

July 2022

The Mediating Influence of Confidence, Autonomy, and Identification on the Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Harmonious Passion

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Recommended Citation

Tabares, Angelica; Malherbe, Lise; and Hurt, Kevin J. (2022) "The Mediating Influence of Confidence, Autonomy, and Identification on the Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Harmonious Passion," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 23.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22543/1948-0733.1403>

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol15/iss2/23>

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Abstract

The current paper explores the relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion. Harmonious passion refers to a strong desire to freely engage in an activity and is a result of an autonomous internalization of the activity into one's identity. While passion and leadership have been generally linked, the specific relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion is underdeveloped within the field of servant leadership research. Our paper presents a conceptual model and propositions linking servant leadership and harmonious passion through the mediating mechanisms of follower confidence, autonomy, and identification. Implications and future research are discussed.

Introduction

The concept of passion at work has gained recent attention in the spheres of organizational behavior and management literature (Vallerand et al., 2003; Zigarami et al., 2018; Vallerand & Houliort, 2003). Work passion can best be described as an attitude and climate within an organization that displays a sense of enthusiasm and in carrying out duties thus encouraging people to work more effectively and more productively (Noviantoro, 2018). Within the work domain, scholars have discovered that the concept of work passion is positively associated with constructive employee outcomes that include, but are not limited to, performance (Kim et al., 2015), job satisfaction (Fernet et al., 2014; Noviantoro et al., 2018), and life satisfaction (Lafreneire et al., 2012). Passion is viewed as an enabling condition for perseverance toward long-term goal accomplishment (Duckworth et al., 2007). Thus, passion should be a serious concern for organizational leaders given that leadership involves influencing employees to willingly engage and move toward organizational goals (Laub, 2004).

A style of leadership that has yielded positive benefits in this area and that has gained much attention in the literature is that of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2008). Servant leaders demonstrate high ethical standards and possess the moral integrity to embrace an other-centric perspective that values and prioritizes subordinate growth and development (Caldwell & Anderson, 2021; Jaramillo et al., 2015). Servant leadership values are reflected in the following leader characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and community building (Spears, 2004). Once servant leaders establish the vision and direction of the organization, their primary focus shifts towards assuring that their subordinates highest priority needs are being met (Blanchard, 2001; Hunter, 2004; Page & Wong, 2000). This focus shift stems from a leader's humility and strong resolve for employee development, which is consistent with the characteristics of good to great leaders (Collins, 2001).

To establish our frame of thought, we refer to Hesse's (1956) novel, *The Journey to the East*, which serves as the foundation for Greenleaf's interpretation of a servant-leader. The character of Leo in the novel is of particular interest to Greenleaf because Leo first identifies as a humble servant when he is actually the noble leader of the entire League. Hesse's character Leo serves as inspiration to Greenleaf's servant leader and demonstrates the impact of such leadership among followers; yet there is another covert aspect represented by Leo: the impact of his leadership on followers' harmonious passion for their work.

Harmonious passion refers to an individual's free will to participate in an activity because of the pleasure provided by the activity (Vallerand et al., 2003). With this type of passion, the activity is deeply internalized into one's identity, however, it does not occupy disproportionate space in one's identity causing conflict in the individual's life (Vallerand et al., 2003). According to Deci and Ryan (2000), people freely engage in activities in hopes of satisfying basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Not only does Leo serve his followers first, but by preserving the League members' identities, emphasizing autonomy, and strengthening their confidence, he also sustains follower's harmonious passion through his leadership.

In addition to organizational goals, *Journey to the East* emphasizes personal goals as imperative for League membership, i.e., organizational members must also hold personal aspirations to fulfill. However, Leo simply wishes to perform his servant-like duties to the group, keeping them on the track of self-discovery. By doing so, Leo enables the group to find their own way to these personal goals. As a servant-leader, Leo gives each League member autonomy, or their own sense of personal initiative to master their craft and seek higher knowledge simultaneously. Similarly, Leo provides each member with confidence to carry on during the long journey. He does so by ensuring that each member regularly executes their personal responsibilities to the group, which in turn enables the achievement of group goals.

