public company's market value and shareholder returns.

Additionally, Gunthorpe (1992) argues that these results have broader implications for corporate governance and business education. The economic consequences of unethical practices reinforce the need for integrating ethics into organizational programs and highlight the critical role of senior management and leadership in nurturing an ethical corporate culture that aligns with market expectations and societal values.

Leading a public company in today's corporate governance landscape presents a set of evolving challenges that require visionary and ethical leadership. As Cole (2019) highlights, effective corporate leaders must transcend short-term pressures and myopic focus on quarterly earnings, instead prioritizing long-term strategic thinking and considering the broader societal impact of business decisions, adapting their styles across different contexts and generations while maintaining an unwavering commitment to ethical standards and continuous organizational renewal (Cole, 2019). To ensure good governance, CEOs and boards must understand their responsibilities and be prepared for shareholder activism by displaying visible leadership and integrity, prioritizing company success over personal gain, and maintaining transparency and timely sharing of information with the board (Cole, 2019).

Fostering innovation and long-term strategic thinking in public companies requires leadership that transcends short-term pressures, as emphasized by Cole (2019) and Silva (2016). This aligns with Quatro's (2002) research on the positive influence of organizational spirituality, which encompasses elements like shared mission, ethical clarity, and a sense of interconnectedness, on the long-term profitability and performance of Fortune 500 firms. By

embracing spiritual norms and values that prioritize long-term goals over short-term gains, public company leaders can effectively balance shareholder expectations with the need for innovation and sustained competitiveness, as suggested by Silva (2016).

Building on the importance of long-term leadership and embracing organizational spirituality to balance innovation with shareholder expectations (Quatro, 2002; Cole, 2019; Silva, 2016), Alamsjah's (2022) study highlights the crucial role of ambidextrous leadership in enhancing firm performance during turbulent times. These mediating factors of the study align with the need for public companies to continuously develop adaptive capabilities to navigate rapid changes and sustain long-term growth amid market volatility (Alamsjah, 2022).

Publicly traded companies in the U.S. serve as an optimal population for investigating the influence of spirituality on servant leadership practices, given their intricate nature, diversity, public scrutiny, and profound economic impact. This study focuses on these companies not only because of their commitment to equitable service regardless of beliefs or religion but also due to their notable social and economic influence as critical drivers of the American economy that significantly shape the livelihoods of numerous citizens (U.S. SEC, 2022; Quatro, 2002; Gunthorpe, 1992).

Examining servant leadership through the lens of publicly traded U.S. companies is particularly relevant considering the regulatory environment that demands transparent and accountable leadership aligned with servant leadership principles (Sarbanes-Oxley Act, 2002). Moreover, the cultural diversity within these organizations necessitates inclusive, ethical leadership approaches that servant leadership can provide (Hofstede, 1980). Additionally, as Quatro's (2002) research on Fortune 500 firms illustrates, embracing spiritual values and servant

leadership ideologies is integral to cultivating a socially responsible corporate character essential for long-term success. By studying spirituality's influence on servant leadership in this context, insights can be gained on how public companies can navigate short-term pressures while sustaining ethical, innovative, and agile practices that create shared value for stakeholders and society (Cole, 2019; Silva, 2016; Alamsjah, 2022; Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Literature Review Results and Themes

The above literature review represents the theoretical framework related to the research questions addressed by the study. The literature encompasses various perspectives on leadership, spirituality, authoritative sources, and assessment tools and their role in leadership and organizational contexts. Kegan and Lahey's (2002) work emphasizes the transformative power of language and its influence on organizational dynamics. The definition of spirituality from Murray and Zentner (1989) highlights its broader meaning beyond religious affiliation. Small's (2013) insights shed light on spirituality in the face of systemic violence, diverse religious sects, and their influence on social change. Harlos (2000) examines spirituality in management education, emphasizing its meaning, value, and integration with work. Phipps (2012) investigates the influence of spiritual beliefs on strategic decision-making in the context of strategic leadership. The characterization of authoritative sources, as described by Westman (2009) and Reitz (2004), provides a framework for identifying reliable and trusted information. Additionally, the significance of sacred books, cultural traditions, personal experiences, and codes of conduct as authoritative sources is highlighted in understanding spirituality and leadership.

Publicly traded companies in the U.S. serve as an optimal population for investigating the influence of spirituality on servant leadership practices, given their intricate nature, diversity,

public scrutiny, and profound economic impact (U.S. SEC, 2022; Quatro, 2002; Gunthorpe, 1992). Examining servant leadership through this lens is relevant due to the regulatory environment demanding transparent, accountable leadership aligned with servant principles (Sarbanes-Oxley Act, 2002) and the cultural diversity necessitating inclusive, ethical approaches that servant leadership provides (Hofstede, 1980). Embracing spiritual values and servant ideologies cultivates a socially responsible corporate character integral to long-term success (Quatro, 2002; Cole, 2019; Silva, 2016; Alamsjah, 2022; Porter & Kramer, 2006).

In Chapter 3, the methodology and research will utilize quantitative research methods to collect and analyze data. The research aims to determine the relationship between variables, i.e., spiritual grounding, servant leadership practice, and authoritative sources. The target population consists of leaders in publicly traded companies in the U.S. Data is collected using a database from a trusted company that supports academic research and Qualtrics, a well-known and respected platform, to collect data. The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS software. The chapter will clearly describe the research design, including the purpose, methods, target population, instrumentation, and data analysis, ensuring transparency and adherence to scientific research principles. Overall, Chapter 3 will provide a roadmap for conducting the research and generating valuable insights into the role of spirituality in servant leadership practice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design employed to address the research questions and hypotheses presented in Chapter 1. The methodology section provides a detailed description of the research methods, target population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis techniques used in this quantitative, correlational research study. This comprehensive overview offers a clear understanding of the processes and tools that will be utilized to conduct the research effectively. By employing a quantitative approach, this study aims to objectively examine the relationships between variables and draw meaningful conclusions based on statistical analysis. This dissertation uses numerical scales to measure spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. Quantitative analyses, including regression, moderation, and correlational techniques, are employed to validate and investigate the relationships between variables and test hypotheses (Cohen et al., 2003; Hair et al., 2019; Hayes, 2018).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between spiritual grounding, servant leadership, and authoritative sources among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the United States. This quantitative study aims to investigate whether an individual's spiritual grounding or lack thereof, is related to their ability to embody servant leadership qualities and traits and whether servant leadership is inherently connected to spirituality or if it can be practiced regardless of one's spiritual beliefs.

Previous research suggests that spirituality and servant leadership are sustainable and favorable for corporations seeking to retain employees and improve their bottom line (Irfan et al., 2022). However, the belief that servant leadership can only be practiced by those with spiritual

grounding may marginalize individuals who aspire to adopt servant leadership principles but do not identify as spiritual. This narrow association may engender uncertainty and doubt for those who wish to practice servant leadership without a spiritual foundation.

This study posits that recognizing servant leadership as a style that prioritizes the needs of others is not limited to those who are spiritually grounded (Lee et al., 2020). By embracing a more inclusive perspective of this leadership style, individuals from diverse backgrounds can be empowered to lead with empathy and compassion, creating a more diverse and collaborative community (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2007). This research also investigates the possibility of serving others without being tethered to any authoritative source.

Conducting research on the influence of spiritual grounding, or lack thereof, on leadership can provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to effective or ineffective leadership while maintaining organizational benchmarks. This knowledge can enable organizations and individuals to identify the underlying reasons for their leadership successes or shortcomings and investigate ways to incorporate servant leadership into their practices without necessarily associating it with spiritual grounding or any particular religion (Contreras, 2016). By reframing servant leadership as a service-oriented leadership style rather than solely focusing on its spiritual or religious connotations, more leaders may be inclined to align themselves with servant leadership and promote it as the optimal approach to leadership, yielding comprehensive benefits for both the organization and its employees (Irfan et al., 2022).

The main research question under investigation is: "How does spiritual grounding influence servant leadership practice in publicly traded companies in the U.S.?" The primary objective of this research is to investigate the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership, enabling individuals to lead through service regardless of their spiritual foundation

(Ikonne, 2021). This could encourage organizations to adopt servant leadership as their preferred leadership style, empowering people to lead through service and potentially discovering a connection to a higher power in the process (Barnabas & Clifford, 2012). Ultimately, the goal is to foster the inherent qualities of service and love towards one another, as they are crucial aspects of our being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Current Research Gap

1. The current gap lies in the need to understand the role of spiritual grounding and authoritative sources in guiding and shaping leadership behaviors and practices.

2. The research will also address a gap in the understanding of the interconnectedness between servant leadership practice, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources. This involves examining the dynamics of these elements and how they interact and influence each other within the context of publicly traded companies in the U.S.

Research Questions

The focal question of interest:

1. What impact does spiritual grounding have on the practice of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.?

Supporting questions:

2. What is the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources?

3. Do spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources serve as foundational elements for servant leadership practice?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested are:

1. H_1: There is a relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

   - H_0: There is no relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.
2. H_2: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

   - H_0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

3. H_3: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

   - H_0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

4. H_4: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice.

   - H_0: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources do not predict servant leadership practice

Research Plan

This research utilizes quantitative research methods to collect and analyze data to determine the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice and to test the relationship between spiritual grounding, authoritative sources, and servant leadership practice. The population of interest for this study is leaders/senior executives in publicly traded companies, as they represent diverse demographics and have significant societal and economic influence (U.S. SEC, 2022). Data collection is conducted through Centiment, an online survey platform that connects researchers with targeted respondents (Centiment, 2024). Qualtrics, a survey platform that supports academic research and provides the necessary features for data collection and analysis, was used to disseminate the survey (Qualtrics, 2024). The collected data was analyzed using SPSS, employing regression, moderation, and reliability analysis methods. The duration of data collection and analysis spanned three weeks.

Research Design

The research was designed to collect, analyze, and interpret data, bridging the gap between theoretical issues and empirical evidence. Research design is critical for asserting the study's contributions to knowledge and for outlining the methods used to gather and analyze data without bias (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, descriptive and explanatory research designs are used, and a quantitative method is used to analyze the relationships among the research variables, facilitating the collection of data for statistical analysis (Flick, 2018). This method is helpful in clarifying the interactions among variables. The explanatory research design aims to provide a deeper understanding of the subject by explaining how and why the research results are made, especially in terms of the relationships between variables (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Considering the study's focus on publicly traded companies in the U.S., a cross-sectional survey is deemed suitable for collecting data at a single point in time from a diverse sample. This approach is suitable for explaining the current state of the variables under study and for detecting potential correlations for further investigation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). This quantitative study will employ a survey design utilizing two established scales: the SLQ developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) and the SPS developed by Pamela Reed (1987). The SLQ will be used to measure attitudes and behaviors related to servant leadership practice, while the SPS will assess participants' spiritual grounding.

Research Key Variables

- Spiritual Grounding

- Servant Leadership Practice

- Authoritative Sources

Research Instrument

This research will be conducted utilizing two pre-existing assessment tools to measure servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding:

a) Servant leadership practice: For this research, the Leader Form—Self-Assessment section of the SLQ by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) was utilized. The SLQ is a self-evaluation tool for leaders, comprising 23 items across five dimensions: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. It is designed to measure leadership qualities with a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alphas) between 0.82 and 0.92. The assessment takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The rater form, which allows for evaluation by others, was not used in this study; thus, the research relied solely on self-assessment, representing a limitation.

b) Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS): The SPS is a reliable and valid 10-item instrument created by Pamela Reed (1987) to measure the prominence of spirituality in an individual's life. It assesses spiritual beliefs and interactions and is applicable in various contexts. The SPS has been tested on diverse adult populations, including healthy and seriously ill individuals, and has shown high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha consistently above .90. It also demonstrates criterion-related and discriminatory validity. The scale can be administered through a questionnaire or interview and typically takes 7 to 10 minutes to complete.

Population and Sampling

Population: The study's population consists of publicly traded companies in the U.S., chosen for their diverse demographics and commitment to equitable service, regardless of beliefs

or religion. These companies have a notable social and economic influence and are key to the American economy, significantly affecting the livelihoods of numerous citizens (U.S. SEC, 2022).

Sample Size: 217 qualified complete responses, 42 disqualified on Q1, 1 disqualified on Q2, 31 disqualified on attention check, seven disqualified for completing the survey in less than 90 seconds, 2 test responses, Total: 300

Simple Random Sampling (SRS): This is a probability sampling method commonly employed by researchers to randomly select participants from a population. It ensures that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby producing representative and unbiased samples (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Singh, 2003). This sampling method is chosen because it eliminates potential biases and allows for the generalization of results to the target population (Etikan et al., 2016).

Eligibility Criteria: Respondents will need to be in leadership positions, i.e., senior executives (C-Suite, president, vice president, director, or controller), work in a publicly traded company, and be at least 18 years old.

Data Collection Procedures

The population sample for this quantitative study consisted of leaders and senior executives of publicly traded companies. Data collection was facilitated through Centiment, an online survey platform that connects researchers with survey respondents (Centiment, 2024). Centiment was utilized to identify and recruit respondents to participate in the survey. The survey instrument was designed using Qualtrics (2024), a versatile survey software tool. Participants received an online consent form (Appendix D – Informed Consent for Anonymous) that outlined their rights, the time required to complete the study, and the option to withdraw

from the study without consequences. The consent form did not require a signature; instead, participants were prompted to select "yes" or "no" to indicate their participation. Selecting "yes" directed them to the survey instrument, while selecting "no" thanked them for their time and allowed them to exit the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Validity and Validation of Research Instruments

The study employs two widely used and validated research instruments: the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) and the Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS) developed by Pamela Reed (1987). The selection of these instruments is crucial for ensuring the validity and reliability of the research results.

