THE INDIVIDUAL HEALTH OUTCOMES OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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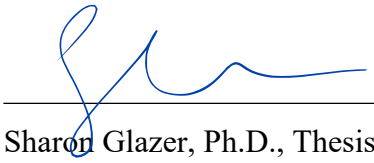

Sharon Glazer, Ph.D., Thesis Chair University of Baltimore

Kevin Wynne, Ph.D., Second Reader University of Baltimore

ABSTRACT

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by Branden M. Lynam

This study explores the personal occupational health implications of servant leadership behavior for individual leaders adopting this style of leadership. The study sample included 156 working professionals from both the United States Department of Defense (including military service members) and the private sector serving in a leadership position. Respondents completed a survey that asked respondents about their leadership styles, as well as their behaviors associated with absenteeism and presenteeism, and psychological well-being associated with engagement and emotional exhaustion. Incorporating self-determination theory and conservation of resources theory, this study examined the extent to which servant leadership behavior would relate with leaders' behaviors and well-being. In particular, it was expected that self-reported servant leadership style would negatively correlate with absenteeism and positively correlate with presenteeism. Additionally, it was expected that servant leadership would positively correlate with work engagement and negatively correlate with emotional exhaustion. Although the data do not support a relationship between servant leadership and either absenteeism or presenteeism, they do reveal a strong correlation in the hypothesized directions between servant leadership and both work engagement and emotional exhaustion. These findings provide unique insight into the psychological benefits of the servant leadership style as it pertains to the leader. The study also serves as an important integration of established theoretical bases for the domains of individual motivation and occupational health and stress.

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love for and joy in each of you increases and abounds daily. I am forever thankful for the light you have been to me throughout my life, but most especially throughout this endeavor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

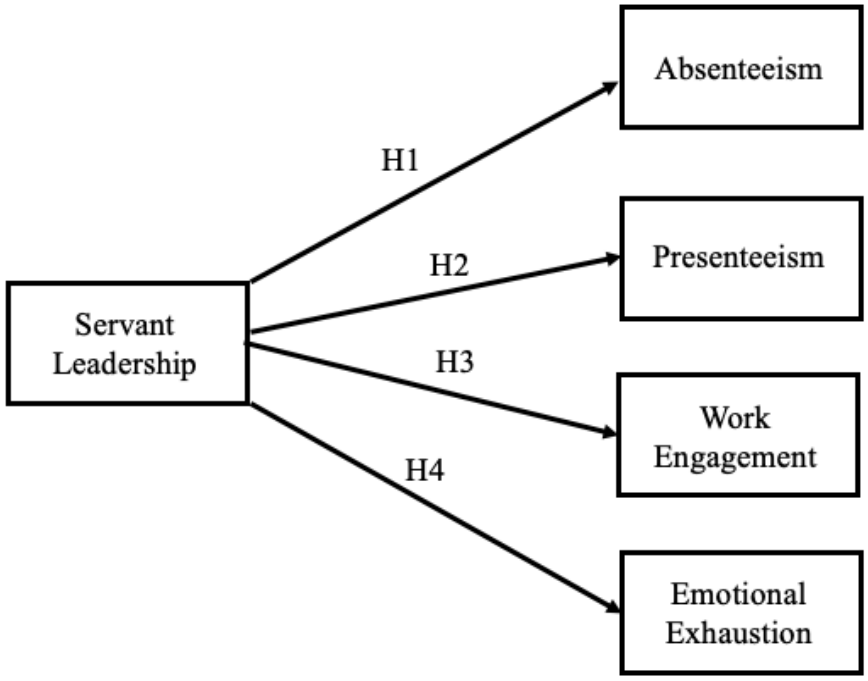
The notion of servant leadership (SL) emerged 50 years ago when Greenleaf (1970) first offered a definition of the style as one in which a leader places the utmost emphasis on the needs and best interests of his/her followers. Greenleaf's (1970) idea has since matured, but at its core are the primacy of the physical and social-psychological needs of the organization's stakeholders (Mayer, 2010; Mayer et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). More attention has been paid to the study of SL since the mid-2000's when millennials entered the workforce exhibiting distinct preferences for socially integrated, ethical work environments with higher levels of supervisor-subordinate interaction, disrupting previous paradigms that favored autocratic or transactional leadership styles in the workplace (Chou, 2012; Milligan, 2017). At the organizational level, companies have had to appraise, and sometimes adapt, their own organizational values to satisfy these emerging preferences (van Dierendonck, 2011). At least one outcome of this adaptation is a swell in the popularization of SL style. Leaders inclined toward SL behaviors may be well suited to adapt to these new social-psychological demands, but little is known about the implications of SL on the leaders' well-being.

The current literature on SL offers a number of insights on its practical implications on employees at both the individual and organizational levels, such as increased subordinate organizational citizenship behaviors, prosocial demeanor, engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job and team performance, and reduced turnover intention (Eva et al., 2019). Nevertheless, despite a prevailing view that servant leaders are more likely to engage in frequent personal (and often emotional) interactions with their followers (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011), little is

known about the implications of SL style on the leader's own well-being (Xu & Wang, 2018; Xu et al., 2020). Rooted in the context of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the current study explores specific work-related and health consequences for a leader practicing the SL style. More specifically, this study attempts to answer an open question in the literature regarding the health implications of leadership for leaders themselves. Does a person's SL behaviors relate to that same person's self-reported absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, or emotional exhaustion? Pursuing answers in this line of inquiry adds to the development of SL theory and provides practical insight into the nomological net of leadership behavior and health outcomes for leaders.