The leader-follower dynamic displayed between Leo and his followers in this fictional story is not uncommon within today's organizations. Today's leaders are consistently challenged with influencing, motivating, and inducing followers to move toward organizational goals (Laub, 2004). Leaders that are more concerned about others than themselves, such as servant leaders, are humble, and their humility stimulates strong relationships with followers who are encouraged to become fully engaged with, and passionate about, their work (Duckworth et al., 2007; Owens & Hekman, 2012). Servant leadership differs from conventional leadership theories in that the leader primarily focuses on individual follower needs so that followers

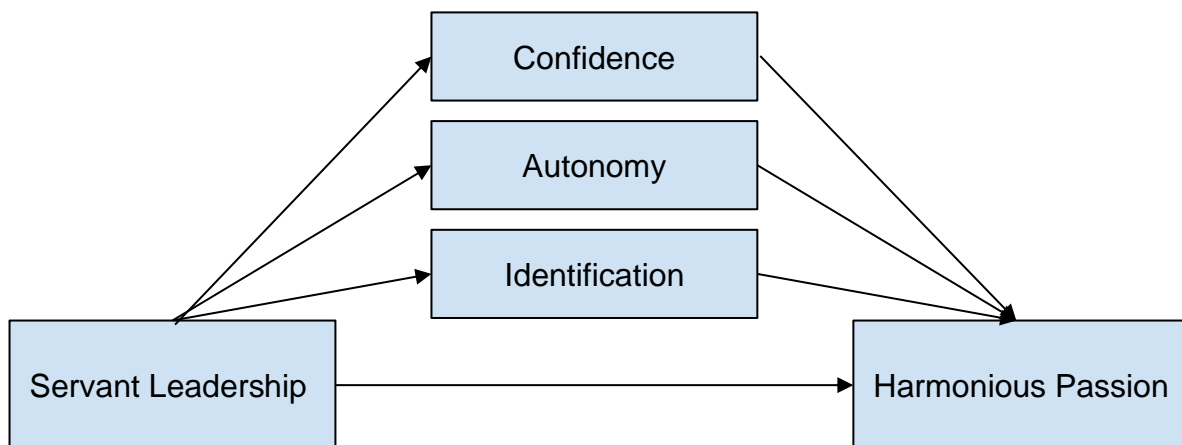
reach their goals and highest levels of organizational achievement (Greenleaf, 2008; Laub, 2004; Liden et al., 2008).

While the concept of servant leadership has only recently gained popularity, the concept of work passion has been prevalent as early as biblical times, most commonly associated with the Passion of Christ and the crucifixion of Jesus (Brown, 1997). Philosophers such as Hegel (1770-1831) argue that passion is necessary for individuals seeking high levels of achievement (Vallerand et al., 2003). Deci and Ryan (2000) contend that autonomy, competence (follower confidence) and relatedness (follower identification) are necessary as it “pertains to those nutriments that must be procured by a living entity to maintain its growth, integrity, and health” (p.326). Baumeister and Leary (1995) also agree that relatedness is a key aspect of psychological well-being. When these characteristics are absent, motivation, performance, and well-being decrease showing the overall importance of these characteristics to psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Vallerand et al. (2003) endorse this argument in their model for passion that links passion to confidence, autonomy, and identification.

While the relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion may seem intuitive, an assessment of the current servant leadership literature fails to reveal such a connection. As such, our understanding about the manner in which servant leadership is related to follower passion is limited. The aim of the present article is to develop a conceptual model (see *Figure 1*) and theoretical argument linking servant leadership and harmonious passion through the mediating mechanisms of confidence, autonomy, and identification.

In the sections to follow, we establish a model to link servant leadership to followers’ harmonious passion for work. Following the introduction of our model, which guides our paper, we summarize the relationship between servant leadership and confidence, autonomy, and identification individually. We conclude the summary of literature with the overarching relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion, offering suggestions for future research.

Figure 1: The relationship of servant leadership and harmonious passion: Mediating influence of confidence, autonomy, and identification



Theory and Proposition Development

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a widely discussed and researched topic that seems to have bit of contention around its definition. Several servant leadership scholars agree that Greenleaf never provided a clear definition of servant leadership (Baykal, 2020; Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Rather, Greenleaf outlined aspects and characteristics that distinguish servant leadership from other leadership styles (Hurt, Huning, & Thomson, 2017). The lack of a universally agreed upon definition has created a divide among researchers with some arguing that research on servant leadership is primarily based on anecdotal, rather than scientific and testable data (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). While servant leadership has a fair number of critics, servant leadership has continued to gain momentum among academia and practitioners alike, and empirical evidence has continued to mount (*see* Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2016; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012). Today, servant leadership is considered a viable leadership theory (Parris & Peachey, 2013). While servant leadership still lacks a *universally* agreed upon definition, servant leadership does have a good working definition and for the purpose of this paper, we refer to Laub's (1999) definition of servant leadership as follows:

Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader... Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led, and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization (p.81).