The SLQ, developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), utilizes a 5-point Likert scale to assess participants' perceptions of their own servant leadership behaviors. This instrument has been extensively used in previous research and has demonstrated good validity and reliability (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Kessler, 2006; Paul et al., 2012; Woo, 2018). The SLQ measures five distinct factors of servant leadership: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship (Kessler, 2006; Woo, 2018). Its validation in various contexts, including academic advising (Paul et al., 2012) and the fitness industry (Woo, 2018), underscores its suitability for measuring servant leadership attributes in the present study. Numerous researchers have consistently reported the SLQ's strong psychometric properties, underscoring its reliability and validity in capturing the nuances of servant leadership (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Kessler, 2006; Paul et al., 2012; Woo, 2018).

The SPS, developed by Pamela Reed (1987), employs a 6-point Likert scale to capture individuals' spiritual perspectives and experiences. This instrument has been widely validated and used in various research studies (Abbasi et al., 2014; Greer, 1992; Musa et al., 2016; Reed,

1987). The SPS is known for its high internal reliability, with Cronbach's alpha consistently reported above 0.90 (Musa et al., 2016; Reed, 1987). Its ability to quantify spirituality and its relationship with personality, locus of control (Greer, 1992), and self-rated health (Musa et al., 2016) has been well-established in previous research. Additionally, the SPS has been used to compare spiritual well-being and spiritual care perspectives among nursing students in Iran (Abbasi et al., 2014), further demonstrating its versatility and validity in diverse contexts.

By incorporating these rigorously validated and extensively used instruments, the study ensures the accurate measurement of spirituality and servant leadership, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the research results. The strong theoretical foundations and empirical evidence supporting the SLQ and SPS provide a solid basis for drawing meaningful and trustworthy conclusions from the study's results.

Authoritative Sources as a Variable

Authoritative sources as a variable were measured on a nominal scale. Specifically, in this study, moderation analysis was utilized to determine if the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership behaviors was mediated by authoritative sources. This approach was deemed ideal for providing valuable insights into the potential mediating role of authoritative sources on the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practices. Moderation analysis is a statistical technique that allows for the examination of how the strength or direction of the relationship between two variables (spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice) is influenced by the presence of a third variable (authoritative sources) (Hayes, 2018; Preacher et al., 2007). By employing moderation analysis, the study aimed to explain the complex relationship between these constructs, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms

through which spiritual grounding may impact servant leadership tendencies, contingent upon the influence of authoritative sources.

The decision to utilize moderation analysis was grounded in its widespread acceptance and extensive use in social science research, particularly in investigating mediating and moderating effects (Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2008; Hayes, 2018; Preacher et al., 2007). This rigorous statistical approach ensured a thorough and nuanced exploration of the relationships among spiritual grounding, servant leadership, and authoritative sources, contributing to a deeper understanding of the factors that shape servant leadership behaviors within the context of spiritual beliefs and external sources of authority.

Limitations

1. The use of online self-scoring assessment instruments may be influenced by participants' honesty and inflated self-perceptions (Dunning et al., 2004; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). Additionally, potential biases introduced by authoritarian structures and egotistical pride within public companies could hinder the accurate measurement of servant leadership levels (Greenleaf, 1977; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). To mitigate this, the survey will stress the importance of truthful and accurate responses, with assurances of data confidentiality and anonymity.

2. Limited understanding of servant leadership among some leaders may affect survey responses. Clear instructions and definitions will be provided to ensure a common understanding of the construct (Northouse, 2019; van Dierendonck, 2011).

3. The researcher's favorable view of servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and the use of authoritative sources may have influenced the interpretation of literature and the framing of research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, the research design was based on

empirical data, and efforts were made to maintain objectivity. A statistical analysis was employed to ensure neutrality in the results. Nevertheless, the potential for bias should still be considered when interpreting the results (Ioannidis, 2005; Pannucci & Wilkins, 2011).

4. The survey instruments used in this study did not capture certain factors that could influence servant leadership practice, e.g., organizational culture, size, and sector. Consequently, the limited variance observed in the study can be attributed to the specific focus on these constructs, while other potentially relevant factors were not considered within the scope of the research (Avolio et al., 2009; Liden et al., 2008).

5. The study focuses on senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S., which limits the generalizability of the results to other organizational settings or groups (Simons et al., 2003).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the study's results, which investigated spiritual grounding as an influence on servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S. Additionally, the study examined the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources. The mediating role of authoritative sources on the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practices will also be examined. The following research questions and hypotheses serve as the guiding beacons for this inquiry:

Research Questions:

1. What impact does spiritual grounding have on the practice of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.?

2. What is the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources?

3. Do spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources serve as foundational elements for servant leadership practice?

Hypotheses:

1. H1: There is a relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

   - H0: There is no relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

2. H2: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

   - H0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

3. H3: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

- H0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership

   practice.

The study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a survey as the primary data collection method. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS, a widely used software program for statistical analysis in research (Green & Salkind, 2017). Additionally, the study involved a comprehensive literature review of relevant research and theoretical underpinnings in the areas of servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources. This chapter presents a summary of the data generated through the study design, encompassing the following components: demographic information of the respondents, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, moderation analysis, and regression analysis.

Presentation and Summary of Data

Descriptive statistics

Of the 300 respondents surveyed, 218 were initially deemed suitable for data analysis. However, during the analysis phase, SPSS identified and excluded one respondent's data due to inconsistencies, resulting in a final sample of 217 complete and valid responses for the study. Forty-two were disqualified on the question: "Do you lead or head an individual department(s), division(s), or business unit(s) with direct reports in a publicly traded company? (Titles include C-Suite, President, Vice President, Director, or Controller)?" One was disqualified for not agreeing to participate, and at that point, one was directed to exit the survey; 31 were disqualified on attention checks; seven were disqualified for completing the survey in less than 90 seconds; and two were test responses.

Of the 217 participants, 40.6% identified as female and 59.4% as male. The majority of participants were between the ages of 25 and 54 (71.4%), with the largest age group being 25-34

years old (24.9%). Regarding ethnicity, the sample was predominantly White/Caucasian

(59.6%), followed by Black/African American (15.3%), Hispanic or Latino (7.8%), and

Asian/Pacific Islander (4.6%). Most participants held a bachelor's degree (43.8%) or a Master's

degree (35%). (Table 1).

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	*n*	%
Gender		
Female	88	40.60
Male	129	59.40
Age		
18-24 years	16	7.40
25-34 years	54	24.90
35-44 years	51	23.50
45-54 years	50	23.00
55-64 years	34	15.70
65-74 years	11	5.10
75 years or older	1	.50
Ethnicity		
Asian / Pacific Islander	10	4.60
Hispanic or Latino	17	7.80
Native American or American Indian	4	1.80
Black/African American	33	15.30
Other	2	0.90
White/Caucasian	151	69.60
The highest degree or level of school participants completed		
Some high school, no diploma	3	1.40
Trade/technical/vocational training	2	.90
High school or GED	7	3.20
Associate's degree	18	8.30
Bachelor's degree	95	43.80
Master's degree	76	35.00
Doctorate	16	7.40

Note: N = 217

In terms of employment characteristics, 34.6% of participants had worked for their

current organization for 11 or more years, and 96.3% were in a leadership role that required

managing people. The majority (70.9%) had been in such a leadership role for more than four

years, with 29% having 11 or more years of leadership experience. Regarding the number of

direct reports, 35% of participants managed 0-20 people, while 21.2% managed 21-40 people.

(Table 2).

Table 2

Employment Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	n	%
Years participants worked for the current organization.		
0-1 Year	2	.90
2-3 Years	22	10.10
4-6 Years	52	24.00
7-10 Years	66	30.40
11+ Years	75	34.60
Participants are in a leadership role that requires managing people.		
No	8	3.70
Yes	209	96.30
Years participants have been in a leadership role that requires to manage people		
0-1 Year	12	5.50
2-3 Years	41	18.90
4-6 Years	54	24.90
7-10 Years	47	21.70
11+ Years	63	29.00
The number of people participants manage.		
0-20	76	35.00
21-40	46	21.20
41-100	43	19.80
101-200	34	15.70
201+	18	8.30

Note: N = 217

Concerning religious affiliations, most participants identified with Christianity (73.7%),

followed by those who identified with other religions (7.8%), Atheism (Do not believe in God or

a Higher Being) (5.5%), Judaism (4.6%), Islam (3.7%), Inter/Non-Denominational (1.8%), and

Buddhism (1.8%), while the least participants identified with Hinduism (.9%) (Table 3).

Table 3

Religious Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	*n*	%
Participants identify with the following organized religion.		
Atheism (Do not believe in God or a Higher Being)	12	5.50
Buddhist	4	1.80
Christianity	160	73.70
Hinduism	2	.90
Inter/non-denominational	4	1.80
Islam	8	3.70
Judaism	10	4.60
Other	17	7.80

Note: N = 217

Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to determine the internal validity and reliability of servant leadership practice and its subscales (Altruistic calling, Emotional healing, Wisdom, Persuasive mapping, Organizational stewardship) and spiritual grounding. The results support that servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding have high internal validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha > .90), while subscales Persuasive mapping and organizational stewardship have moderately high reliability (Cronbach's alpha > .80) and subscales Altruistic calling, emotional healing, and wisdom have moderate reliability (Cronbach's alpha > .70) (Table 4).

Table 4

Cronbach's Alpha, Means, and Standard Deviations for Servant Leadership Practice, its Subscales, and Spiritual Grounding

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	M	SD
Servant Leadership Practice	23	.928	13.52	2.72
Altruistic calling	4	.739	11.67	2.80
Emotional healing	4	.797	11.52	3.01
Wisdom	5	.782	15.51	3.34
Persuasive mapping	5	.812	14.36	3.58
Organizational stewardship	5	.828	14.53	3.84
Spiritual grounding	10	.956	4.73	1.24

The mean for servant leadership practice is 13.52 ($SD = 2.72$); altruistic calling is 11.67 ($SD = 2.80$); emotional healing is 11.52 ($SD = 3.01$); wisdom is 15.51 ($SD = 3.34$); persuasive mapping is 14.36 ($SD = 3.58$); and organizational stewardship is 14.53 ($SD = 3.84$). The mean spiritual grounding is 4.73 ($SD = 1.24$) (Table 4).

Regression Analysis

H_1: There is a relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

A regression analysis was conducted to determine whether spiritual grounding predicts servant leadership practice. $R^2 = .156$, indicating that 15.60% of the variance in servant leadership practice is explained by spiritual grounding. Spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B = .86; $p < .001$) (Table 5).

Table 5

Regression Analysis: Servant Leadership Practice and Spiritual Grounding

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	9.44	.67	8.12	10.76	< .001
Spiritual Grounding	.86	.14	.59	1.13	< .001

Note. $N = 217$; Dependent variable: servant leadership practice; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.96, so the assumption about the independence of observations has been met. Maximum Cook's distance is .11 < 1, so the assumption is that there are no significant outliers. Figure 1 shows that regression-standardized residuals are approximately normally distributed, so the assumption has been met.

Figure 1

Regression-Standardized Residuals: Spiritual Grounding and Servant Leadership Practice
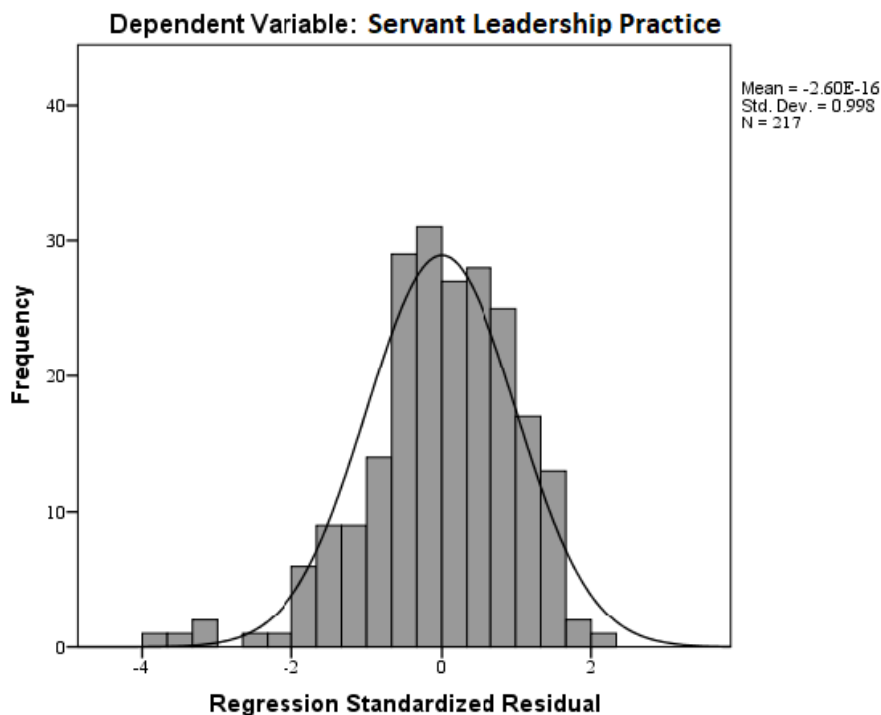
H₀: There is no relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

This result rejects the null hypothesis (H$_0$) that there is no relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

H₂: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

Multiple regression analysis showed a complex relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding. While personal experiences ("The Self") and an unspecified category ("Other") were significant negative predictors of spiritual grounding ($B = -1.46$, $p < .001$; $B = -1.91$, $p = .004$, respectively), sacred books or texts did not significantly predict spiritual grounding ($B = 1.11$, $p = .065$). This suggests that while some authoritative sources may detract from spiritual grounding, others may potentially support it, though not significantly in this study. This hypothesis is partially supported but with limitations. (Table 6).