Figure 1

Correlational Model of Servant Leadership and Health Outcomes as Tested in This Study



LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant Leadership

Though the concept of SL was first introduced a half-century ago, little theoretical development occurred over its first 30 years. Graham (1991) re-examined the concept of SL some 20 years after it was first introduced, presenting it as an ethical form of leadership and an alternative to transformational leadership. Although distinct from transformational leadership, SL is conceptually subsumed within a broader umbrella of charismatic leadership style. Graham's (1991) primary assertion was two-fold. First, servant leaders take responsibility for accommodating the needs and interests of all other organizational stakeholders (especially those less advantaged). Second, servant leaders try to grow and develop those around them. This growth and development is seen in subordinates' increased organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) when they have a servant leader (Ehrhart, 2004; Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1970). Servant leadership is conceptualized as a distinct moral or ethical form of leadership behavior wherein a leader's primary concerns are the needs and interests of others and the greater organizational community of which the leader is a part, over the leader him- or her- self.

De Dreu (2006) points out that *other orientation* is the degree to which any person expresses a concern for others' interests, needs, and desires. De Dreu and Nauta (2009) add that other orientation does not represent the opposite end of a bi-polar continuum with *self-concern*, or the extent to which one is concerned with their own self-interest. Thus, the servant leader's expressed concern for others may at times come at the leader's expense, but this in no way suggests servant leaders neglect self-concern wholesale, just that self-concern may not represent the dominant motivating influence for servant leaders

vis-à-vis their followers.

According to Liden and colleagues (2008) and van Dierendonck (2011), the servant leader's others-orientation demands effort in order to build meaningful relationships with followers, routinely participate in helping behaviors, and engage in emotional healing and/or perspective taking. The SL literature further suggests that servant leaders are likely to routinely perform emotional labor in order to participate in these pro-social activities and effectively connect with their followers (Liden et al., 2014). *Emotional labor* is the "management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" in order to earn a wage (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). The central idea behind emotional labor is that it is an effortful activity occurring at the individual level in the affective and cognitive domains by way of *emotional regulation*, which is the strategy or technique one employs to affect one's emotional expressions (Grandey, 2003). Even though emotional experiences may occur automatically, there is actual labor being performed through emotion regulation in order to allow an emotion to be expressed naturally (*automatic*), modify or change an emotional disposition (*deep acting/ regulation*), or suppress an emotion altogether in favor of another emotional expression (*surface acting/regulation*; Grandey & Melloy, 2017). Arguably, SL behaviors involve deep thought and effort, and emotional regulation may be involved in order to produce the desired social-psychological outcomes in followers. That is, SL is likely both cognitively and emotionally demanding; this also suggests that it draws upon an individual leader's resources.

Occupational Stress and Health

For over a decade, there has been an increased scholarly effort to study the role of

leadership in relation to stress and well-being (e.g., Harms et al., 2017; Lyons & Schneider, 2009). Considering SL might utilize emotional and cognitive resources, its implications on the leader's own personal well-being and organizational outcomes should not be overlooked. According to COR theory, people are apt to assess their situation in terms of resources they do or do not have and losses to those resources can be more salient than gains in those resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Therefore, Hobfoll (1989) argues that investing in resources can help to mitigate strains. The efforts a servant leader exerts to satisfy an 'other' orientation may be balanced with the leader's own self-concern for personal resources (De Dreu, 2006). However, it is possible that a SL style could be taxing to a person's resources if the behaviors are excessively emotional and cognitively effortful. In other words, consistent with the dynamic process in which stressors may lead to strains, the psychosocial demands associated with SL may result in adverse behavioral (absenteeism and presenteeism) and psychological (emotional exhaustion vs. engagement) outcomes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, by examining the link between SL style and leader well-being and organizational outcomes, the study incrementally contributes to an understanding of SL as a contributor to resource deficit or surplus.

Theoretical Composition of Servant Leadership

Antecedents

While scholars agree that an inherent desire to serve others is a defining characteristic of the SL style, the antecedents for SL include a range of individual attributes. van Dierendonck (2011) identifies three personal characteristics of the SL style: self-determination, moral cognitive development, and cognitive complexity. Liden et al. (2014) also submit that servant leaders must exhibit moral maturity and conation, or

an internal sense of purpose to act. Additionally, individual differences of emotional intelligence, prosocial identity, core self-evaluation, and (low) narcissism indicate a more complex personality profile for the servant leader (Liden et al., 2014). Eva et al.'s (2019) review reinforces the essential nature of (positive) core self-evaluation and (low) narcissism, and adds (high) agreeableness, (low) extraversion, (high) mindfulness, and (positive) organizational identification. Indeed, low extraversion, low personal ambition, and a sense of ethical responsibility toward others are key distinguishing characteristics of SL compared to transformational leadership and charismatic leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004; van Dierendonck, 2011). Overall, the servant leader's profile depicts a pro-socially oriented leader who is deliberate in executing responsibilities, cognitively developed, self-aware, and both cognizant of and effective in exercising the ability to manage personal emotions.

Servant leaders are also likely predisposed to a high level of work engagement and meaningful interaction with their followers (Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). They take active steps to be deeply involved with their followers and other organizational stakeholders. For example, they listen, communicate transparently, show respect and trust in others, guide and help, and demonstrate ethical responsibility (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). Through these actions, servant leaders empower others, help others grow professionally, empathize with others, and help to clearly situate others' fit within the larger organizational community (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011).

Mediating Processes

The theoretical mechanism through which SL style influences subordinate

behaviors and attitudes, may be grounded in Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT, a theoretical framework for motivation. SDT identifies three salient needs for individuals: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Mayer (2010) suggests that a servant leader's attention to and support of these three salient needs facilitates positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes for the follower (e.g., job attitudes, job performance, and OCB). Relatedly, SDT also offers support for the servant leader's rationale and motivation for tailoring work, processes, and rewards in a way that empowers subordinates, develops their competencies, and accentuates relatedness to the larger organization. More importantly, SDT sheds light on why servant leaders may be interested in behaving in an altruistic manner—such attitudes and behaviors may also fulfill the servant leader's own needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in some way (Liden et al., 2014).

The literature also consistently points to servant leaders striving to achieve high-quality relationships with their followers, as defined by Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). Through LMX, servant leaders remain effective only in so much as the leader and follower find such a relationship beneficial, highlighting the need for servant leaders to personally invest in followers in order to achieve their goals. Through investment in subordinates, servant leaders foster a climate that promotes various positive outcomes in their subordinates (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011), including OCB (Ehrhart, 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Thus, servant leaders likely exert considerable effort to invest in their relationships with subordinates, as well as in the workplace environment in order to achieve organizational outcomes.