This definition focuses on the six main areas of servant leadership and helps to frame the characteristics of a person to associate as a servant leader. These six areas include developing and placing worth in people, forming a community, showing authenticity, being a leader, and sharing power (Laub, 2004). Servant leadership is more than a specific type of leadership; it is also a mindset on how to lead (Laub, 2004). De Pree (2004) asserts that a leader must have the conviction to become a servant and think of his- or her-self as a steward in terms of relationships. To De Pree, the art of leadership lies in liberating people to do what is required of them and then concentrating leader efforts towards serving employees. Servant leaders place a high value on building relationships, listening to employees' ideas, and promoting a culture of trust and appreciation for others (De Pree, 2004). Both Laub (1999) and De Pree (2004) regard community building as essential in leadership. In fact, De Pree asserts that building community in the organization is part of a leader's calling to help the organization and people within it reach their fullest potential. In the process of being served, employees learn to serve, which contributes to the organization becoming most effective while reaching its potential (De Pree, 2004).

Servant leadership is both inspirational and moral, promoting subordinate's intellectual and skill development, as well as enhancing their moral reasoning (Graham, 1991). Given the moral dimension of servant leadership, it stands to reason that servant leaders have a high degree of moral integrity, which Hardy and Carlo (2011) define as the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual's identity. A moral person is concerned about justice, caring, openness, generosity, and simply doing those things that are consistent with their perception of what is good (Bock, 2013; Caldwell & Anderson, 2021). Good to a servant

leader involves service over self, acts of caring for others and fulfilling all obligations that assist people in becoming healthier, wiser, and more autonomous (Caldwell & Anderson, 2021; Greenleaf, 2008). Thus, living consistently with one's moral identity serves as a key source of moral motivation (Hardy & Carlo, 2011) and strengthens an individuals' desire to engage in prosocial and ethical behaviors (Hertz & Krettenauer, 2016).

Servant leadership has been characterized as putting the followers before the leader similar to the relationship between a parent and child (Laub, 2004; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). This is also recognized as a humbleness and selflessness in a leader (Blanchard, 2001; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Servant leadership is not dependent on a title or position for respect, but rather "delivering on what was promised and serving others with humility" (Cincala, 2018, p. 6). A good servant leader is measured based on the value they have added to his/her follower (Cincala, 2018). Servant leadership focuses on the growth of its followers rather than solely organization goals (Bass, 2000; Greenleaf, 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). This is not to say organizational goals are insignificant or unaccomplished, but servant leaders emphasize individual goals above organizational goals (Keith, 2012; Stone et al., 2004). This shift of focus and energy is one of the distinguishing qualities of servant leaders.

Rivkin et al. (2014) state the need and importance of servant leadership by presenting the positive effect of servant leadership on employee's psychological wellbeing through the benefit of "job attitudes, fairness perceptions, and, not least, job performance" (p.55). These factors help contribute to the collective nature of servant leadership, where the follower works to better the group through individual servanthip. This keeps an individual's identity unique rather than grouping them and losing individual identity (Bass, 2000). This achieves group goals, yet the servant leader's focus is on individuals (Hoch et al., 2018). A servant leader continuously works to cultivate servant leadership characteristics in their followers, a process which leads to followers becoming servants or servant leaders. This is one of the distinguishing factors of servant leadership when compared to other leadership styles (Liden et al., 2008; Rivkin et al., 2014).

Servant Leadership and Passion

The dualistic model of passion, proposed by Vallerand et al (2003), defines passion "as a strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy" (p. 756). This suggests that for an activity to be considered a passion to an individual, it must be significant in their lives and practiced by the individual regularly. Passion stems from an intrinsic sense of purpose, which leads to a conviction that one's work is meaningful and beneficial to others (Lee & Duckworth, 2018). Additionally, passion is considered an important factor necessary for individuals to accomplish long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Without passion to sustain one at work, one is likely to give up (Vallerand & Houliort, 2019). Along the same vein as Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, the representation of these passionate activities is typically interrelated to a person's identity. Past research asserts that values and regulations concerning important activities can be internalized either in an autonomous or a controlled manner (Deci et al., 1994) making for two possible types of passion: harmonious and obsessive (Vallerand et al., 2003). Vallerand et al. (2019) contend that the difference between the two types comes down to control; that is, in the case of obsessive passion the activity controls the person whereas in harmonious passion, the person controls the activity.