Table 6

*Regression Analysis: Authoritative Sources and Spiritual Grounding*

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	4.93	.08	4.78	5.09	< .001
Sacred Books or Texts	1.11	.59	-.07	2.29	.065
The U.S. Constitution	-.40	.73	-1.84	1.04	.581
Personal Experiences – "The Self"	-1.46	.34	-2.14	-.78	< .001
Customs or Cultural Traditions – Ethnic or Indigenous	-.18	.67	-1.49	1.14	.793
Codes of Conduct	-.42	.43	-1.26	.43	.331
Other	-1.91	.66	-3.20	-.61	.004
Participants do not draw guidance from any source	-2.41	.55	-3.48	-1.33	< .001

Note. $N = 217$; Dependent variable: spiritual grounding; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The Durbin-Watson statistic is 2.16, confirming that the assumption regarding the independence of observations has been met. Maximum Cook's distance is 0.58, which is less than 1, indicating no significant outliers. Figure 2 shows that regression-standardized residuals are not approximately normally distributed. According to the Central Limit Theorem, for $n = 217 > 30$, residuals approximate a normal distribution, so the assumption has been met. The VIF for all variables is less than 5, so the assumption that there is no multicollinearity has been met.

Figure 2

Regression-Standardized Residuals: Authoritative Sources and Spiritual Grounding

Dependent Variable: Spiritual Grounding

Mean = -S.23E-16
Std. Dev. = 0.984
N = 217
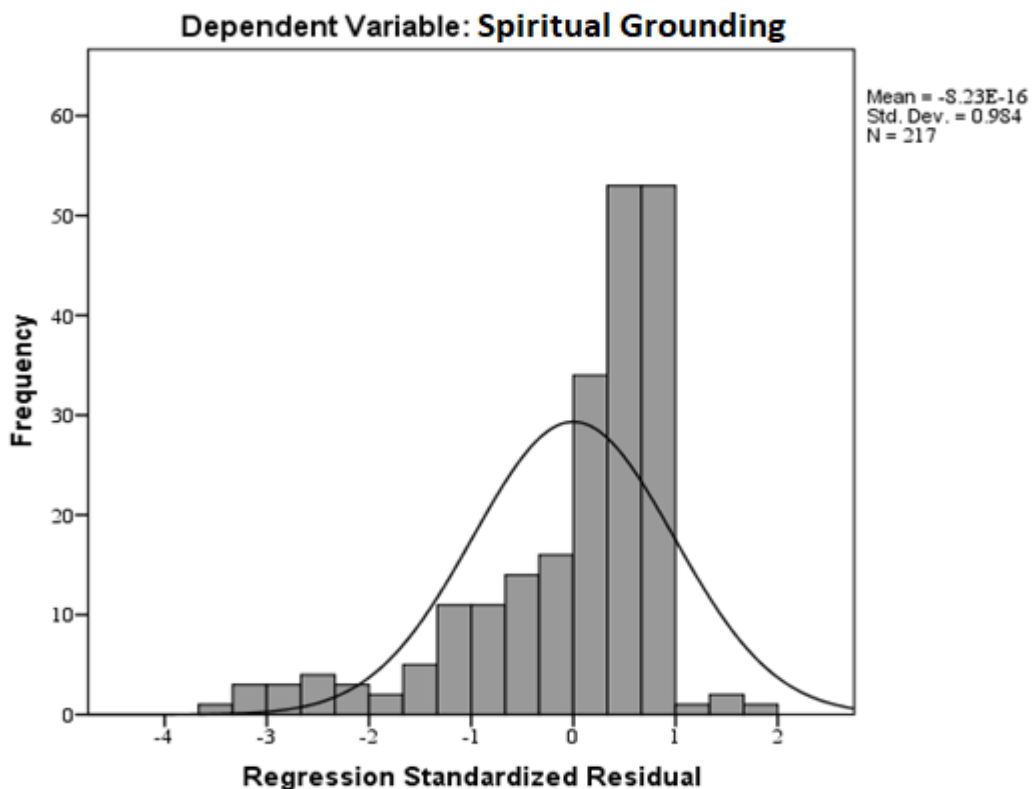
H_0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

The null hypothesis is partially supported, but it has limitations. The results rejected the null hypothesis for authoritative sources with a significant negative relationship with spiritual grounding but not for those that do not have a significant relationship. The results suggest that while certain authoritative sources can negatively influence spiritual grounding, others do not have a significant impact. It indicates that the influence of authoritative sources on spiritual grounding varies depending on the type of source and is not uniform.

H_3: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritative sources (Sacred Books or Texts, The U.S. Constitution, Personal Experiences – "The Self," Customs or

Cultural Traditions – Ethnic or Indigenous, Codes of Conduct, Other, and Participants do not

draw guidance from any source) predict servant leadership practice. $R^2 = .040$, indicating that

only 4.00% of the variance in servant leadership practice is explained by authoritative sources

Table 7

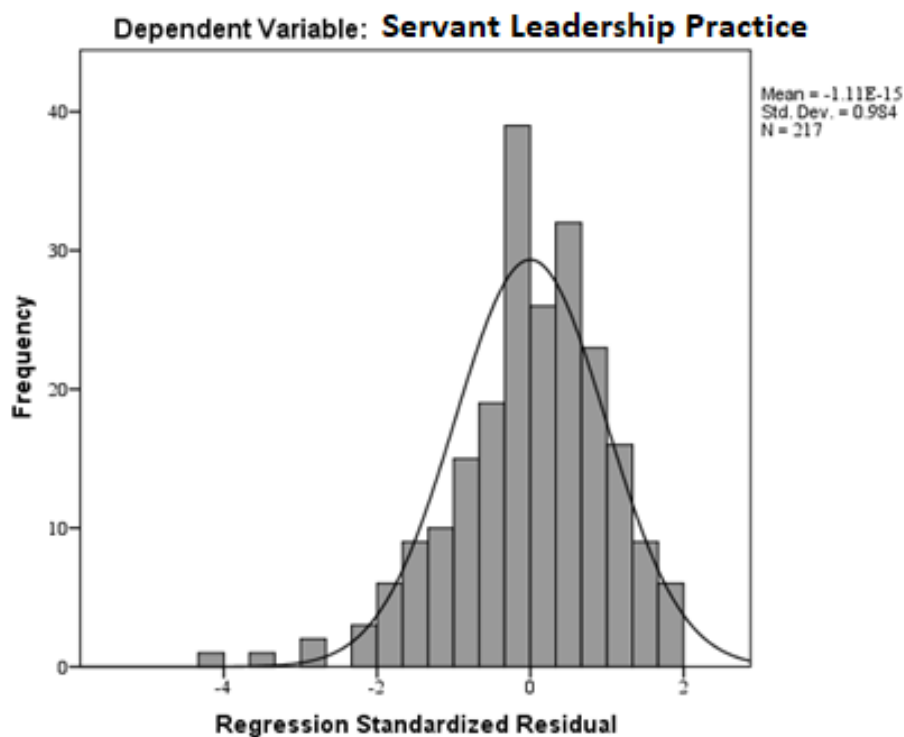*Regression Analysis: Authoritative Sources and Servant Leadership Practice*

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	13.62	.19	13.24	14.01	< .001
Sacred Books or Texts	2.61	1.50	-.35	5.57	.084
The U.S. Constitution	.13	1.83	-3.48	3.74	.943
Personal Experiences – "The Self"	-.92	.86	-2.61	.78	.290
Customs or Cultural Traditions – Ethnic or Indigenous	.48	1.67	-2.80	3.76	.774
Codes of Conduct	-.88	1.07	-2.99	1.23	.410
Other	.42	1.65	-2.83	3.68	.798
Participants do not draw guidance from any source	-2.42	1.37	-5.12	.27	.078

Note. $N = 217$; Dependent variable: servant leadership practice; CI = confidence interval; LL =

lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.92, indicating that the assumption of independence of

observations has been met. Additionally, the maximum Cook's distance is .24, which is less than

1, suggesting that there are no significant outliers. Figure 3 shows that regression-standardized

residuals are not approximately normally distributed. According to the Central Limit Theorem,

for n = 217 > 30, residuals approximate a normal distribution, therefore the assumption has been

met. The VIF for all variables is less than 5, therefore the assumption that there is no

multicollinearity has been met.

Figure 3

Regression Standardized Residuals: Authoritative Sources and Servant Leadership Practice

H_0: There is no relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

The analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between any of the authoritative sources and servant leadership practice, with all p-values above 05 (Table 7). Consequently, the data did not provide sufficient evidence to support Hypothesis 3, and the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice stands.

H_4: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice. $R^2 = .159$, indicating that 15.90% of the variance in servant leadership practice is explained by spiritual grounding and authoritative

sources. Spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B = .93; p < .001). In Table 8, authoritative sources are non-significant positive predictors of servant leadership practice (B = .51; p = .386).

Table 8

Regression Analysis: Servant Leadership Practice, Spiritual Grounding, and Authoritative Sources

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	9.07	.79	7.49	10.63	< .001
Spiritual grounding	.93	.16	.62	.62	< .001
Authoritative sources	.51	.59	-.65	-.65	.386

Note. N = 217; Dependent variable: Servant Leadership Practice; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.83. Thus, the assumption about the independence of observations has been met. Maximum Cook's distance is .11 < 1, so the assumption is that there are no significant outliers. Figure 4 shows that regression-standardized residuals are not approximately normally distributed. Therefore, the assumption has not been met. According to the Central Limit Theorem, for n = 217 > 30, residuals approximate a normal distribution, so the assumption has been met. All variance inflation factors (VIF) are less than 5; therefore, the assumption that there is no multicollinearity has been met.

Figure 4

Regression Standardized Residuals: Servant Leadership Practice, Spiritual Grounding, and Authoritative Sources
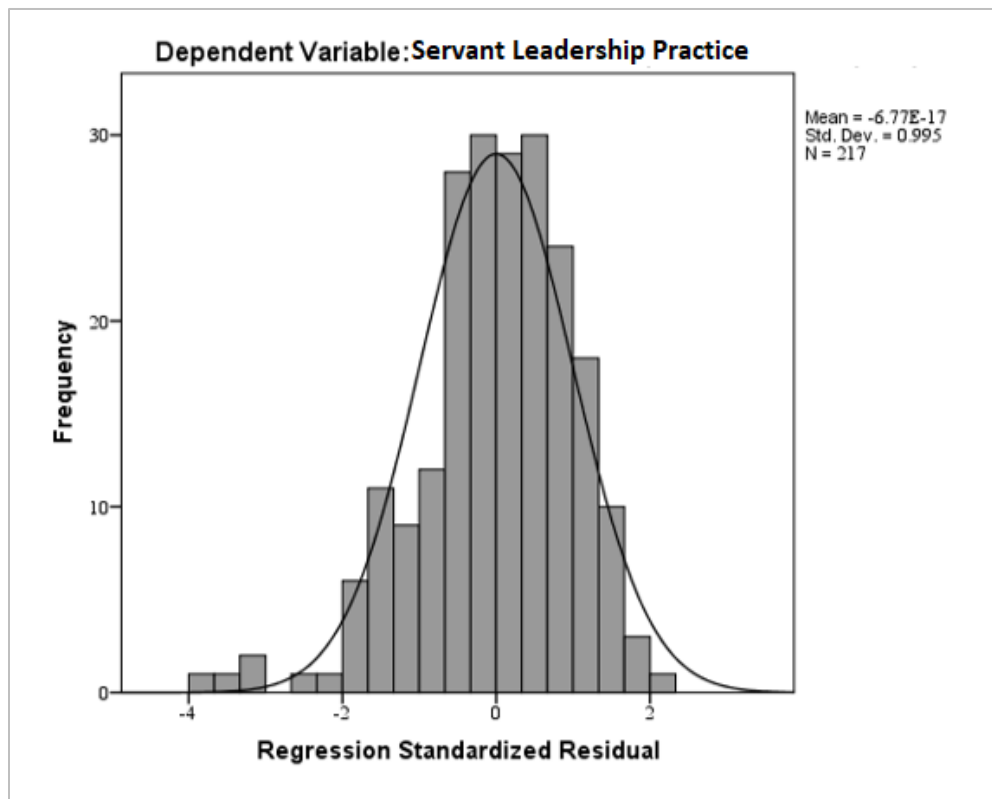
H₀: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources do not predict servant leadership practice

The null hypothesis is rejected in part. Based on the data, spiritual grounding significantly predicts servant leadership practice, but authoritative sources do not.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the relationship, direction, and strength of spiritual grounding in each of the servant leadership practice subscales (Altruistic calling, Emotional healing, Wisdom, Persuasive mapping, Organizational stewardship). The results indicate a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice $r(217) = .39$, $p < .001$. As servant leadership practice increases, spiritual

grounding also increases. This finding rejects the null hypothesis (H_0) that there is no relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