Outcomes

Several follower, team, and organizational outcomes have been associated with having a servant leader. In particular, Eva and colleagues' (2019) comprehensive review of the literature showed a trend of a positive relationship between SL and follower helping behaviors and OCB. A shared view of SL in self-managed teams, also resulted in greater team integration and efficacy (Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2016). At the organizational level, SL positively related to organizational performance (Choudhary et al., 2013; Huang et al. 2016). Research also shows that SL relates to followers' work-related attitudes and psychological and interpersonal well-being, increased job satisfaction, engagement, organizational commitment, and sense of work-to-family enrichment, as well as decreased emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, ego depletion, need for recovery, work-family conflict, and turnover intention (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014; Rivkin et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2016; van Dierendonck, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012). In short, the extant literature shows a broad range of positive employee outcomes associated with SL behavior. Nevertheless, the literature is quiet on the extent to which being a servant leader positively or negatively relates with the leader's own well-being and work-related behavioral outcomes.

Leadership in Relation to Occupational Stress and Health

A number of studies have revealed that leadership behavior plays a role in the dynamic stress process for subordinate employees. van Dierendonck and colleagues (2004) highlighted the interactive nature of leadership behavior and employee well-being. Gilbreath and Karimi (2012) specifically demonstrate that both positive and negative supervisor behavior were predictive (in opposite directions) of employee job-stress-

related presenteeism. Skogstad and colleagues (2007) found laissez-faire leadership behavior is a destructive form of leadership due to its relationship with workplace stressors (i.e., job-related demands or constraints in the workplace), including role conflict and role ambiguity and negative outcomes, such as interpersonal conflict. Harms and colleagues (2017) recorded a clear positive relationship between both Transformational leadership and high LMX and lower reported stress and burnout from subordinates. They also found strong support for a relationship between abusive leadership and high levels of reported stress and burnout from subordinates. Despite evidence that various leadership behaviors relate with followers' strains, little is known about the role of SL behavior on the health and well-being for leaders adopting the style. The present study examines SL style in relation to several specific outcomes for leaders, including absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, and emotional exhaustion.

Absenteeism

In the context of occupational health, the term absenteeism is somewhat complicated. Most often the term *absenteeism* refers to the abstinence from scheduled work and work-related activities (Johns, 2010). Nevertheless, researchers and practitioners take care to draw a distinction between excused and unexcused absences (Jex & Britt, 2014). Accordingly, *withdrawal* is a term that the organizational behavior literature has used to describe consistent and deliberate avoidance of the workplace and work-related activities even when non-work demands aren't present. Withdrawal is considered a counter-productive work behavior (CWB) and, as such, is not considered supportive to the accomplishment of organizational goals and outcomes. Thus, while productive and committed members of an organization may exhibit absenteeism (i.e.,

excused absence), they tend not to engage in withdrawal (i.e., unexcused absence and/or avoidance of the workplace; Jex & Britt, 2014).

Drawing on SDT theory, workplace absence may carry notable implications for a servant leader. First, because servant leaders are also fulfilling their own needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000), being absent mitigates the opportunities to help subordinates, which could then enhance subordinate well-being and subordinate performance (Panaccio et al., 2015). Second, because servant leaders may draw a greater sense of meaning and wellbeing from actively serving others, they may be less likely to take into consideration their personal needs or demands for a day off (Xu & Wang, 2018). In sum, a servant leader's inclination to serve others also satisfies the leader's self-interest (De Dreu, 2006; De Dreu & Nauta, 2009) and, as a result, the servant leader might choose to take few absences.

Hypothesis 1: Servant leadership behavior will negatively correlate with leader absenteeism.

Presenteeism

Within the occupational health and organizational behavior literature, *presenteeism* is the act of attending and participating in work even while ill (Johns, 2010). Even work activities occurring remotely (e.g., telework) while ill are subsumed within this definition. Despite some estimates placing the productivity losses of presenteeism as high as $150 billion in the United States (Hemp, 2004), the literature does not deliver a definitive assessment of the behavior as either positive or negative (Miraglia & Johns, 2016). On the one hand, presenteeism may indicate motivation to work, satisfaction with the job, or a demonstration of organizational commitment and

citizenship (Johns, 2010; Miraglia & Johns, 2016). On the other hand, presenteeism can pose risks to the work environment for other employees in the near term and, in the long term, an increased risk of chronic health issues and interruption of work-life balance (Miraglia & Johns, 2016).

Consistent with SDT theory, literature suggests that servant leaders are likely to persist in their work-role despite personal hardship or demands due to the priority placed on carrying out their duties in service to others (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders' affinity for work even while ill may be a function of their motivation to satisfy their own intrinsic needs to be actively serving their followers. Drawing on COR theory, it is possible that servant leaders think that by showing up to work ill, they are mitigating resource losses associated with illness by simultaneously generating a surplus of other salient resources, such as a personal sense of purpose and connectedness, as well as increased subordinate engagement and performance.

Hypothesis 2: Servant leadership behavior will positively correlate with leader presenteeism.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Work engagement can be further deconstructed into the components of vigor (i.e., high energy, mental resilience, and persistence), dedication (i.e., personal involvement, perceived significance, and challenge), and absorption (i.e., high focus and concentration that is satisfying and difficult to interrupt; Bakker et al., 2008). In the broader context of occupational health and stress, work engagement is notable for its association to several

positive outcomes. The work engagement literature highlights positive physical health (e.g., Seppälä et al., 2012), motivational (e.g., initiative, enthusiasm, creativity; Bakker et al., 2012; Sonnentag, 2003), and job-related outcomes (e.g., improved in-role and extra-role performance and turnover; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008) linked to high levels of work engagement. Moreover , emotional stability, conscientiousness, positive affect, task significance, and positive core self-evaluation have been shown to be antecedents of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2014), as well as of SL (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011; Xu & Wang, 2018). Thus, the extent to which servant leaders are engaged in the work they do for others may have implications for their own personal well-being and SL might be an antecedent of personal work engagement.