Harmonious passion refers to a strong desire to freely engage in an activity and is a result of an autonomous internalization of the activity into one's identity. That is, the individual voluntarily accepts the activity as important without any influence from constraints or external contingencies (Vallerand et al., 2003). The two primary characteristics associated with harmonious passion include an autonomous integration of the passionate activity into one's identity and personal enjoyment derived from engaging in the activity (Vallerand & Miquelon, 2007). As previously noted, the activity remains under the individual's control despite it occupying a significant space in an individual's life. For example, employees with harmonious passion highly value their work and willingly engage in their work without generating conflicts with other important life domains (Fernet et al., 2014; Vallerand et al., 2003). Thus, individuals with prevailing harmonious passion tend to be more open and less defensive to outcomes of performing such activities (Lafreniere et al., 2012).

Conversely, obsessive passion results from controlled internalization originating from intrapersonal and/or interpersonal pressures and contingencies such as self-esteem, social acceptance, or high performance (Vallerand et al., 2003). While obsessively passionate individuals still have love for their activity, individuals come to develop ego-invested self-structures toward their activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When an activity represents such a dominant role in one's identity, it is not easily put aside, leaving one in an odd position of feeling obligated to engage in an activity that they otherwise enjoy (Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008). The result of this obligated, and often uncontrollable, urge is a decision to partake in an activity even at the expense of other aspects of the individual's life (Lafreniere et al., 2012). To illustrate, suppose a student with an obsessive passion for basketball has an important exam scheduled the next day. If a group of friends calls and propositions a basketball scrimmage that evening, the obsessively passionate student will likely partake in the scrimmage instead of studying for the exam (Philippe et al., 2010). Previous research finds that obsessive passion, where individuals rely on work as a source of self-esteem, is often correlated to outcomes such as workaholism (Fernet et al., 2014; Spence & Robbins, 1992; Vallerand et al., 2003). Obsessive passion has been linked to higher levels of apprehension, negative emotions (e.g., guilt), interpersonal conflict, and lower levels of subjective well-being (Philippe et al., 2010; Seguin-Levesque et al., 2003; Vallerand et al., 2003; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008). Finally, with its relationship to negative affect, obsessive passion may potentially undermine physical and mental health (Forest et al., 2011; St-Louis et al., 2014).

While the outcomes associated with obsessive passion are largely negative, many scholars agree that harmonious passion for work is mainly an adaptive construct that leads to favorable outcomes such as improved productivity, reduced burnout, and higher job satisfaction (Fernet et al., 2014; Lafreniere et al., 2012; Noviantoro, 2018). Harmonious passion has also been associated with positive mood states, higher quality interpersonal relationships, greater creativity, task persistence, and enhanced life satisfaction (Liu et al., 2011; Philippe et al., 2010; Southwick et al., 2019). While similar to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, harmonious passion is considered a superior motivational predictor of outcomes due to its two primary characteristics of autonomous internalization and personal enjoyment (Liu et al., 2011). For harmonious passion to be sustained, individuals must understand the *why* behind superior- and subordinate- goals while also assuring that those goals are aligned. Additionally, individuals must believe in their ability to accomplish those goals if they commit to them (Southwick et al., 2019). De Pree (2004) contends that good leaders, those that act as stewards of the organization, focus on explaining the *why's* in organizational life. Leaders

play an important role in establishing the organizational culture and values that it espouses and can therefore create the right environment not only to sustain, but also to cultivate harmonious passion (Lee & Duckworth, 2018; Schein, 2010).

Some of the foundational aspects of the outcomes associated with harmonious passion draw from the fulfillment of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and a sense of relatedness with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vallerand et al., 2003). These psychological needs and a general sense of well-being are influenced by an individual's perception that his or her needs are being met (Coggins & Bocarnea, 2015; Formosa et al., 2022). Servant leaders, as influencers to employees' voluntary engagement in workplace activities (Laub, 2004), positively impact employee perceptions by focusing on their employee's highest priority needs and promoting the values of trust, appreciation of others, and empowerment (Greenleaf, 2008; Laub, 2004; Russell, 2001). Thus, servant leaders function as an important linkage to employee psychological needs and positive workplace outcomes.