The results below indicate a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and altruistic calling $r(217) = .32, p < .001$. As altruistic calling increases, spiritual grounding also increases (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Scatter plot between Spiritual grounding and Altruistic Calling
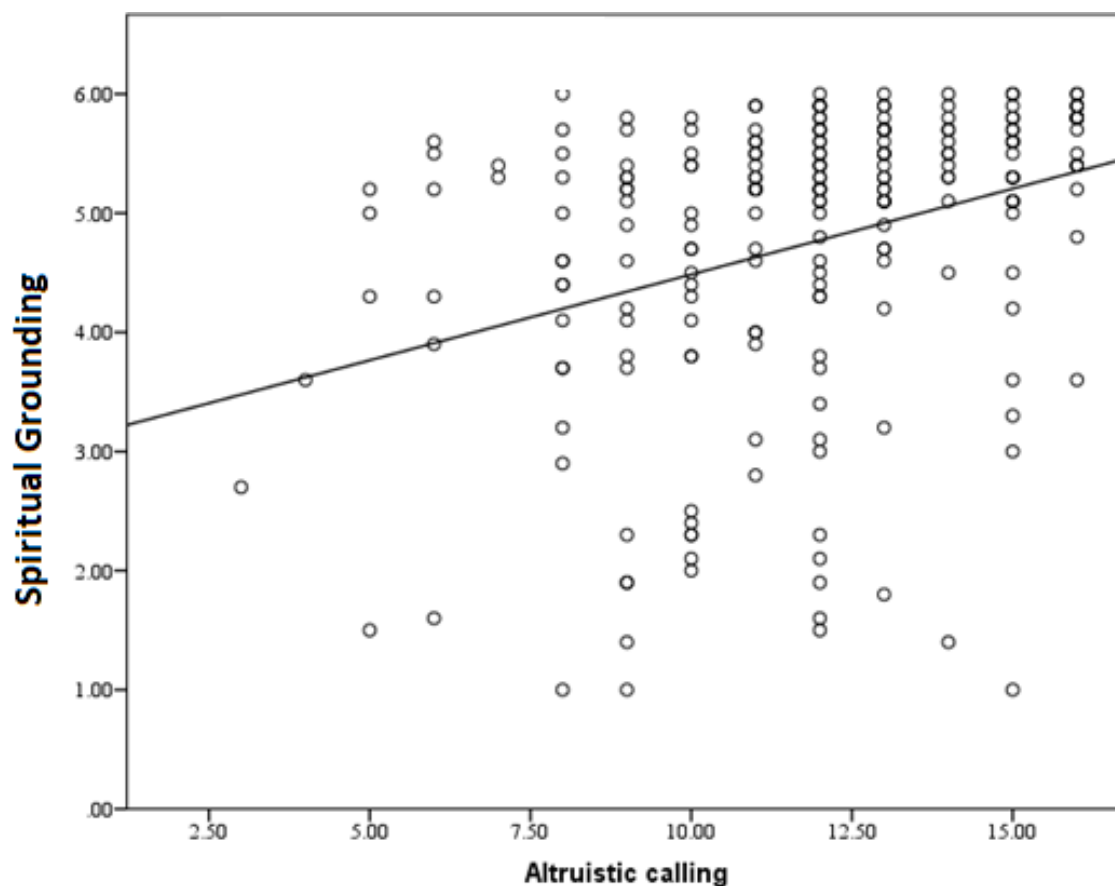
The scatter plot shows the relationship between altruistic calling and spiritual grounding. The x-axis shows the altruistic calling subscale, while the y-axis shows spiritual grounding.

The results below indicate a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and emotional healing, $r(217) = .46$, $p < .001$. As emotional healing increases, spiritual grounding also increases (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Scatter plot between Spiritual Grounding and Emotional Healing

The scatter plot shows the relationship between emotional healing and spiritual grounding.

The results below indicate a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and wisdom $r(217) = .19$, $p = .006$. As wisdom increases, spiritual grounding also increases (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Scatter plot between Spiritual Grounding Scale and Wisdom
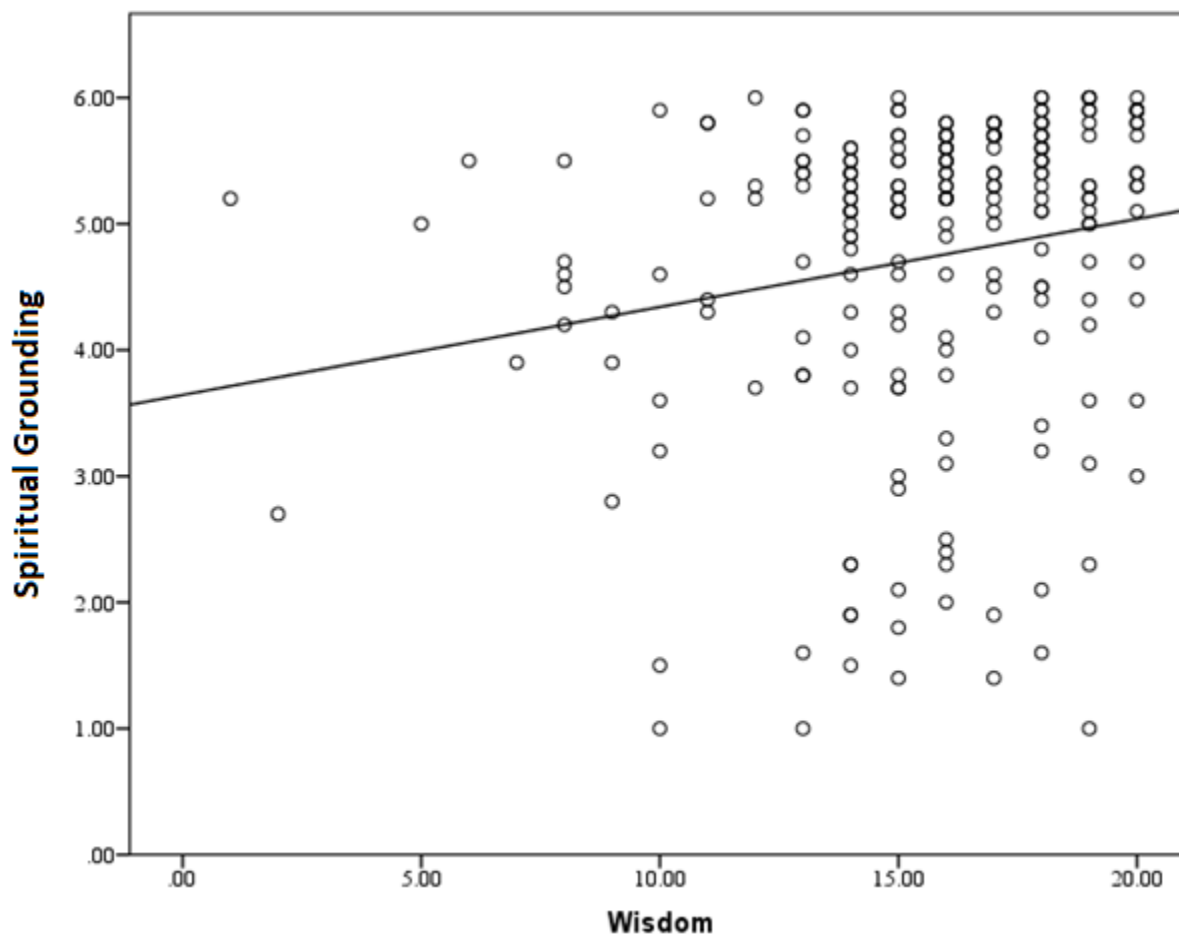
The scatter plot shows the relationship between wisdom and spiritual grounding.

Figure 9 below indicates a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and persuasive mapping, $r(217) = .25$, $p < .001$. As persuasive mapping increases, spiritual grounding also increases (Figure 8).

Figure 8

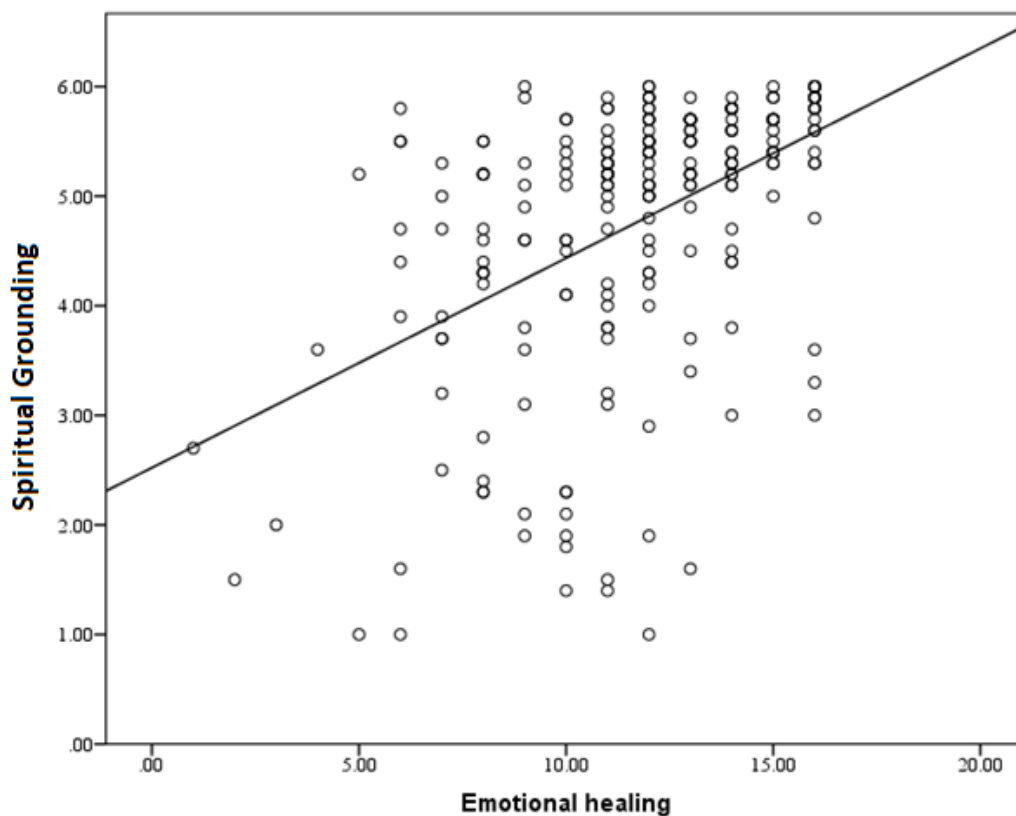*Scatter plot between Spiritual grounding and Persuasive Mapping*
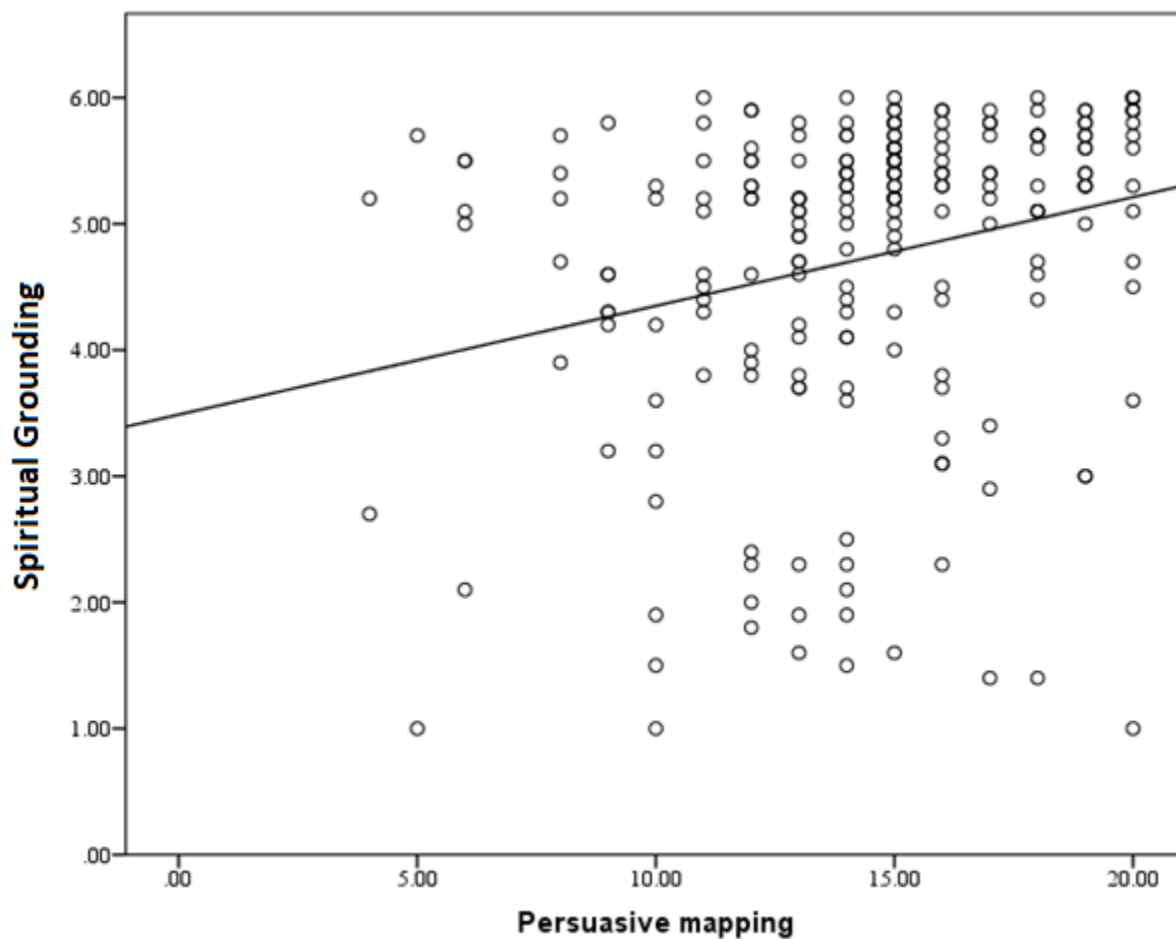
The scatter plot shows the relationship between persuasive mapping and spiritual grounding.