Hypothesis 3: Servant leadership behavior will positively correlate with work engagement.

Emotional Exhaustion

Schaufeli et al. (2002) contrast work engagement with burnout's subcomponents: emotional exhaustion (vs. high energy or vigor), cynicism (vs. dedication), and reduced efficacy (vs. absorption). *Emotional exhaustion,* or the feeling of being emotionally drained or depleted, represents the primary affective symptom of burnout and has received substantial attention in the occupational health literature (Jackson et al., 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Individuals who report a deep level of involvement in their work, including a high frequency of emotional interaction with others (e.g., clients, coworkers), commonly experience emotional exhaustion (Jackson et al., 1986). Thus, emotional exhaustion is of interest in the study of leadership behavior, since one typically cannot exercise leadership without frequently interacting with others.

The literature on SL indicates that servant leaders are likely to engage in emotional labor through frequent emotional exchange and the deliberate use of emotional expression in order to accommodate the emotional needs of followers, namely emotional healing (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). In fact, it may very well be that servant leaders demonstrate a proclivity for emotional labor in seeking out such emotional interactions with their followers as a function of their service orientation (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). Despite the literature on emotional labor clearly suggesting that the act of leading is potentially a resource-depleting activity (Arnold et al., 2015; Haver et al., 2013; Humphrey, 2012; Humphrey et al., 2008;), the SL literature offers limited insight on the implications for the servant leader's overall health and well-being (Eva et al., 2019; Panaccio et al., 2015; Xu & Wang, 2018). Several studies, however, provide empirical insight into the effects of various emotional regulation strategies.

Martínez-Iñigo and others (2007) found that Spanish physicians employing automatic expression with respect to their patients exhibited a decrease in emotional exhaustion, while those employing deep acting recorded a neutral status on emotional exhaustion. Still, for physicians employing surface acting with their patients, the authors observed a positive relationship with emotional exhaustion. Goldberg and Grandey (2007) found similar results for call center employees using surface and deep-level regulation strategies. Hülsheger and Schewe's (2011) meta-analysis also reveals strong negative relationships between surface acting and well-being and job attitudes. However, these findings appear not to hold up for employees who perceive more autonomy in their role (e.g., leaders or supervisors; Grandey et al., 2005; Johnson & Spector, 2007).

Perhaps these findings explain why Xu and Wang (2018) did not find a relationship between servant leadership and emotional exhaustion.

The literature on SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that the pursuit and attainment of intrinsic goals is related to positive individual well-being and lower emotional exhaustion (Fernet et al., 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2016) Furthermore, to the extent that leadership behavior is attributed to individual motivation, a servant leader's inclination towards frequent, emotional interactions with their subordinates likely reflects some level of intrinsic motivation to seek out such interactions. Côté and Morgan (2002) suggest that emotional labor does not represent a negative experience for all individuals, highlighting the plausibility that servant leaders may very well be drawn to emotional labor in so much as it is perceived to be closely linked to a job they are intrinsically motivated to perform. Indeed, recent research by Liao and colleagues (2021) reveals that perspective-taking may be an emotionally laborious activity that servant leaders find revitalizing. And so, for servant leaders, engaging in emotional labor may not be experienced as detrimental, but instead as a resource that reduces emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1998).

Hypothesis 4: Servant leadership behavior will be negatively correlate with emotional exhaustion.

Research Summary and Goals

For some time now, leadership has been considered a factor influencing other individuals' (usually subordinates') job-related well-being and work-related behaviors (Arnold et al., 2015; Gilbreath & Karimi, 2012; Harms et al., 2017; Skogstad, 2007; van Dierendonck et al., 2004). However, literature on leadership in general, and SL in

particular, reveals little about occupational health implications for the leaders themselves. Thus, this study's singular aim is to integrate insights from motivation theory (SDT – Ryan & Deci, 2000) and occupational stress (COR theory – Hobfoll, 1989) to explore—and ultimately expand understanding of—how SL behavior relates with the leader's own work-related behaviors and psychological well-being.

METHOD

Procedures

The study used a single web-based survey instrument that was administered on the Qualtrics survey platform (see approval from The University of Baltimore's Institutional Review Board in Appendix A). The sampling frame included US citizens currently serving in a leadership position within the US Department of Defense, US federal government, or the private sector. A convenience sample was assembled through three recruitment sources: the researcher's personal network of individuals fitting the sampling frame, a professional organization to which the researcher belongs, and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk).

Web links to the survey were distributed via email to the researcher's personal contacts and to the professional organization with a request to forward the survey link to other potential participants. Survey links deployed through Amazon MTurk were advertised as a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) for Amazon MTurk workers to complete. While the use of personal contacts and access to a professional organization's network of members allowed the researcher to better target individuals likely to fit the sampling frame (Watters & Biernacki, 1989), Amazon MTurk allowed the study to generate a larger and more diverse sample quickly without sacrificing data quality (Boas et al.,

2018; Buhrmester et al., 2011).

The survey was distributed by email (a link to the Qualtrics survey) to 36 personal contacts and 115 members of a professional organization with which the researcher is affiliated. In addition, 200 MTurk workers were targeted in this study. The survey included demographic screening questions to maximize the likelihood that participants truly fit the following sampling frame criteria for the study: 1) US citizen; 2) currently employed; 3) serving in a leadership position. The study excluded non-US, unemployed or retired individuals, and individuals not currently serving in a leadership position.

In addition to the main study variables, the survey included two attention-check questions to assess participant engagement: "select 'disagree' for this question," and "select 'never' for this question." Participants failing even one of the attention-check questions still received the incentive or compensation for completing the survey, but the response data were omitted from the study's analysis. As an incentive for completing the survey, participants from among the researcher's personal contacts and the professional organization were offered an entry into a drawing for one $100 Amazon gift card, whereas MTurkers were paid $2.50 for completing the survey. Data were collected over a span of approximately 10 weeks from early June to mid-August 2020.