In the workplace, where external controls such as deadlines, stringent schedules, and mandatory tasks are inevitable, employees' perceptions of autonomy can influence their passion for the job. Results from Lafreniere et al. (2014) show that organizations with low levels of autonomy foster controlled internalization forcing employees to comply and deal with external contingencies that are not necessarily in line with their goals and values. This suggests that leaders who encourage opportunities for employees to make choices, participate in decision-making, and have some control over how tasks are accomplished foster harmonious passion and hinder obsessive passion. Thus, servant leaders, who prioritize the needs, goals, and aspirations of their followers, should foster a working environment conducive to harmonious passion among employees.

As an extension to the Vallerand et al. (2003) passion model, Noviantoro (2018) considers work passion as the desire and enthusiasm of an individual to carry out quality work to achieve maximum productivity. Servant leaders encourage personal development and provide optimal working conditions so that employees can perform their duties well and achieve high levels of productivity (Carter & Baghurst, 2013). Servant leaders should therefore foster harmonious passion, as they are known to provide organizational support and clarify goals toward followers (Thao & Kang, 2018).

Self-identity is another essential component in determining passion for activity. Drawing from various theories on self-identification, we can infer that self-identity is strongly influenced by follower's social environment (Bandura, 1997; Tajfel, 1974; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that humans' active tendency to connect with others can either result in introjection or integration of culture. Thus, individuals' type of passion, whether harmonious or obsessive, is dependent on how one internalizes or identifies with a certain activity or behavior (Vallerand et al., 2003). Servant leaders should be able to foster the needs of relatedness and autonomy simultaneously so that followers can internalize cultures and values in a manner that supports harmonious passion.

In terms of their influence on culture, servant leaders seek to encourage their ethical and caring behaviors among their followers. Liden et al. (2014) find that in this leadership process, followers adopt servant-like behaviors enabling a "servant culture" (p. 1435) where everyone supports each other in areas ranging from technical advice to emotional support. Furthermore, servant leaders display more love and acceptance toward their followers enabling them to feel more included and part of the in-group of the organization (Chen et al.,

2015). Rather than focusing on changing their followers, servant leaders accept their followers regardless of their beliefs, goals and interests. Not only do servant leaders foster an inclusive culture centered on servant-like behaviors, but they also allow followers autonomy in their decisions. When leaders nurture self-efficacy, freedom in decision-making, and community involvement, employees become more committed to organizational values (Walumbwa et al., 2010) and are more likely to share in their leader's concern for the organizational community (Liden et al., 2014). Thus, follower identity is preserved, and harmonious passion should prosper under the support of servant leadership. Therefore, we put forth the following proposition:

Proposition 1: There is a direct positive relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion.

The Mediating Influence of Confidence

The concept of confidence is grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1995), which refers to confidence, or self-efficacy, as one's belief in his/her abilities to successfully organize and execute the course of action required to achieve desired outcomes given a particular situation. Some of the main predictors of Bandura's (1995) self-efficacy include enactive mastery (i.e., previous experience containing the tools required to manage ever-changing circumstances), vicarious experience (i.e., observation of other individuals similar to themselves successfully performing a particular task), and verbal persuasion (from those who possess the capabilities) (1997). Similarly, Spreitzer (1995) suggests that employees gain confidence in their abilities to perform workplace tasks when leaders empower or give opportunities to become proficient in their skills and masters of their behaviors. Lu et al. (2020) further assert that empowered employees firmly believe in their capabilities and understand work meanings. As it pertains to passion, employees who experience success at work develop higher levels of self-efficacy, which facilitates the development of harmonious passion (Lex et al., 2019). Given that leaders are essential constituents to followers' understanding of the workplace environment and cognition of work-related activities (Chen & Beliese, 2002), leaders should also serve as key determinants of followers' competence, and subsequent harmonious passion, in such activities.

Greenleaf's (2008) servant leadership concept has a follower empowerment component through leaders' understanding of followers' current abilities, pressing needs, and potential growth. Servant leaders can best enhance followers' self-efficacy because they clarify the required knowledge to resolve issues effectively and they remain attentive to their follower's personal development (Walumbwa et al., 2010). With a full understanding of each individual's traits and capabilities, servant leaders can assist followers in expanding knowledge, learning new skills, enhancing task-effectiveness, and achieving their greatest potential (Liden et al., 2008). By placing individualized attention on follower needs, servant leaders can create a nurturing organizational environment that best serves individual development. As a result, followers' proficiency and confidence in work-related activities are fostered.