The scatter plot for the final subscale below indicates a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and organizational stewardship, $r(217) = .40, p < .001$ (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Scatter plot between Spiritual Grounding and Organizational Stewardship
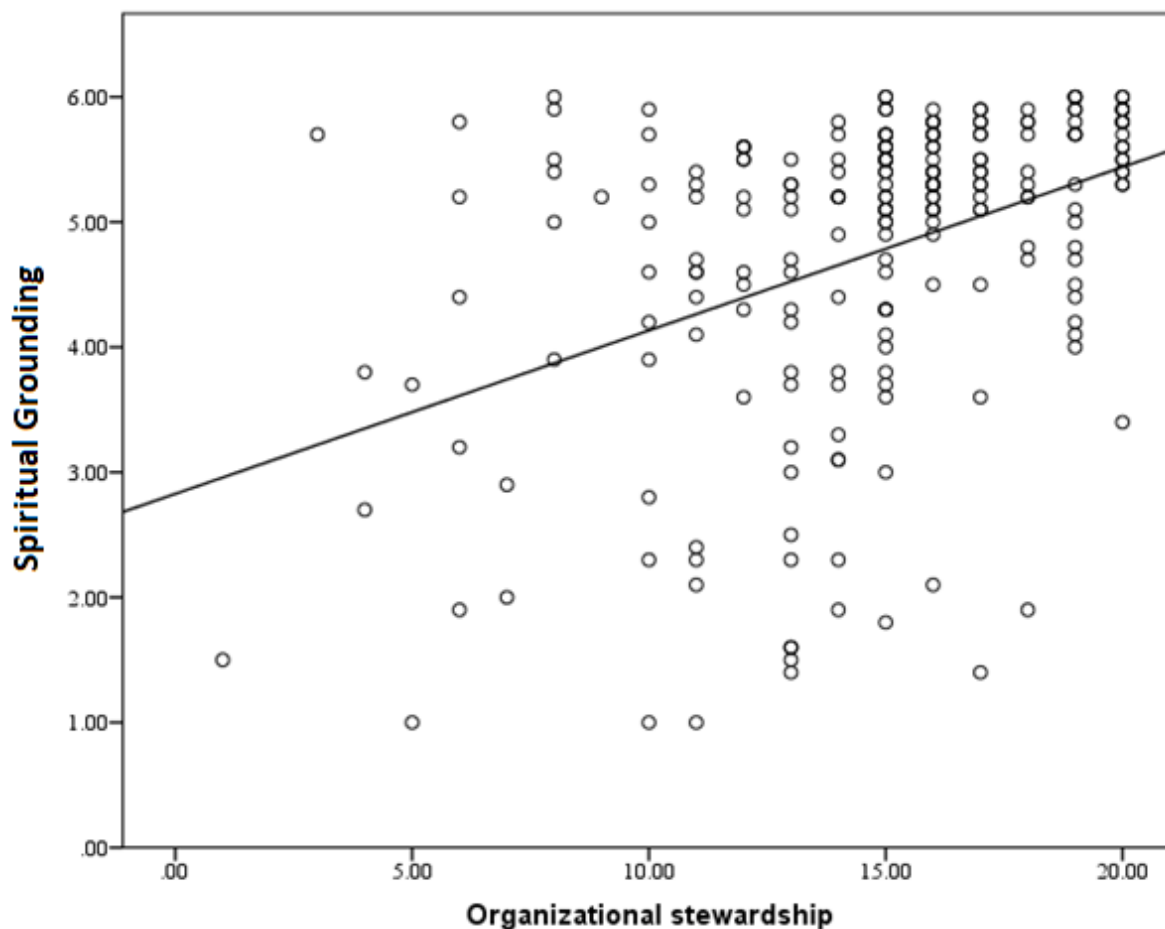
The scatter plot shows the relationship between organizational stewardship and spiritual grounding.

The Pearson correlation coefficient analysis results further reinforce the positive relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice, as higher levels of spiritual grounding were associated with increased scores on each of the servant leadership subscales.

The scatter plot below (Figure 10) shows the relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding. The x-axis shows the servant leadership practice subscale, while the y-axis shows spiritual grounding.

Figure 10

Scatter plot between Spiritual Grounding and Servant Leadership Practice
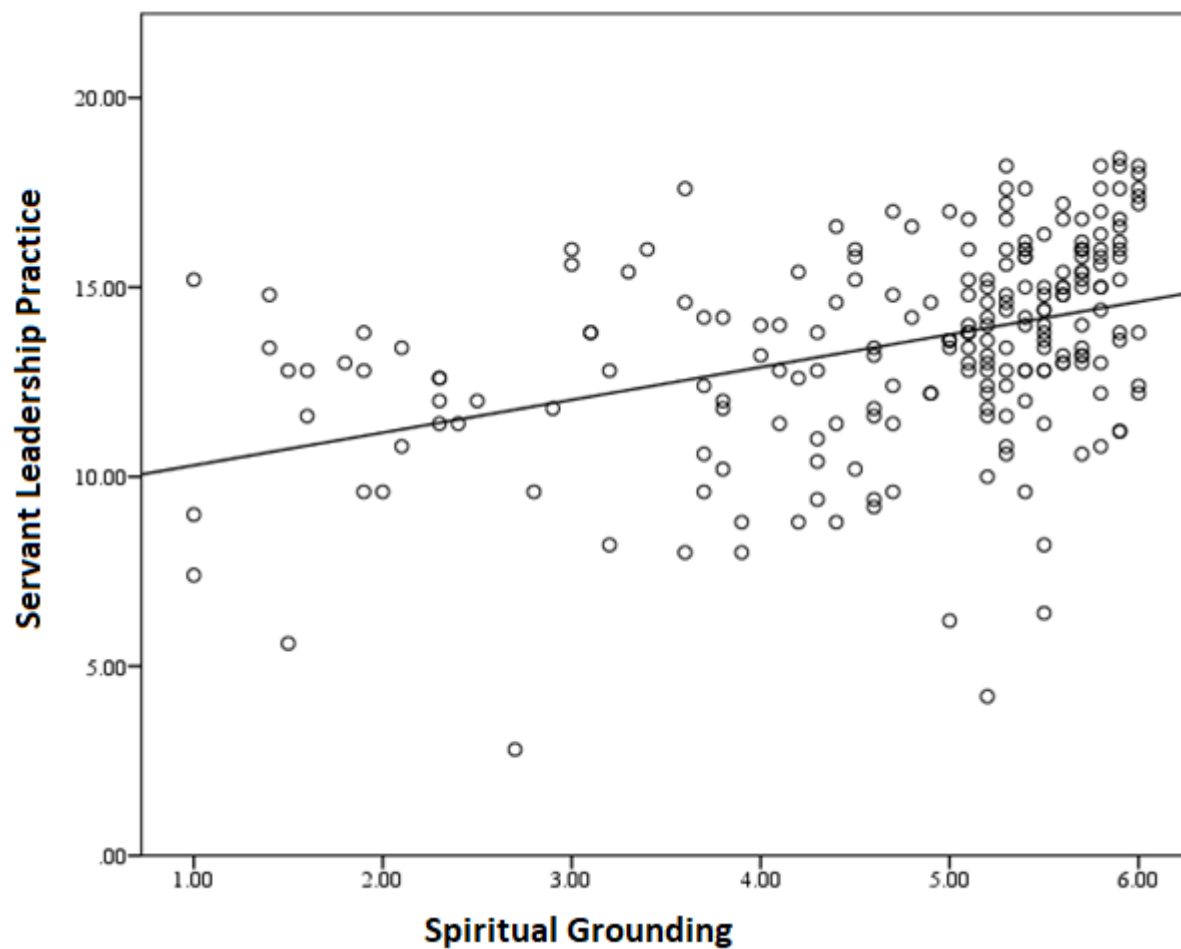
As Organizational stewardship increases, spiritual grounding also increases (Table 9).

Table 9

Correlations between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. servant leadership practice	1						
2. Altruistic calling	.78***	1					
3. Emotional healing	.85***	.60***	1				
4. Wisdom	.82***	.58***	.59***	1			
5. Persuasive mapping	.83***	.55***	.66***	.61***	1		
6. Organizational stewardship	.82***	.55***	.65***	.56***	.54***	1	
7. spiritual grounding	.39***	.32***	.46***	.19***	.25***	.40***	1

Note. *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$
Moderation analysis

Moderation analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritative sources mediated the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. The results indicated that authoritative sources were a non-significant negative predictor of spiritual grounding ($B = -1.31$, $p = .172$), and the interaction between servant leadership practice and authoritative sources was a non-significant negative predictor of spiritual grounding ($B = -.03$, $p = .729$). Therefore, authoritative sources did not significantly mediate the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. (Table 10).

Table 10

Moderation Analysis: Servant Leadership Practice, Authoritative Sources, and Spiritual Grounding

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	2.82	.39	2.05	3.58	< .001
Servant Leadership Practice	.16	.03	.10	.21	< .001
Authoritative sources	-1.31	.95	-3.18	.57	.172
Servant Leadership practice* Authoritative sources	-.03	.07	-.17	.12	.729

Note. N = 217; Dependent variable: spiritual grounding; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Similarly, when examining the potential mediating role of authoritative sources on the relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding, the results showed that authoritative sources were a non-significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B = 1.90, p = .209), and the interaction between spiritual grounding and authoritative sources was a non-significant negative predictor of spiritual grounding (B = -.39, p = .318). Consequently, authoritative sources did not significantly mediate the relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding. (Table 11).

Table 11

Moderation Analysis: Servant Leadership Practice, Authoritative Sources, and Spiritual Grounding

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	*UL*	
Constant	8.69	.88	6.98	10.42	< .001
Spiritual Grounding	1.00	.17	.66	1.35	< .001
Authoritative sources	1.90	1.51	-1.07	4.88	.209
Spiritual Grounding * Authoritative sources	-.39	.39	-1.19	.39	.318

Note. N = 217; Dependent variable: servant leadership practice; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Research Results: Questions and Hypotheses

What impact does spiritual grounding have on the practice of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.?

Spiritual grounding has a significant positive impact on the practice of servant leadership. The regression analysis indicates that spiritual grounding is a significant predictor of servant leadership practice (B = .86; p < .001), explaining 15.60% of the variance in servant leadership practice. This suggests that leaders with higher levels of spiritual grounding are more likely to exhibit servant leadership behaviors.

What is the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources?

The relationship between servant leadership and spiritual grounding is significant and positive, indicating that spiritual grounding supports servant leadership practice. However, the relationship between servant leadership and reliance on authoritative sources is not significant.

Authoritative sources do not predict servant leadership practice (B = .51; p = .386), suggesting that while they may influence an individual's spiritual perspective, they are not directly associated with the practice of servant leadership.

Do spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources serve as foundational elements for servant leadership practice?

Spiritual grounding serves as a foundational element for servant leadership practice, as evidenced by its positive relationship with servant leadership behaviors. In contrast, reliance on authoritative sources does not serve as a foundational element for servant leadership practice, given the non-significant predictive relationship. This indicates that spiritual grounding is more critical to the development and practice of servant leadership than reliance on authoritative sources.

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

Regression analysis indicated that spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B=.86; p<.001). This suggests that spiritual grounding has a connection to servant leadership practice, as an increase in spiritual grounding is associated with an increase in servant leadership practice.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

Partially supported with limitations. Multiple regression analysis shows that while personal experiences ("The Self") and the unspecified category ("Other") are significant negative predictors of spiritual grounding, other authoritative sources like sacred books or texts do not significantly predict spiritual grounding. The moderation analysis also supported that authoritative sources do not significantly mediate the relationship between servant leadership

practice and spiritual grounding (B=1.90, p=.209). Therefore, the results partially support this hypothesis but with limitations.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

This hypothesis is not supported. Moderation analysis indicates that authoritative sources are a non-significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B=1.90, p=.209), suggesting no significant relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

Hypothesis 4: Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice.

This hypothesis is partially supported. Spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B = .93; p < .001), while authoritative sources are a non-significant positive predictor (B = .51; p = .386). This indicates that spiritual grounding contributes to predicting servant leadership practice, but authoritative sources do not.

Summary of Results

Based on the preceding presentation and summary of the data generated by the study, the results/conclusions are as follows (Appendix F):

1. Spiritual grounding positively impacts servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S. Higher levels of spiritual grounding are associated with an increased inclination to exhibit servant leadership behaviors.

2. Authoritative sources are not a foundation for spiritual grounding, as they do not significantly mediate the relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding.

3. The relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources is complex. This indicates that spiritual grounding plays a more crucial role in fostering servant leadership behaviors than reliance on authoritative sources.

4. Unlike authoritative sources, spiritual grounding serves as a foundational element for servant leadership practice, evidenced by its positive relationship with servant leadership practice.

Chapter 5 will summarize the study's results, highlighting a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership, with spiritual grounding serving as a foundational element. This correlation extends across servant leadership subscales such as altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship, reinforcing spiritual grounding's role in servant leadership. The study also found that authoritative sources do not significantly mediate the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual grounding, nor is there a significant relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice. This still leaves a substantial portion unexplained. This points to the complexity of servant leadership and suggests the influence of other unexamined factors. These results pave the way for future research to identify additional predictors of servant leadership, emphasizing the need to consider a wider array of influences, including personal traits, organizational influences, and external factors. The final chapter will further discuss these results and propose directions for future research to deepen the understanding of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Overview

This final chapter provides a complete discussion of the results, overall conclusions, implications for professional practice, and recommendations for implementation or further research. It begins with a summary of the study's major results, followed by an analysis of the results in relation to the reviewed literature from Chapter 2. The chapter concludes by articulating the research purpose, implications for practice, leadership, and research, recommendations for future studies, and providing a transition to the broader discourse in the field. The discussion will focus on the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice among senior executives in U.S. publicly traded companies, the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources, and whether spiritual grounding or relying on authoritative sources is foundational for servant leadership.

Summary of Study

This dissertation investigates the influence of spiritual grounding on the practice of servant leadership among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S. The study also examines the relationships between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources, investigating whether spiritual grounding and authoritative sources serve as foundational elements for servant leadership practice. The research is presented across five chapters, with Chapter 1 providing an introduction, background information, purpose, approach, significance, delimitations, limitations, and key terms. Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, focusing on the theories and research related to spirituality, servant leadership, other leadership theories, and authoritative sources. Chapter 3 outlines the study

design, including the methodology, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures, employing a quantitative research design utilizing a survey as the primary data collection method.

Chapter 4 presents and summarizes the study's data, aligning the results with the research questions and hypotheses. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice, suggesting that leaders with higher levels of spiritual grounding are more likely to exhibit servant leadership behaviors. The multiple regression analysis revealed that spiritual grounding and authoritative sources explained 15.9% of the variance in servant leadership practice ($R^2 = .159$), indicating that a substantial portion of the variance remained unexplained by these two variables.