Participants

This study consisted of US citizens currently employed in a leadership position. Demographic screening questions were incorporated in the survey, such that only respondents meeting these sampling criteria were invited to complete the survey in its entirety. Additionally, the survey's demographic screening questions allowed participants to specify the nature of their employment as either a member of the US military (i.e.,

active duty, reserve, or national guard), the US federal government, or the private sector (including self-employed).

A total of 351 individuals met the sampling criteria for the study and were invited to complete the survey. While demographic questions were optional, individual responses were included in the final data set only if all of the main survey items were completed and attention check questions were answered properly. After reviewing the data, 192 responses (80 of which were from MTurkers) were determined to be incomplete (i.e., more than half the survey was incomplete), whereas 3 responses included improper responses to attention check questions. Overall, this rendered a final sample of 156 participants, of which 19 were drawn from the researcher's personal contacts, 17 from the researcher's professional organization, and the remaining 120 from the Amazon MTurk worker pool. A one-way, between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the different recruitment sources did not reveal any significant differences between the groups on any of the variables of interest in this study.

Table 1 provides a summary of the sample's descriptive data. The majority of the study's participants were employed full-time in the private sector (or self-employed; 79.5%); 15.4% identified as military members, and 5.1% identified as civilian federal government employees. Of the 156 respondents, 64% were male, and the mean years of professional leadership experience was 9.7 (SD = 7.2) years. The racial composition of the sample consisted of 70.5% White, 12.2% Asian, 5.8% Black or African American, 5.1% Hispanic or Latin American, 4.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.6% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; 1.3% of sample participants declined to respond to the question. The age range of the sample spanned from 24 to 66 years, with a mean age

of 37.2 (SD = 8.4) years. A clear majority of the sample (82.7%) had earned at least a bachelor's degree and nearly one-third (30.8%) held a graduate degree.

Table 1

Sample Demographics

Variables		Survey One Sample Proportion *n* = 156
Sex	Male	64%
	Female	36%
Age	*M*	37.2
	SD	8.4
Race	White	70.5%
	Black or African American	5.8%
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	4.5%
	Asian	12.2%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.6%
	Hispanic or Latin American	5.1%
	Decline to Respond	1.3%
Education Level	High School Diploma	17.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	51.9%
	Master's Degree	27.6%
	Doctoral Degree	3.2%
Years of Leadership Experience	*M*	9.7
	SD	7.2
Employment Category	Military Member	15.4%
	Civilian Federal Employee	5.1%
	Private Sector or Self-Employed	79.5%

Measures

The survey instrument consisted of demographic questions and five unique scales to measure the focal constructs: servant leadership, absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, and emotional exhaustion.

Demographics

Sex, age, race, education level, years of leadership experience, and employment category were gathered from survey participants (see Appendix B).

Servant Leadership

The study used the 23-item Servant Leadership Questionnaire designed to capture an individual's self-assessment of the extent to which their own behaviors and beliefs are consistent with an SL style (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). One example item reads, "I do everything I can to serve others." Items were rated on an agreement-scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5, "strongly agree." An aggregate score was computed for each participant, with higher total scores represented a greater tendency for the participant to perceive one's self as a servant leader. No items were reverse-scored or eliminated during analysis. Scale items demonstrated favorable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

Behavioral Outcomes

Absenteeism. Two self-report items were included to capture absenteeism behavior. The first question, "In the past 12 months how many sick days did you use for health-related reasons that prevented you from working?" aimed to capture legitimate absentee behavior. The second question, "In the past 12 months how many sick days did you use to avoid work or work-related activities when you were otherwise able to work?" was designed to indicate withdrawal behavior, a phenomenon that is considered distinct

from legitimate absenteeism (Jex & Britt, 2014). Respondents typed in a number to indicate frequency of absence. Following Eisinga et al. (2013), the two items demonstrated an acceptable coefficient alpha value ($\alpha = .81$) and Spearman-Brown coefficient ($r = .84$).

Presenteeism. A single-item global scale was used to measure presenteeism by way of a self-report question, "In the past 12 months, how many days did you attend work despite feeling ill or unfit to carry out your duties?" (Johns, 2011; Miraglia & Johns, 2016). Although only a single item, several studies support the use of single-item measures for more complex social or psychological constructs (e.g., Hyland & Sordergren, 1996; Sarstedt & Wilczynski, 2009; Wanous et al., 1997). Given the simplicity of reporting when one works while otherwise feeling ill or unfit to do so, one item was deemed sufficient to measure this variable.

Psychological Well-Being

Work Engagement. The study incorporated the 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale to assess self-reported engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The measure consists of three subscales: Vigor (VI; e.g., "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work"), Dedication (DE; e.g., "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose"), and Absorption (AB; e.g., "When I am working, I forget everything else around me"), with an aggregate score computed for overall work engagement. All items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1, "never" to 7, "always." No items were reverse-scored or eliminated. Scale items demonstrated favorable reliability ($\alpha = .91$).

Emotional Exhaustion. The study used the nine-item emotional exhaustion subscale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, & Jackson, 1981). An

example item reads, "I feel used up at the end of the workday." All items were rated on a binary agreement scale, 0 for 'no' and 1 for 'yes.' Responses were aggregated to produce a total score. No items were reverse-scored or eliminated. Scale items demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$).

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

As noted above, internal consistency for each scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with all scales demonstrating acceptable to favorable ratings. Where applicable, principal component factor analysis was then employed to test validity. Both Work Engagement and Emotional Exhaustion scales exhibited acceptable factor loadings. Finally, bivariate correlations between the variables of interest were computed to test Hypotheses 1 through 4.

The dependent variables of work engagement and emotional exhaustion were subjected to principal component analysis with Oblimin rotation and revealed acceptable factor loadings ranging from .50 to .92 for emotional exhaustion (see Table 2) and .32 to .93 for work engagement (see Table 3). Measures for both work engagement and emotional exhaustion boasted a sufficient level of variance explained, although each demonstrated unique deviations from theorized dimensionality as put forth in the literature. Observed correlations, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha coefficients for the primary variables in this study are described next and presented in Table 4.