Followers specifically under servant leadership should gain a heightened sense of confidence as they are not only provided tools required to perform their job successfully, but they are also provided high levels of organizational support (Hurt et al., 2017). Empathy and emotional healing are prominent qualities of the servant leader (Liden et al., 2008), implying that servant leaders have high responsiveness to individuals' emotional concerns. Characteristics such as these enable the servant leader to foster strong interpersonal relationships with their

followers and are instrumental to inspiring trust and providing supportive resources (Liden et al., 2008; 2014). Consistent with this reasoning, Chen and Bliese (2002) find that the presence of servant leadership enhances follower confidence by providing sufficient socio-emotional support while minimizing psychological strain within the working environment. Given that servant leaders recognize followers' capabilities and ensure that followers' environmental and emotional needs are met, servant leaders should positively influence harmonious passion through follower confidence. As such, we put forth the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Follower confidence positively mediates the relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion

The Mediating Influence of Autonomy

Factors considered important in the development of harmonious passion include an individual's sense of autonomy support, and an autonomous personality orientation (Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand et al., 2019). At work, Hardgrove (2019) suggested that a leader's position plays an important influential role in the development of employee autonomy. Greenleaf (2008) addressed the concept of autonomy related to servant leadership through the basic concept of follower growth. For a follower to gain autonomy he/she must grow and become his/her own person. Thus, autonomy cannot be achieved without growth. Other scholars similarly conclude that growth (Laub, 2004; Bass, 2000; Page & Wong, 2000) and autonomy are an important characteristic in servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011; Deci & Ryan, 2000). It has already been shown in one study that autonomous motivations increase when servant leadership is accepted in the workplace (Chen et al., 2013). This makes the study of servant leadership's effects on autonomy highly important due to it being tied into the basic concept of servant leadership: follower growth.

In a multipart study, Vansteenkiste et al. (2004) found that environments that cultivate autonomy within an individual lead to greater results in growth or learning outcomes. This study would support the claim that servant leadership enables follower autonomy due to the effect's autonomy has on individual growth and fulfilling potential. An autonomy-supportive environment along with intrinsic goals can help to provide the "most fertile ground for learning" (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004, p.258), providing further evidence of the codependence between growth and autonomy. Growth and learning are not synonymous. Saade (2015) describes learning as a short-term concept that does not contribute to the overall individual, while growth is a long-term concept and adds to the person as a whole. Learning comes first, followed by growth (Saade, 2015). Autonomy leads to learning about oneself and identity, which signifies growth, rather than just learning of skills or knowledge.

As Chen et al. (2013) state, there is research that already suggests servant leadership has a positive effect on autonomous motivation. Characteristics that are associated with servant leadership such as "mutual trust and empowering others" (Chen et al., 2013, p.423) help to foster higher levels of autonomy in followers. This follower autonomy along with intrinsic motivation helps each individual find a sense of meaning in their work and elevates an individual's eudemonic well-being (i.e., human potential) (Chen et al., 2013).

In the Cognitive Evaluation Theory presented by Deci et al. (1975), it was theorized that external rewards weaken the individual's sense of autonomy. This theory also suggests that the more followers find satisfaction in intrinsic rewards, the more likely they are to be

autonomous and experience growth (Deci et al., 1975; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Servant leadership is one method that can create a positive work environment that encourages intrinsic rewards and “enables employees to develop higher goals, promoting the internalization of motivations, leading to more autonomous self-adjustments to work” (Chen et al., 2013, p.433). Through servant leadership, we contend that autonomy will be increased resulting in increased passion. As such, we put for the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Follower autonomy positively mediates the relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion.

The Mediating Influence of Identification

Prior research suggests that an individual's identification is grounded in personal perceptions and behaviors given one's social environment (Tajfel, 1974; Bandura, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974) considers individuals' perceptions of and connections to group memberships as key determinants of thoughts and behaviors. Tajfel (1974) further recognizes three foundational processes under this theory: social categorization, social comparison, and social identification. Under social categorization, individuals consciously or subconsciously classify each other into various subgroups based on characteristics and available information as a way of making sense of the social environment (Ashforth & Meal, 1989). Individuals engage in social comparison when they use these subgroups to formulate perceptions of status and worth (Ashforth & Meal, 1989). Realizing that their self-worth is derived from their group membership, individuals commit to their group and relate to other group members in the process of social identification (Chen et al., 2015). More specifically, individuals often engage in behaviors that are consistent with other group members and that benefit their own membership. Leaders as prominent members of groups and administrators of group standards should help shape employees' self-identity making for desired outcomes in follower behavior.