The results showed that spiritual grounding was a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice, while authoritative sources were not a significant predictor. The study also reveals a complex relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding, with some sources negatively influencing spiritual grounding while others have no significant impact. Additionally, the results suggest that there is no significant relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the study's results, addressing the limitations and delimitations of the research and providing recommendations for future research, highlighting the importance of nurturing spirituality among leaders to foster servant leadership behaviors and the need for organizations to support the spiritual growth of their leaders.

Figure 11 on the next page, through a moderation analysis that was conducted to determine whether authoritative sources mediate the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice, illustrates the relationships between the variables and how they

are linked to one another. The arrows in the model show the relationships between variables. In this representation, the mediating variable (Authoritative Sources) is placed between the independent variable (Spiritual Grounding) and the dependent variable (Servant Leadership). However, the arrow connecting the mediating variable to the dependent variable is not significant, indicating that the mediating variable does not have a significant influence on the dependent variable. This visual representation conveys that while the mediating variable is present in the pathway, it does not play a significant role in influencing the dependent variable.

Figure 21

Relationship Between Variables

The Influence of Spiritual Grounding and the Role of Authoritative Sources on Servant Leadership Practice among Senior Executives in Publicly Traded Companies in the U.S

Independent Variable — Mediating Variable — Dependent Variable

Spiritual Grounding (SPS) → Servant Leadership (SLQ)
Altruistic calling
Emotional healing
Wisdom
Persuasive mapping
Organizational stewardship

Authoritative Sources
Sacred texts
Constitution
Personal experiences
Cultural traditions
Codes of conduct

(No significant effect)

Summary of Major Results

Research Question 1

What impact does spiritual grounding have on the practice of servant leadership in publicly traded companies in the U.S.?

The results suggest that spiritual grounding significantly influences servant leadership practice in U.S. publicly traded companies. This finding aligns with the literature that highlights the importance of spirituality in shaping leadership approaches and organizational culture (Ebener, 2010; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Wallace, 2007). Senior executives with a strong spiritual grounding are more likely to exhibit servant leadership behaviors. This suggests that spirituality plays a positive role in shaping and fostering servant leadership practices among leaders in these organizations. The regression analysis showed that spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B = 0.86, p < 0.001), explaining 15.6% of the variance. This result aligns with Freeman's (2011) literature, which suggests that spirituality can foster behaviors associated with servant leadership.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and reliance on authoritative sources?

The study also found that the relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding is complex and nuanced. While some authoritative sources, such as personal experiences ("The Self") and the unspecified category ("Other"), were found to be significant negative predictors of spiritual grounding, others, like sacred books or texts, did not significantly predict spiritual grounding. This suggests that the influence of authoritative sources on spiritual grounding varies depending on the type of source, challenging assumptions about the universal

impact of authoritative sources on spirituality (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Wallace, 2007). This indicates that spiritual grounding plays a more crucial role in fostering servant leadership behaviors than reliance on authoritative sources among executives in publicly traded U.S. companies. Furthermore, the study did not find a significant relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice. This finding suggests that while authoritative sources may influence an individual's spiritual perspective, they do not directly translate into servant leadership behaviors. This result highlights the need for further investigation into the factors that contribute to the development and practice of servant leadership in organizational settings (Liden et al., 2014; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Research Question 3

Do spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources serve as foundational elements for servant leadership practice?

The results support that while spiritual grounding and reliance on authoritative sources can enhance and support servant leadership, together, they are not foundations for servant leadership. Spiritual grounding serves as a foundational element for servant leadership practice, as evidenced by its significant positive relationship. However, reliance on authoritative sources does not serve as a foundational element, given the non-significant predictive relationship with servant leadership practice. The moderation analysis revealed that authoritative sources did not significantly predict spiritual grounding (B = -1.31, p = .172), and the interaction between servant leadership practice and authoritative sources was not a significant predictor of spiritual grounding (B = -.03, p = .729). These results suggest that authoritative sources do not play a significant role in mediating the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. The statistical analysis performed to assess the influence of various authoritative

sources on servant leadership practice found that authoritative sources collectively account for 4% of the variability in the servant leadership practice scores among the participants in the study. This low percentage indicates that while there is some degree of association between the authoritative sources and servant leadership practice scores, the majority of the variance in servant leadership practice scores is not explained by the authoritative sources outlined. In other words, other factors not included in the regression model are responsible for the remaining 96% of the variability in servant leadership practice scores.

Hypothesis 1

There is a relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice.

Result: The regression analysis reveals that spiritual grounding significantly predicts servant leadership practice scores (B=.86; p<.001) and R_2 = .156, indicating that 15.6% of the variance in servant leadership practice is explained by spiritual grounding. Therefore, spiritual grounding is indeed foundational for servant leadership practice.

Comparison to Literature: The result of this hypothesis aligns with the literature that suggests a strong link between an individual's spiritual perspective and their capacity for servant leadership. Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) examined the philosophical foundation of servant leadership, drawing from the principles outlined by Greenleaf (1970) and the teachings of Jesus Christ, and found that spiritual grounding can be a strong foundation for servant leadership practice. This idea is further supported by Fry's (2003) model of spiritual leadership, which argues that leaders who incorporate spirituality into their leadership style can create a more engaging and purposeful work environment, leading to increased employee well-being, organizational commitment, and performance. Sendjaya et al. (2008) developed a conceptual model that integrates the principles of servant leadership with spiritual leadership, suggesting

that servant leadership is a manifestation of spiritual leadership as it emphasizes the importance

of serving others and creating a sense of meaning and purpose in the workplace, reinforcing the

idea that spiritual grounding is closely related to servant leadership practice.

Furthermore, Khan et al. (2015) investigated the impact of servant leadership on workplace

spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior in the Pakistani corporate sector. The study

found that servant leadership positively influences workplace spirituality, which in turn promotes

organizational citizenship behavior, highlighting the potential of spiritually grounded leadership

approaches to foster positive organizational outcomes.

These studies, along with the current research results, provide compelling evidence for

the strong relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. The literature

consistently demonstrates that leaders who incorporate spirituality into their leadership approach

are more likely to exhibit servant leadership behaviors, creating a more engaging, purposeful,

and positive work environment.

Hypothesis 2

There is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding.

Result: While some authoritative sources negatively impact spiritual grounding, others do

not have a significant effect, indicating a complex and nuanced relationship between these

variables. The results suggest that while authoritative sources can influence spiritual grounding,

the nature of this influence varies depending on the type of source. Therefore, the results

partially support Hypothesis 2 but with limitations, as the relationship between authoritative

sources and spiritual grounding is complex and nuanced. Personal experiences ("The Self") and

the unspecified category ("Other") are significant negative predictors of spiritual grounding,

which would lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis for these specific authoritative sources.

Sacred books or texts, the U.S. Constitution, customs or cultural traditions, and codes of conduct are not significant predictors of spiritual grounding, which would lead to the acceptance of the null hypothesis for these specific authoritative sources. Additionally, the moderation analysis indicated that authoritative sources did not significantly mediate the relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding (B = 1.90, p = .209). Therefore, the results partially support Hypothesis 2 but with limitations, as the relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding is complex and nuanced.

Comparison to Literature: While personal experiences and self-discovery were found to negatively predict spiritual grounding, aligning with Zinnbauer et al. (1997), sacred texts did not significantly influence spiritual grounding, potentially serving as starting points for personal reflection rather than direct influences (Streib & Hood, 2015). This resonates with Pargament et al.'s (1988) proposition that individuals draw upon multiple sources of authority, including personal experiences, cultural traditions, and religious texts, leading to diverse spiritual outcomes. Furthermore, the lack of a significant mediating effect of authoritative sources on the relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding is consistent with the emphasis on the multidimensional nature of servant leadership and the potential influence of various personal and contextual factors beyond authoritative sources (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019). Overall, these results contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the nuanced and context-dependent interplay between various sources of authority, personal experiences, and cultural contexts in shaping spiritual grounding and servant leadership practices. This finding challenges perspectives in the literature that might posit authoritative sources as essential for developing a spiritual perspective. Instead, the results indicate a more nuanced and complex relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding than

previously thought. Given the lack of existing literature explicitly supporting or refuting this hypothesis, the current study's results open up avenues for further exploration and research into the intricate interplay between authoritative sources and the development of spiritual perspectives.

Hypothesis 3:

There is a relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice.

Result: This hypothesis is not supported; the null hypothesis stands. The results of this study did not find a significant relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice, suggesting that reliance on authoritative sources does not directly translate into servant leadership behaviors. The multiple regression analysis revealed that authoritative sources explained only 4% of the variance in servant leadership practice, suggesting that authoritative sources are not strong predictors of servant leadership behavior. This finding highlights the need for further investigation into the factors that contribute to the development and practice of servant leadership in organizational settings. The analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between any of the authoritative sources and servant leadership practice, with all p-values above.05. Consequently, the data did not provide sufficient evidence to support this hypothesis.

Comparison to Literature: This result contradicts the hypothesis and supports literature acknowledging the interconnectedness of authoritative sources and servant leadership. The literature on the relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice is limited, and the results of this study contribute to the understanding of this relationship. This study suggests that certain authoritative sources, such as religious values, may have an indirect influence on servant leadership practice by shaping an individual's personal values and beliefs.

Hypothesis 4:

Spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice.

Result: This hypothesis is partially supported. The multiple regression analysis revealed that spiritual grounding and authoritative sources together explained 15.90% of the variance in servant leadership practice. Spiritual grounding was found to be a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice, while authoritative sources were a non-significant positive predictor. Based on these results, the null hypothesis was partially rejected, as spiritual grounding significantly predicted servant leadership practice, but authoritative sources did not.

Comparison to Literature: The finding that spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice aligns with the existing literature. Fry's (2003) model of spiritual leadership argues that leaders who incorporate spirituality into their leadership style can create a more engaging and purposeful work environment, leading to increased employee well-being, organizational commitment, and performance, supporting the idea that spiritual grounding is closely related to servant leadership practice. On the other hand, authoritative sources did not emerge as a significant predictor in the study, with a non-significant positive relationship observed. This suggests that while authoritative sources may inform an individual's values or ethical framework, they do not necessarily translate into servant leadership behaviors in the same way that a leader's spiritual grounding does. The lack of significant predictive power from authoritative sources indicates that servant leadership is more likely to be influenced by intrinsic spiritual values than external authoritative guidance. The study's results highlight the complexity of servant leadership practice and suggest that while spiritual grounding plays a crucial role, the influence of authoritative sources on leadership behaviors warrants further investigation to

understand the nuances of this relationship within the context of publicly traded companies in the U.S.

In summary, the research underscores the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S. While spiritual grounding emerges as a critical factor in developing servant leadership behaviors, the influence of authoritative sources on both spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice is more nuanced and warrants further investigation. This study contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of spiritual grounding and authoritative sources in the context of servant leadership, offering a foundation for future research in this area.

Analysis of Results: Literature Summary

The results of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on servant leadership by examining the relationships between spiritual grounding, servant leadership practice, and authoritative sources among senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S. The results align with and extend the existing literature in several ways. The significant positive relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice found in this study is consistent with the literature that highlights the importance of spirituality in shaping leadership approaches and organizational culture (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Wallace, 2007). This result supports this with a regression analysis showing that spiritual grounding predicts 15.60% of the variance in servant leadership practice, underpinning the idea that leaders who incorporate spirituality into their leadership style can create a more engaging and purposeful work environment, leading to increased employee well-being, organizational commitment, and performance (Fry, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008). The study also reinforces the concept that spiritual grounding can be a strong foundation for servant leadership practice, as suggested by

Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) and Ebener (2010). The concept of spiritual grounding in various contexts, such as adult education (English, 2008), healthcare (Giganti, 2002), and social activism (Sheridan), supports the idea that spiritual grounding serves as a valuable resource that provides individuals with a sense of purpose, meaning, and resilience, enabling them to navigate challenges and engage in their work with greater depth and integrity.

The complex and nuanced relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding found in this study extends the current understanding of how different sources of authority influence spiritual perspectives. The literature review discusses the role of authoritative sources in shaping spiritual grounding, with Zinnbauer et al. (1997) and Streib and Hood (2016) highlighting the diversity of sources relied upon, including traditional religious sources, personal experiences, and intuition. Pargament (2007) argues that sacred texts and religious traditions provide a structured framework for spiritual development. While the study found a complex relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding, with some sources negatively influencing spiritual grounding and others having no significant impact, the review suggests a more nuanced understanding of the role of authoritative sources in shaping spiritual perspectives. While some authoritative sources, such as personal experiences ("The Self") and the unspecified category ("Other"), were found to be significant negative predictors of spiritual grounding, others, like sacred books or texts, did not significantly predict spiritual grounding. This finding challenges assumptions about the universal impact of authoritative sources on spirituality (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Wallace, 2007) and highlights the need for a more nuanced approach to understanding the role of authoritative sources in shaping spiritual perspectives.

The lack of a significant relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice found in this study raises questions about the factors that contribute to the

development and practice of servant leadership in organizational settings. Graham (1991) argues that servant leadership is grounded in the teachings and principles found in various religious and philosophical traditions, suggesting that authoritative sources could potentially shape the adoption and practice of servant leadership; however, the study's results do not support this perspective. This finding suggests that the development of servant leadership behaviors may require more than just adherence to authoritative sources and that organizations should focus on providing training and mentoring programs that emphasize the core principles of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010) and create a culture that values and rewards servant leadership behaviors (Liden et al., 2014). The limited literature on the relationship between authoritative sources and servant leadership practice highlights the need for further research in this area. Additionally, the regression analysis conducted to determine if spiritual grounding and authoritative sources predict servant leadership practice revealed that these two variables together explained 15.9% of the variance in servant leadership practice, while authoritative sources alone explained only 4% of the variance in servant leadership practice.