Table 2

Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis with Oblique Rotation of Emotional Exhaustion

	Emotional Exhaustion	
Item	Job Induced	Personal/ Interpersonal
I feel emotionally drained from my work.	.79	
I feel used up at the end of the workday.	.77	
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	.72	
I feel burned out from my work.	.86	
I feel frustrated by my job.	.76	
Working with people all day is really a strain for me.		.90
I feel I'm working too hard on my job.		.50
Working with people directly puts too much strain on me.		.92
I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.		.67

Table 3

Factor Loadings for Principal Components Analysis with Oblique Rotation of Work Engagement Dimensions

	Work Engagement		
Item	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Vigor			
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.		.68	
At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	.32	.32	
At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	.93		
I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	.56		

Item	Work Engagement		
	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Vigor			
At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.	.90		
At my job I feel strong and vigorous.		.78	
Dedication			
To me, my job is challenging.	.50		
My job inspires me.		.92	
I am enthusiastic about my job.		.92	
I am proud of the work that I do.		.90	
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.		.74	
Absorption			
When I am working, I forget everything else around me.			.82
Time flies when I am working.		.39	.41
I get carried away when I am working.			.80
It is difficult to detach myself from my job.			.59
I am immersed in my work.		.60	
I feel happy when I am working intensely.		.67	

Hypothesis Testing

Correlational Analysis of Behavioral Outcomes

Correlation analyses were performed to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. Hypothesis 1 stated that SL behavior would negatively correlate to leader absenteeism. The data reveal a nonsignificant negative correlation (r = -.10, *ns*). Hypothesis 2 stated that servant leadership behavior would positively correlate to leader presenteeism. However, again, the data uncover a correlation near zero (r = -.04, *ns*). Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not

supported.

Correlational Analyses of Psychological Well-Being

Correlation analyses were also performed to test Hypotheses 3 and 4. Hypothesis 3 expected to observe a positive correlation between SL behavior and work engagement. Data from the first survey were supportive of Hypothesis 3, demonstrating a clear positive relationship ($r = 0.57$, $p < .01$) between SL and work engagement. Hypothesis 4 anticipated a negative correlation between SL behavior and emotional exhaustion. The results were similarly supportive for Hypothesis 4, revealing a statistically significant relationship ($r = -0.25$, $p < .05$) between servant leadership behavior and emotional exhaustion.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alpha (on diagonal) for Study Variables

Category	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Serv Ldr	Absent	Present	Work Eng	Emo Exh
Serv Ldr	156	4.10	0.42	(.90)	-0.10	-0.04	-0.57**	-0.25**
Absent	156	1.54	3.01		(.81)	0.11	-0.02	0.34**
Present	156	4.61	11.62			(-)	-0.01	0.04
Work Eng	156	5.22	0.81				(.91)	-0.40**
Emo Exh	156	1.90	2.46					(.86)

Note. Serv Ldr = Servant Leader Questionnaire; Absent = Absenteeism; Present = Presenteeism; Work Eng = Work Engagement; Emo Exh = Emotional Exhaustion.

** $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

The present study integrates extant theory on leadership, motivation, and occupational health and stress in order to determine the relationship between SL behavior and occupational health outcomes for those leaders. Previously, the vast majority of studies involving SL discussed the relationship between the behavior of servant leaders and individual outcomes for employees or the organization at-large (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Rivkin et al., 2014; Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2016). Only a few publications (Liao et al., 2021; Xu & Wang, 2018; Xu et al., 2020) have recently begun to explore the occupational health implications of leadership behavior for leaders themselves. This study adds to this small, but growing line of research by specifically investigating SL behaviors in relation to well-being and behavioral outcomes amongst those leaders through the lenses of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and COR Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Consistent with these theoretical frameworks, the study offers some evidence that a servant leader accumulates resources and benefits from SL style as evident in increased engagement and decreased emotional exhaustion.

Servant Leadership and Occupational Health Outcomes

Behavioral Outcomes

The data did not support Hypotheses 1 or 2, which proposed SL would (1) negatively correlate with absenteeism and (2) positively correlate with presenteeism. These results ran counter to the study's expectation that SL behaviors would reflect individual tendencies to attend and participate in work regardless of illness. The prevailing view that a servant leader's primary focus is followers' needs suggested that a leader adopting the SL style might thus be inclined to persist in work activities despite

one's own limiting health conditions due to the leader's own motivation to pursue their purpose to serve and achieve a sense of fulfillment (Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Contrary to this view, the findings suggest that individuals reporting SL behavioral tendencies did not exhibit any inclination toward either absenteeism or presenteeism.

van Dierendonck (2011) and Liden and colleagues (2014) both noted that servant leaders place an emphasis on ethical behavior in addition to altruistic behavior. Thus, it is possible that a servant leader's tendency to support one's subordinates and organization does not supersede their sense of and preference for ethical behavior. It may very well be that a servant leader's desire to model appropriate self-care practices for their followers results in the leader strictly reserving sick-days for use when they are genuinely ill and otherwise refraining from presenteeism (which could pass along illness), despite notable work demands. The relative equivalence that a servant leader assesses to both ethical and altruistic behavior could explain why the study revealed no clear tendency for servant leaders to either avoid absentee behavior or exhibit presenteeism behavior (Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 2002). The aforementioned explanation notwithstanding, the timing of data collection, during the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, cannot be ignored. Showing up to work while feeling sick was not an option and during the pandemic, fewer people became ill with other common viruses (Olsen et al., 2020).

Psychological Outcomes

The study revealed strong support for Hypothesis 3; self-assessed SL behavior positively related with work engagement. This finding supports established views on SL behavior in that servant leaders maintain a deep and consistent interest in the needs,

activities, and outcomes of both their followers and the organization to which they belong (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). Additionally, based on Bakker et al.'s (2014) review of burnout and work engagement, there is reason to believe that a servant leader's high level of work engagement (as observed in this study) could be predictive of other positive health outcomes, including reduced emotional exhaustion.