Studies have found that an employee's self-identity mediates the relationship between servant leadership and service performance behaviors (Chen et al., 2015). Research has also documented that servant leaders achieve such positive outcomes by modifying follower identity in associating with group identification (Liden et al., 2008; 2014) and employee commitment (Walumbwa et al., 2010). One of the distinct goals of servant leadership is to foster servant leadership among followers. That is, followers are influenced to become servants themselves (Greenleaf, 2008). Liden et al. (2014) find that servant leaders achieve this by cultivating personal relationships and developing a serving climate that is based on the behavioral norms of placing priority on helping others. Drawing from Tajfel's (1974) processes of social identity theory, individuals should socially identify with the desired behaviors and expectations of a serving culture fostered by credible servant leaders.

Research further asserts that individual group members' attitudes and behaviors are not only influenced by that of other group members, but they are also influenced by the social bonds and relationships they have formed with their leaders (Liden et al., 2008). Servant leaders are recognized for investing in interpersonal relationships, thus, invoking trust and respect from their followers. Servant leaders are also known for their unconditional dedication to follower development enticing organizational commitment among (i.e., emotional attachment and identification) followers (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Given that followers generally admire their supportive leaders, they are more inclined to align their self-identity with that of their leader (Chen et al., 2015), as well as emulate their leader's behaviors (Liden et al., 2014). In line

with reasoning from social identification (Tajfel, 1974), servant leaders should foster harmonious passion through follower identity. As such, we put forward the following:

Proposition 4: Follower self-identification positively mediates the relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion.

Discussion and Conclusion

The moral nature of leaders is considered essential for societal good as well as long-term organizational success (Lemoine et al., 2019). However, when leaders act immorally, people and organizations suffer. The financial scandals of the past (e.g., Enron, Tyco, Worldcom), largely attributed to unethical behaviors of organizational leaders (Hoch et al., 2019), serve as a reminder of the problems that can arise from leaders who are focused on advancing their own interests (Hurt & Heath, 2017). Unfortunately, ethical failures and irresponsible leader behaviors have continued to be so pervasive that public trust in our institution's leaders has continued to decline steadily (De Cremer et al., 2011). An estimated 63% of employees do not trust their leaders and this distrust spans practically all domains (e.g., business, government, media, and educational institutions) (Comaford, 2017; Kramer, 2011). Not surprisingly, there has been a growing concern about how to manage these failures to regain the public's trust and restore leader credibility (Araujo, 2009; De Cremer et al., 2011).

Servant leadership, with its focus on leader selflessness, has risen in prominence over the last decade in large part because it is considered a moral leadership style with the potential to restore trust and leader credibility through the prioritization of subordinate needs over leader self-interest (Graham, 1991; De Pree, 2004). Credibility, honesty, and service are considered core attributes of servant leadership (Farling et al., 1999) and its proponents believe that it can minimize, if not abolish, the unethical leadership failures of the past (Blanchard, 2001; Greenleaf, 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Since servant leaders' identities are morally grounded, their desire to live in a manner consistent with their values serves as a moral motivation to continue doing that which is good (Hardy & Cardo, 2011; Sun, 2018).

If organizations are to succeed, they will need credible and trustworthy leadership (Collins, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2011); but they will also need subordinates who are engaged and committed at work. While a leader can command subordinate compliance, commitment is a volitional choice. Yet, servant leaders may be perfectly suited to influence employee commitment by inspiring harmonious passion within their subordinates.

Scholars agree that the concept of work passion, particularly harmonious passion, positively contributes to desired organizational outcomes including, high-performing employees (Kim et al., 2015); employee job-satisfaction (Fernet et al., 2014); decreased burnout (Noviantoro et al., 2018), greater life satisfaction among employees (Lafreneire et al., 2012); and even increased employee commitment (Forest et al., 2011). While there is an abundance of research examining passion's role in employee outcomes, there is little research investigating how leaders influence passion in leader-follower relations. Furthermore, little is known about the mediating mechanisms that enhance the leader-follower passion relationship. Organizational leaders should prioritize employees' passion for work given that leaders influence employees to willingly engage and move toward organizational goals (Laub, 2004).