Finally, the positive relationship between spirituality and servant leadership supports previous research that emphasizes the role of spirituality in fostering servant leadership behaviors (Spears, 1995; van Dierendonck et al., 2014). The high percentage of Christians among the study's participants suggests a notable influence of Christian beliefs on leadership practices within publicly traded companies in the U.S. This spiritual grounding in Christian values may encourage a servant leadership approach characterized by a focus on serving others and leading by example. The results highlight the potential impact of personal spiritual beliefs on professional leadership styles and organizational culture, underscoring the importance of

considering the role of spirituality in leadership development and practice (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

The literature review on publicly traded companies indirectly supports the study's results, particularly regarding the importance of ethical and socially responsible leadership practices, such as servant leadership, in the context of these organizations. The public's expectations of corporate responsibilities beyond legal obligations (Jennings, 2023), the pressure for public companies to demonstrate commitment to CSR principles (Barrese et al., 2020), the potential impact of organizational spirituality on long-term profitability (Quatro, 2002), and the financial consequences of unethical behavior (Gunthorpe, 1992) collectively underscore the relevance and value of servant leadership and spiritual grounding in publicly traded U.S. companies. While the purpose of having public companies as the target population was because they are meant to be demographically diverse and committed to equitable service, regardless of beliefs or religion., the study's sample was predominantly white/Caucasian (59.60%) and Christian (73.70%). This limitation in sample diversity may restrict the generalizability of the results to other ethnic and religious groups, and it highlights the need for future research to include a more diverse sample to better represent the intended characteristics of publicly traded companies. Although these studies do not directly address the specific relationships examined in the data analysis, they provide a contextual foundation that supports the importance of investigating the influence of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practices among senior executives in this organizational setting.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that spirituality plays a significant role in servant leadership practice among senior executives in publicly traded U.S. companies. Senior executives with a strong spiritual grounding are more likely to claim they exhibit servant

leadership behaviors. Additionally, we have supported that authoritative sources do not have a significant effect on servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding. This observation sets the stage for future research to study other potential predictors of servant leadership practice. It underscores the importance of considering a broader range of factors, possibly including personal characteristics, organizational culture, external environmental factors, and other leadership competencies, that may also play a significant role in shaping servant leadership behaviors.

Discussion of Implications

Implications for Practice: The results of this study suggest that organizations benefit from recognizing the importance of spirituality in leadership development programs. Providing opportunities for leaders to investigate and develop their spiritual beliefs and practices can contribute to the cultivation of servant leadership behaviors. Also, organizations can promote the adoption of servant leadership principles by creating a culture that values empathy, compassion, and service. This can be achieved through training programs, mentoring relationships, and the establishment of supportive organizational structures. Furthermore, incorporating spiritual practices, such as mindfulness or reflection exercises, into leadership development initiatives can enhance the effectiveness of servant leadership practices. Organizations can provide resources and support for leaders to engage in these practices.

Implications for Leadership: The research suggests that spiritual grounding is a significant positive predictor of servant leadership practice (B=.86, p<.001), supporting the hypothesis that spiritual grounding is a foundation for servant leadership practice. However, authoritative sources do not significantly mediate the relationship between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice, as indicated by the non-significant interaction between servant

leadership practice and authoritative sources (B=-.03, p=.729). The results imply that senior executives who have a strong spiritual grounding are more likely to engage in servant leadership practices, but relying on authoritative sources does not necessarily enhance this relationship. This insight agrees with the conclusions drawn from the study, emphasizing the importance of personal spiritual beliefs over external authoritative guidance in shaping servant leadership behaviors. Therefore, while the study provides valuable insights into the role of spiritual grounding in servant leadership practice, the limitations and potential extensions of the research design suggest that further investigation is needed to fully understand the complex dynamics between leadership, learning, and service in the context of publicly traded companies. When servant leaders integrate spirituality into their practices, it can cultivate a more inclusive and collaborative leadership culture. By recognizing the interconnectedness of spirituality and leadership, leaders can create a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, which can positively influence their followers and organizational outcomes. Leaders who practice servant leadership and incorporate spiritual principles are likely to experience personal growth and fulfillment. This can lead to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and overall well-being.

Research Audience: This research is aimed at academic researchers who specialize in leadership, organizational behavior, and spirituality. Those who are seeking a connection between spiritual grounding and servant leadership among senior executives, as well as researchers who are interested in leadership styles and workplace spirituality, will find this research particularly interesting. For practitioners and consultants in the fields of leadership development and executive coaching, the results could provide valuable insights into factors that influence servant leadership behaviors, which could then be used to inform training and development programs for executives. Senior executives, particularly those in public companies,

would benefit from the study results in shaping their view of servant leadership and their

perception of leadership practices, executive development, talent management, and growth. The

study would also interest organizational and leadership psychologists who are interested in

understanding the backgrounds of servant leadership and the factors that may motivate altruistic

and ethical leader behaviors. Scholars in religious studies and theology who wish to examine the

connections between spirituality, authoritative sources, and leadership would also find this

research useful.

Implications for Research

Future research may investigate the long-term effects of spirituality on servant leadership

practice and organizational outcomes. Longitudinal studies can offer valuable insights into the

effectiveness and long-term sustainability of leadership practices that incorporate spirituality.

New instruments may need to be developed, or current ones may need to be updated to support

the evolving nature of leadership and spirituality. Further investigation is needed to examine the

mechanisms through which spirituality influences servant leadership behaviors. Qualitative

studies can examine the personal experiences and narratives of leaders who practice servant

leadership and investigate the role of spirituality in their leadership journey. Research may also

investigate the potential challenges and barriers to integrating spirituality into leadership

practices. Understanding the factors that enable or hamper the adoption of spiritual principles can

inform the development of effective interventions and strategies.

Limitations and Delimitations Summary

Limitations

1. Sample Diversity: The sample is predominantly White/Caucasian (59.60%) and Christian (73.70%), which may limit the generalizability of the results to other ethnic and religious groups.

2. Cross-sectional Design: The study design is cross-sectional (collected at one point in time), which limits the ability to infer causality between spiritual grounding, authoritative sources, and servant leadership practice.

Delimitations

3. Self-Report Measures: The use of self-report measures (SLQ and SPS questionnaires) can introduce bias, as participants may respond in socially desirable ways.

4. Limited Variance Explained: Due to limitations in data availability and the scope of this research, the survey instrument used to collect data did not gather information on organizational culture, size, or industry. These variables were not included in the current study. The multiple regression analyses show that 15.90% of the variance in servant leadership practice is explained by spiritual grounding and authoritative sources. This indicates that there are other factors not captured in the study that influence servant leadership practice. The study specifically examines the constructs of spiritual grounding and authoritative sources in relation to servant leadership practice, which means other potentially relevant factors were not considered within the scope of this research.

5. This study focused on senior executives in publicly traded companies in the U.S., which limits the generalizability of the results to other populations or organizational contexts.

6. Finally, the researcher favors servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and the use of authoritative sources. However, the research was conducted using empirical data,

ensuring the objectivity of the results. Despite this, potential bias should be considered when interpreting the results.

Extending the Research Design or Methods

To extend the research design or methods, the following could be considered:

1. Longitudinal Study: Conducting a longitudinal study would help in understanding the changes in servant leadership practice over time and the potential causal relationship with spiritual grounding.

2. Mixed Methods: Incorporating qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews or focus groups, through open-ended questions can explore the gradations of how the interviewees understand and incorporate spiritual grounding into their organizations and interactions with others, thus providing a deeper understanding of how senior executives in U.S. public companies perceive the influence of spiritual grounding on their leadership practice. A thematic analysis can also help in identifying common themes and patterns that emerge from the narratives of the participants.

3. Broader Sampling: Including a more diverse sample in terms of ethnicity, religion, and types of organizations could enhance the generalizability of the results.

4. Additional Variables: Subsequent studies could build upon these results by incorporating additional variables, such as organizational culture, size, and industry, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing servant leadership practice. Including other potential predictors of servant leadership practice could help explain more variance in servant leadership practice. The large error term serves as a push for further investigation. It highlights the limitations and the need for a broader exploration of variables that could influence the dependent variable. This approach is fundamental to

the iterative nature of research, where results from one study lay the groundwork for future investigations, leading to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the topic.

5. The involvement of multiple researchers could mitigate potential biases and enhance the validity of future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for future research are proposed:

1. Conduct a multiple comparative case study to determine the influence of spirituality on servant leadership in different organizational contexts, such as geographical locations, nonprofit organizations, or government agencies.

2. Investigate the influence of specific spiritual practices, such as prayer or gratitude exercises, on servant leadership behaviors and outcomes.

3. Examine the role of organizational culture and climate in fostering spirituality and servant leadership. Investigate how organizational factors can support or hinder the integration of spirituality into leadership practices.

4. The research was not conducted on privately held firms, government agencies, or nonprofit organizations. Those are three additional populations that may be examined in future studies.

5. Future research could beneficially study the extent to which servant leadership practices influence critical business outcomes, including performance, growth, and profitability, which are paramount in publicly traded U.S. companies. Investigating the potential

mediating role of servant leadership in relation to these outcomes would provide valuable

insights into the efficacy of such practices in a corporate context.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the study's results revealed that spiritual grounding significantly and

positively predicts servant leadership practice, explaining 15.60% of the variance in the servant

leadership practice scores. This supports the first hypothesis that there is a relationship between

spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice. However, the second hypothesis, which

proposed that there is a relationship between authoritative sources and spiritual grounding, was

not fully supported. While some authoritative sources, such as personal experiences and other

unspecified sources, were found to have a significant negative effect on spiritual grounding

scores, others, like sacred books or texts and the U.S. Constitution, were non-significant

predictors. The study also found that authoritative sources do not significantly mediate the

relationship between servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding, as indicated by the

moderation analysis. These results suggest that while spiritual grounding plays a significant role

in servant leadership practice, the influence of authoritative sources on spiritual grounding is

more complex and may vary depending on the specific source. Furthermore, the limited variance

explained by spiritual grounding and authoritative sources in predicting servant leadership

practice scores indicates that there are other factors not captured in this study that influence

servant leadership practice and spiritual grounding.

The study's results, which indicate a significant positive relationship between spiritual

grounding and servant leadership practice, are supported by the literature that emphasizes the

importance of personal values and ethics in leadership. For instance, the concept of servant

leadership itself, as proposed by Greenleaf (1977), is rooted in the idea of leading from a place of

selflessness (p.28), which aligns with the notion of spiritual grounding influencing leadership

behaviors. However, the results regarding authoritative sources are more nuanced. While the

study suggests that authoritative sources do not significantly mediate the relationship between

spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice, the literature provides various definitions and

categorizations of authoritative sources that could influence this relationship differently. For

example, Westman (2009) and Reitz (2004) describe authoritative sources as reliable data or

works recognized by experts, which could be interpreted as having a potential influence on the

development of spiritual grounding and, consequently, servant leadership practice. The literature

also touches upon the evolution of leadership theories and the importance of adapting leadership

practices to meet the changing needs of society, as discussed by Northouse (2022) and

Kellerman (2010). This evolution suggests that the role of authoritative sources in leadership

may also be subject to change and could be an area for further study.

    The literature review provides both support for the study's results on the relationship

between spiritual grounding and servant leadership practice and a basis for challenging the

results related to authoritative sources. The literature suggests that while spiritual grounding is a

critical component of servant leadership, the role of authoritative sources in shaping leadership

practices is complex and requires further investigation. Future research could provide a deeper

examination of how different types of authoritative sources influence both spiritual grounding

and servant leadership practices among senior executives.

    This concluding chapter discusses the major results, draws conclusions, examines

implications for professional practice, leadership, and research, and provides recommendations

for future studies. The results of this research contribute to the fields of leadership and

spirituality, highlighting the importance of spirituality in fostering servant leadership behaviors

and enhancing leadership effectiveness. The conclusions drawn from this study extend beyond the specific results and provide insights into the broader implications of integrating spirituality into leadership practices. It is recommended that future research extend upon these results to further advance knowledge in this area and promote the development of spiritually grounded and servant-led organizations.

"Servant leaders transcend their own personal needs and interests and serve others by helping them grow professionally and personally" (Ebener, 2010). If this is the case, how can publicly traded U.S. companies implement servant leadership practices to foster inclusivity and enhance leadership effectiveness, irrespective of employees' religious affiliations, spiritual beliefs, or reliance on authoritative sources? Servant leadership, a model of leading, contributes to employees' emotional and spiritual well-being and, subsequently, the organization's economic and social stature to increase its flourishing. The key difference is determined by the degree to which individuals are affected by the guidance and example set by a servant leader.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Survey Questionnaire

Demographic Questions:

1. **What is your age?**

   ☐ 18-24 years

   ☐ 25-34 years

   ☐ 35-44 years

   ☐ 45-54 years

   ☐ 55-64 years

   ☐ 65-74 years

   ☐ 75 years or older

2. **What is your gender?**

   ☐ Male

   ☐ Female

   ☐ Other

   ☐ Prefer not to answer

3. **What is your ethnicity?**

   ☐ Black or African-American

   ☐ Hispanic or Latino

   ☐ White/Caucasian

☐ Native American or American Indian

☐ Asian / Pacific Islander

☐ Other

4. **What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?**

☐ Some high school, no diploma

☐ High school or GED

☐ Trade/technical/vocational training

☐ Associate's degree

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Doctorate

5. **How many years have you worked for your current organization?**

☐ 0-1 Year

☐ 2-3 Years

☐ 4-6 Years

☐ 7-10 Years

☐ 11+ Years

6. **Are you in a leadership role that requires you to manage people?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. **How many years have you been in a leadership role that requires you to manage people?**

    ☐ 0-1 Year

    ☐ 2-3 Years

    ☐ 4-6 Years

    ☐ 7-10 Years

    ☐ 11+ Years

8. **How many direct reports do you have (how many people do you manage)?**

    ☐ 0-20

    ☐ 21-40

    ☐ 41-100

    ☐ 101-200

    ☐ 201+

9. **Do you identify with any organized religion?**

    ☐ Christianity

    ☐ Judaism

    ☐ Islam

    ☐ Buddhist

    ☐ Hinduism

    ☐ Inter/non-denominational

☐ Atheism (Do not believe in God or a Higher Being)

☐ **Other**

10. <u>Spirituality Questions:</u>

Please rate the frequency with which you complete the following actions:

	About once a day	About once a week	About once a month	About once a year	Less than once a year	Not at all
In talking with your family or friends, how often do you mention spiritual matters?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often do you share with others the problems and joys of living according to your spiritual beliefs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often do you read spiritually related material?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often do you engage in private prayer or meditation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree more than disagree	Disagree more than agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Forgiveness is an important part of my spirituality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I seek spiritual guidance in making decisions in my everyday life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My spirituality is a significant part of my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I frequently feel very close to God or a "higher power" in prayer, during public worship or at important moments in my daily life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My spiritual views have had an influence on my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My spirituality is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. Do <u>you</u> consider yourself to be spiritual?