For Hypothesis 4, the study expected to find SL behavior to negatively correlate with emotional exhaustion, and the data indeed depict a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. This finding is consistent with Xu and Wang's (2018) observation and adds credence to the literature's assertion that servant leaders exhibit high emotional intelligence as evident in their abilities to emotionally regulate (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011). That emotional exhaustion remains low despite what is likely a high frequency and intensity of emotional interaction with followers suggests that servant leaders are likely skilled in exercising emotional regulation strategies, and perhaps even perceive emotional labor as pertinent to their duty to serve others. In other words, engaging in emotional labor is not just part of the job for a servant leader, but rather an activity they are motivated to seek out due to the satisfaction and fulfillment it provides (Liden et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000; van Dierendonck, 2011). This finding follows from the finding in Hypothesis 3 and reinforces earlier work by Arnold and colleagues (2015) linking leadership styles, emotional regulation, and burnout. Moreover, the collective support for both Hypotheses 3 and 4 suggests that the intrinsic motivation servant leaders exhibit may be a unique individual resource that promotes positive health outcomes or reduces the likelihood of strains (Hobfoll, 1989; Liden et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Limitations

Like all scientific research, this study includes several notable limitations. The most obvious and dramatic limitation stems from the COVID-19 pandemic, which represents a historical threat to the study's external validity (Shadish et al., 2002). Due to unique public health restrictions on social interactions and organization's widespread use of remote work policies, the accuracy of self-reported tendencies for the study's variables of interest (especially absenteeism and presenteeism) is likely diminished. Beyond impacts to self-reporting, the pandemic also likely influenced both the study's sampling method and research population. Although the study's use of Facebook and Amazon MTurk to recruit convenience samples does not represent a critical research design flaw (Boas et al., 2018; Buhrmester et al., 2011), the pandemic indirectly undermined the study's targeted sampling method by way of increased work-from-home policy implementation, which displaced many leaders from their conventional workplace environments and reduced the likelihood of subsequent snowball recruitment.

Furthermore, although there is some indication that for some people the work-from-home orders brought unexpected positive health outcomes (Williams et al., 2021), even some otherwise psychologically and physically healthy participants encountered some form of negative behavioral or psychological outcomes as a result of the pandemic. Reductions or complete suspensions of work, increased remote/telework, and an increase in the observed incidence rates for anxiety and depression have been documented as some of the most pervasive social and psychological strains (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Rajkamur, 2020). Recently published and ongoing research is also revealing clear behavioral strains in the form of substance abuse and addiction (Volkow, 2020; Zaami et

al., 2020). Such radical changes to the work environment and increased work-from-home mandates likely meant the study's participants perceived and processed job demands differently from how they might otherwise in a typical workplace environment. In the current study this means that participants also likely did not exhibit the same absentee and presentee behavioral tendencies. Thus, while it is difficult to surmise whether the pandemic influenced this study's results, overall, it remains a plausible confounding factor.

Another limitation of the present study is that it relied strictly upon self-report data, which presents several potential concerns. First is common method variance, wherein there might be a reduced likelihood that variance observed in the self-report data is due to the psychological phenomena of interest rather than the method of data collection (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second is self-report bias and desirability bias in this study. On the one hand, self-report bias could have impacted the validity of responses if respondents did not respond truthfully, were indifferent or insensitive to the construct(s) of interest, or were influenced by momentary variations in their own affective disposition or environment (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). Social-desirability bias, on the other hand, might have influenced participant response given the self-report nature of both the SL scale and Utrecht work engagement scale and respondents' desire to appear favorable in both the domains of leadership and job performance (Paulhus, 1984). Nonetheless, that absenteeism was not rated particularly low or presenteeism particularly high compared to employee engagement and emotional exhaustion, suggests that bias might not be a major concern. Limitations notwithstanding, the present study remains among the few that explores occupational health outcomes for servant leaders.

Future Research

Five areas of future research are recommended to improve upon this study. First, although this study clearly demonstrates support for a relationship between SL and both work engagement and emotional exhaustion, it does so through a cross-sectional design. Future research might employ a longitudinal design in order to determine whether any meaningful variation in psychological outcomes appears over time (Davis & Smith, 2005; Weathington et al., 2010). Measuring any variation would allow researchers to gain a better understanding of how strongly leadership behaviors factor into any occupational health outcomes. Second, the data are self-reports; it would be ideal to have subordinates rate supervisors on their leadership style and relate that with objective measures of absenteeism, as well as self-report assessments of this study's outcome variables.

Third, this study only considers a single leadership style absent any relationship to other notable variables like personality or general mental ability (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Judge et al., 2002; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Future research would do well to adapt an approach like Arnold and colleagues (2015) to compare SL with other self-reported leadership styles or preferences in order to discern if any unique occupational health outcomes are clearly linked to SL more or less than any other particular leadership style. Fourth, future research could expand the nomological net of SL. For example, emotional exhaustion may moderate the relationship between servant leadership and absenteeism, explaining when a servant leader might be absent, or may function as a mechanism (serving as a mediator) through which absenteeism increases (or decreases).

Finally, subsequent studies should also examine the extent to which the applied effort varies from individual to individual for a given leadership style. As literature on

both emotional labor (Grandey & Melloy, 2017) and leadership and personality (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Judge et al., 2002; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998) suggest, the extent to which a leadership style aligns with one's emotional regulation skills and individual differences may reveal how much effort a leader is likely to apply to performing in their role. Gaining a better understanding of this interaction as it pertains to the dynamic stress process could allow organizations and individuals alike to be better prepared for the cognitive and affective demands of leadership.

Implications

Though a generalized relationship between leadership behavior and follower health and well-being has been acknowledged for some time (Gilbreath & Karimi, 2012; Liden et al., 2014; Montano et al., 2017; Skogstad et al., 2007; van Dierendonck, 2004), fewer insights have been generated regarding the implications of leadership behavior for leaders themselves (Eva et al., 2019). This study is among the first to specifically capture insights for SL theory and occupational health and well-being by demonstrating measurable relationships between SL behavior of supervisors and their experience of psychological outcomes like work engagement and emotional exhaustion. Two implications of this study stand out in particular.