Passion comes from intrinsic interest and from a sense of purpose, i.e., from a conviction that one's work matters and helps others (Lee & Duckworth, 2018). People in the workforce, particularly those of generation X and Z, want meaningfulness in their work (Clifton & Harter, 2019). Without meaning, they are less likely to be passionate about their work. Servant leaders, by engaging everyone, empowering their subordinates, and maintaining frequent communication may be perfectly suited to foster harmonious passion by helping their subordinates find their purpose within the organization (De Pree, 2004; Laub, 2004). Servant leaders are passionate about their subordinates, which is reflected in their drive to help subordinates become aware of what they can achieve. By embracing high ethical standards and acting in the best interest of their employees (Jaramillo et al., 2015), servant leaders provide subordinates with an understanding that they (i.e., subordinates) and the work they do, matter.

As this conceptual review shows, there is evidence that Greenleaf's (2008) concept of servant leadership can directly and indirectly (i.e., through confidence, autonomy, and identification) affect employee's harmonious passion for work. This makes for significant implications for organizational leaders today.

As business entities continue to grow and levels of competition continue to increase, firms look to quality leadership approaches to bring out the best in employees and yield successful organizational outcomes. Employees, as significant constituents to organizational success, require more individualized and supportive leadership in order to effectively develop and grow. Furthermore, employees vary in their beliefs, capabilities, and needs. Thus, they should respond more enthusiastically to the supportive managers who are able to provide personalized guidance. Beneficial employee outcomes should continue to follow as employees grow through servant leadership and maintain harmonious passion. The relationships presented in the paper can help managers to make effective business decisions by investing in their employees.

Our model allows leaders to see the benefits of servant leadership towards their employees and how the individual mediators (i.e., confidence, autonomy, and identification) connect to form harmonious passion within their followers. This addition to servant leadership research allows leaders to recognize the importance of these mediators in their relationships with employees. If servant leaders can recognize that there may be a decrease in follower passion, this relationship model allows the servant leader to look at the specific areas of confidence, autonomy, and identification as possible areas to focus on to help increase follower passion.

Limitations and Future Research

The purpose of this conceptual review was to address the gap in the literature as it relates to servant leadership and follower passion. The propositions presented in this paper are based on logical arguments and rational connections based off of existing literature; however, our arguments remain conceptual and would therefore need to be empirically validated.

Although we limited our conceptual model to one leadership style, i.e., servant leadership, other leadership styles (e.g., charismatic and transformational) may have similar outcomes. Future studies may want to consider whether confidence, autonomy, and identification have the same effects on the leader-follower passion relationship. This would lead to comparative literature between servant leadership and other leadership styles. Similarly, because there is not a commonly accepted servant leadership definition, we must assume our conclusions are

solely related to Laub's accepted definition and description of servant leadership. As Laub (2004) states "leadership must be understandable, usable, researchable, and comprehensive while possessing the ability to discriminate" (p.4) and without these clear standards, studies will continue to be argued and ignored due to the lack of clarity of the basic concepts associated with servant leadership. In the future, we hope to see a commonly shared view of servant leadership that will allow for more in-depth research and allow for more comparative studies to be done.

Although our model considers the three mediators individually relating to servant leadership, it is possible that there are interaction effects among the mediators. For example, autonomy and identification seem to be positively related. When individual autonomy is increased, individual identity also seems to increase (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Future researchers may want to consider the extent to which other interaction effects among the mediators in our model may influence the servant leadership-harmonious passion relationship.

While we present a generalized model, researchers may also want to consider whether specific contexts alter these relationships. Environments such as the sports industry or the military have special contextual factors that affect how leadership styles are perceived. For example, in the military identification and autonomy may be taken away due to the strict dress codes and appropriate behavior accepted. These rules or regulations may impact the relationship between servant leadership and harmonious passion. Further studies should be done in specific contexts to see how results change based on environmental factors.

Lastly, there is concern for the stability and consistency of servant leadership's impact on certain outcomes over time (Thao & Kang, 2018). Whether impactful changes are fully under the leader's control or determined by external factors, variability in such outcomes over time is probable. Consistency in empirical findings is significant being that results influence how scholars classify the effectiveness of certain leadership styles. Thus, future studies should include a longitudinal design to measure consistency and gain reliability in results.

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