  ☐ YES

  ☐ NO

<u>12. Servant Leadership Questions:</u>

Describe your leadership behaviors and attitudes as you perceive them. Please answer all of the questions. Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes you.

	Frequently, if not Always	Fairly Often	Sometimes	Once in a While	Not at All
I put others' interests ahead of my own.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I do everything I can to serve others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am someone to whom others will turn if they have a personal trauma.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am alert to what's happening around me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I offer compelling reasons to get others to do things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I encourage others to dream "big dreams" about the organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am good at anticipating the consequences of decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I am good at helping others with their emotional issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have great awareness of what is going on.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am very persuasive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that the organization needs to play a moral role in society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am talented at helping others heal emotionally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am in touch with what is going on.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am good at convincing others to do things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that our organization needs to function as a community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I sacrifice my own interests to meet others' needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can help others mend their hard feelings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am gifted when it comes to persuading others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I see the organization for its potential to contribute to society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I encourage others to have a community spirit in the workplace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I go above and beyond the call of duty to meet others' needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know what is going to happen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am preparing the organization to make a positive difference in the future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. If you do not follow a religion or do not consider yourself to be spiritual, what source(s) do you draw ethical inspiration from, or rather, what core principles and values guide your life choices and/or moral code? You can select more than one answer. Select "Not Applicable" if you follow a religion or you are spiritual.

☐ Sacred Books or Texts – A sacred book is a religious body's authoritative source of faith, history, and practices, believed to be divinely inspired

☐ The U.S. Constitution – The United States Constitution is the supreme law, and no legislation may oppose or contradict its principles

☐ Personal Experiences – "The Self"

☐ Customs or Cultural Traditions – Ethnic or Indigenous

☐ Codes of Conduct

☐ Other

☐ I do not draw guidance from any source

☐ Not Applicable

APPENDIX B – Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ)

Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ)

Leader Form

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership behaviors and attitudes as you perceive them. Please answer all of the questions. Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes you.

Use the following rating scale:

Not at All	Once in a While	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, If Not Always
0	1	2	3	4

_____1. I put others' interests ahead of my own.

_____2. I do everything I can to serve others.

_____3. I am someone to whom others will turn if they have a personal trauma.

_____4. I am alert to what's happening around me.

_____5. I offer compelling reasons to get others to do things.

_____6. I encourage others to dream "big dreams" about the organization.

_____7. I am good at anticipating the consequences of decisions.

_____8. I am good at helping others with their emotional issues.

_____9. I have great awareness of what is going on.

_____10. I am very persuasive.

_____11. I believe that the organization needs to play a moral role in society.

_____12. I am talented at helping others heal emotionally.

_____13. I am in touch with what is going on.

_____14. I am good at convincing others to do things.

_____15. I believe that our organization needs to function as a community.

_____16. I sacrifice my own interests to meet others' needs.

_____17. I can help others mend their hard feelings.

_____18. I am gifted when it comes to persuading others.

_____19. I see the organization for its potential to contribute to society.

_____20. I encourage others to have a community spirit in the workplace.

_____21. I go above and beyond the call of duty to meet others' needs.

_____22. I know what is going to happen.

_____23. I am preparing the organization to make a positive difference in the future.

APPENDIX C – Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS)

Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS)
Developed and Revised by Reed (1986, 1987)

Items 1 to 5
1=Not at all, 2=Less than once a year, 3=About once a year, 4=About once a month, 5=About once a week, 6=About once a day

Items 6 to 10
1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Disagree more than agree, 4=Agree more than disagree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly Agree

Item 11
YES OR NO

____1. In talking with your family or friends, how often do you mention spiritual matters?

____2. How often do you share with others the problems and joys of living according to your spiritual beliefs?

____3. How often do you read spiritually related material?

____4. How often do you engage in private prayer or meditation?

____5. Forgiveness is an important part of my spirituality.

____6. I seek spiritual guidance in making decisions in my everyday life.

____7. My spirituality is a significant part of my life.

____8. I frequently feel very close to God or a "higher power" in prayer, during public worship or at important moments in my daily life.

____9. My spiritual views have had an influence on my life.

____10. My spirituality is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.

____11. Do you consider yourself to be spiritual?

APPENDIX D – Informed Consent for Anonymous Survey

INFORMED CONSENT FOR ANONYMOUS SURVEY

SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AS AN INFLUENCE ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICE AMONG SENIOR EXECUTIVES IN PUBLICLY TRADED COMPANIES

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore the impact of spiritual grounding on servant leadership practice in publicly traded companies. The findings may enable individuals to lead through service regardless of their spiritual foundation. This could potentially challenge the fundamental premise of what it means to be a servant leader, thus encouraging organizations to adopt servant leadership as their preferred leadership style without excluding anyone, empowering everyone to lead through service.

This study poses no health risks. Your data will be anonymously collected and will be kept confidential.

This study is being conducted by Nancy Bosire, MBA, EA, under the supervision of faculty advisor Scott Quatro, Ph.D. - Professor of Management and Chair of the Business Department at Covenant College. You were selected as a possible participant because you are in a leadership position in a publicly traded company.

If you decide to participate, you will complete an online survey. The survey includes questions about your demographics, your leadership, your spirituality, and your belief in authoritative sources, which have been defined. The survey will take between 7 to 10 minutes, and you may only take the survey once.

Participation in this activity does not pose any significant risks or discomforts that would undermine your welfare or well-being. You can make changes to your survey responses before submitting them. Once submitted, responses cannot be modified because they are submitted as anonymous.

Your participation may help us understand the correlation between servant leadership, spiritual grounding, and authoritative sources in publicly traded companies. Our aim is that the insights gathered from this research will benefit leaders and organizations in the future.

The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your responses back to you. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement and may be published in a professional journal and/or presented at a professional meeting. Since it's an anonymous survey, none of your identifiable information will be included.

You may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Anderson University.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

Nancy Bosire
nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu

Scott A. Quatro, Ph.D.
squatro@andersonuniversity.edu

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Co-Chairs of the Institutional Review Board by phone or e-mail. The HSC Co-Chairs, Dr. Joni Criswell, and Dr. Robert Franklin can be reached at (   ) or by email at

By selecting "I Agree," I consent to join the study. Select "I Do Not Agree" to exit the survey.
o I agree to participate
o I do not agree to participate

316 Boulevard · Anderson, South Carolina 29621 · 864.231.2000 · andersonuniversity.edu

APPENDIX E – Questionnaire Permissions

RE: [External] Request for Permission to Use Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) in my Research Study

Barbuto, Jay ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Tue 11/14/2023 9:13 PM

To:Nancy K Bosire <nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu>

Cc:Center for Leadership <▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Hello!

Of course you can use the SLQ for research!

Good luck with the study!

Jay

Sent from my T-Mobile 5G Device

-------- Original message --------

From: Nancy K Bosire <nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu>

Date: 11/14/23 1:35 AM (GMT-08:00)

To: "Barbuto, Jay" ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Cc: Center for Leadership ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Subject: [External] Request for Permission to Use Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) in my Research Study

External Email Use Caution and Confirm Sender

Greetings Dr. Barbuto!

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Nancy Bosire, and I am a Doctoral Student at Anderson University, SC. I am writing to request your permission to use the Servant Leadership Questionnaire, which you developed with Dr. Wheeler in 2006, for my research project titled "Spiritual Grounding as an Influence on Servant Leadership Practice Among Senior Executives in Publicly Traded Companies."

I have reviewed your questionnaire and believe that it will be an invaluable tool for assessing the servant leadership practices of senior executives in the context of spiritual grounding. Your work in this area has been influential, and I am eager to build upon it in my own research.

I assure you that the questionnaire will be used solely for the purpose of my research project, and all data collected will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and in accordance with ethical guidelines. I am committed to providing you with a copy of my research findings once the study is completed.

Your contribution to the field of servant leadership is highly respected, and I would be honored to have your permission to utilize your instrument in my study.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your favorable response. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information or clarification regarding my research.

Blessings!

Sincerely,

Nancy K. Bosire

nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Re: Permission Request to Use Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) for my Research Study

Reed, Pamela G - (preed) ██████████████
Wed 11/15/2023 1:39 PM
To:Nancy K Bosire <nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu>

📎 1 attachments (142 KB)
SPS packet 2019.pdf;

Greetings to you, Nancy,

Thank you for your interest in my instrument, the *Spiritual Perspective Scale*. And yes, you are most welcome and have permission to use the SPS in your study, "Spiritual Grounding as an Influence on Servant Leadership Practice among Senior Executives in Publicly Traded Companies."

I have attached some background information along with a copy of the STS, in case it's helpful. And the modification you mentioned sounds fine! If you have other questions along the way, please contact me.

I wish you a productive study and success in completing your doctoral degree!
Pam
Pamela G. Reed, PhD, MSN, MA, RN, FAAN
Professor
The University of Arizona College of Nursing
Tucson, AZ 85721-0209
preed@arizona.edu / *nursing.arizona.edu* /

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
College of Nursing

From: Nancy K Bosire <nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:46 AM
To: F██████████████████████
Cc: ██████████████████████
Subject: [EXT]Permission Request to Use Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS) for my Research Study

External Email

Greetings Dr. Reed!

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Nancy Bosire, a Doctoral Student at Anderson University, SC. I am currently conducting a research study titled "Spiritual Grounding as an Influence on Servant Leadership Practice among Senior Executives in Publicly Traded Companies."

In this study, I am interested in exploring the role of spirituality in shaping leadership practices. Your Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS), developed and revised in 1986 and 1987, is a highly respected tool in this field and aligns perfectly with the objectives of my research. Therefore, I am writing to kindly request your permission to use the SPS in my study.

I would like to disclose that I plan to make a slight modification to the original SPS. Specifically, I intend to replace the question "If possible, please describe how you define spirituality on the back of this page, or provide any other comments you feel are important for the researcher to know about" with "Do you consider yourself to be spiritual?". This modification is intended to align the instrument more closely with the quantitative nature of my research.

I assure you that the use of the SPS in my study will be strictly for non-commercial research purposes, and the distribution will be controlled, meaning only to the participants engaged in the research. I understand the importance of maintaining the integrity of the original instrument and will ensure that any modifications do not distort its intended purpose.

I look forward to your positive response and appreciate your consideration of my request. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Blessings!

Sincerely,

Nancy K. Bosire
nbosire100@andersonuniversity.edu

APPENDIX F – Raw Data

Variable Relationship	Variables	B (Coefficient)	SE (Standard Error)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value	R² (Variance Explained)	N	Significance
Spiritual Grounding and Servant Leadership Practice		0.86	0.14	0.59	1.13	<0.001	0.156	217	Significant
Authoritative Sources → and Spiritual Grounding	Sacred Books or Texts	1.11	0.59	-0.07	2.29	0.065	-	217	Not Significant
	The U.S. Constitution	-0.4	0.73	-1.84	1.04	0.581	-	217	Not Significant
	Personal Experiences – "The Self"	-1.46	0.34	-2.14	-0.78	<0.001	-	217	Significant
	Customs or Cultural Traditions	-0.18	0.67	-1.49	1.14	0.793	-	217	Not Significant
	Codes of Conduct	-0.42	0.43	-1.26	0.43	0.331	-	217	Not Significant
	Other	-1.91	0.66	-3.2	-0.61	0.004	-	217	Significant
	Participant do not draw guidance from any source	-2.41	0.55	-3.48	-1.33	<0.001	-	217	Significant
Authoritative Sources → and Servant Leadership Practice	Sacred Books or Texts	2.61	1.5	-0.35	5.57	0.084	0.04	217	Not Significant
	The U.S. Constitution	0.13	1.83	-3.48	3.74	0.943	0.04	217	Not Significant
	Personal Experiences – "The Self"	-0.92	0.86	-2.61	0.78	0.29	0.04	217	Not Significant
	Customs or Cultural Traditions	0.48	1.67	-2.8	3.76	0.774	0.04	217	Not Significant
	Codes of Conduct	-0.88	1.07	-2.99	1.23	0.41	0.04	217	Not Significant
	Other	0.42	1.65	-2.83	3.68	0.798	0.04	217	Not Significant
	Participant do not draw guidance from any source	-2.42	1.37	-5.12	0.27	0.078	0.04	217	Not Significant
Spiritual Grounding and Authoritative Sources (Predicting Servant Leadership Practice)	Spiritual Grounding	0.93	0.16	0.62	1.25	<0.001	0.159	217	Significant
	Authoritative Sources	0.51	0.59	-0.65	1.67	0.386	0.159	217	Not Significant