First, this study extends the work by Wheeler and Barbuto (2006) by demonstrating the reliability of the SL Questionnaire to measure self-reported SL behavior. As such, the study not only reinforces that SL is an empirical construct, but also provides evidence for a relationship between SL behavior and positive health and well-being outcomes for leaders (i.e., increased work engagement and decreased emotional exhaustion). These findings in the study of leadership and occupational health are notable

in a broad sense, because it exposes the presence of a definable leadership style that may very well bolster healthier psychological and physiological well-being for the leader as well as his/her followers. This merits attention in the literature due to the current lack of understanding about how leadership style and behavior relates to the occupational health and well-being of leaders (Eva et al., 2019).

The second noteworthy implication of this study's findings pertains to the broader domains of organizational selection, socialization, and occupational health. First, understanding that any leadership style is related to particular occupational health outcomes suggests that methods of selection, socialization, and performance management may be manipulated in order to maximize the probability of achieving positive organizational outcomes for both subordinates and those performing in leadership roles (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Schneider, 1987). Several works highlight the predictive utility of general mental ability and personality traits in identifying individual inclination towards leadership behavior in general (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Judge et al., 2002; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Thus, considering the benefits of SL, organizations might stand to enhance selection and development by adopting the servant leadership questionnaire in order to assess candidate proclivity for SL style.

Second, this study also reveals SL style as a potential means for organizations to actively manage stressors for incumbent leaders (Hargrove et al., 2011). More specifically, organizations can introduce the concept of SL to its supervisors as a means of reframing how they perceive the external work environment and their station in it. Organizations can also outline practical SL behaviors for supervisors to engage in with respect to their subordinates. Topical exposure and training in SL could thus be adapted

as a preventative stress method in order to improve individual outcomes for leaders and employees (Glazer & Gasser, 2016; Hargrove et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Overall, this study yields incremental contributions to the literature on leadership and occupational health and stress. The cumulative evidence of this study reveals SL as a leadership style with unique and compelling ties to positive outcomes in leader well-being. The study serves to reinforce calls for a closer examination of leader health and well-being. Such insights are useful to individuals serving in (or pursuing) leadership roles, as well as organizations seeking to understand the stress process and how to achieve positive outcomes for not just their employees, but also for their leaders. Understanding the implications of SL behaviors on self and others can provide organizations and leaders with a roadmap for training so as to create a more sustainable leadership archetype.

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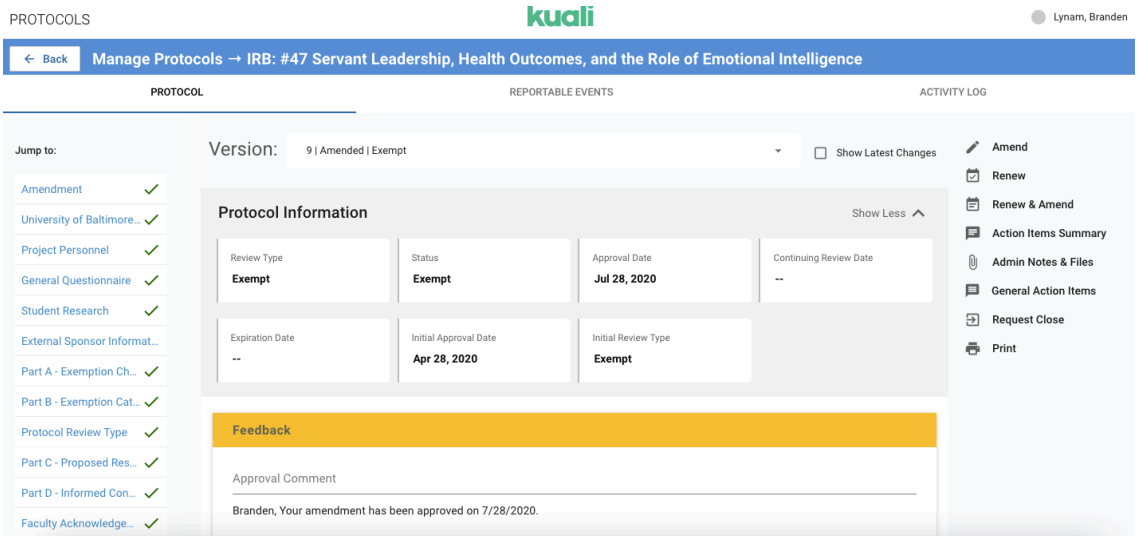
APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board



APPENDIX B

Survey Items

Demographic Items Assessed

1. Are you currently a supervisor with at least two subordinates?
    - Yes
    - No

2. Are you a citizen of the United States?
    - Yes
    - No

3. I am a...
    - Military member
    - Federal government civilian employee
    - Other

4. Gender
    - Male
    - Female

5. Race
    - White
    - Black or African American
    - American Indian or Alaska Native
    - Asian
    - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    - Hispanic or Latin American
    - Decline to respond

6. Age (free text response; real number between 22 and 99 required)

7. Education Level

- High School Diploma
- Post High School Studies and/or Industry Certifications Alone
- Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree with Advanced Studies or Industry Certifications
- Master's Degree
- Master's Degree with Advanced Studies or Industry Certifications
- Doctoral Degree
- Doctoral Degree with other Advanced Degree or Industry Certifications

8. Years of Professional Leadership Experience
(free text response; real number between 0 and 75 required)

Main Survey Items

Servant Leadership

Participants reported their self-assessed leadership tendencies by rating their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1, “strongly disagree,” to 5, “strongly agree.”

1. I put others’ best interests ahead of my own.
2. I am someone that others turn to if they have a personal trauma.
3. I am alert to what is happening around me.
4. I am good at anticipating the consequences of decisions.
5. I believe that the organization needs to play a moral role in society.
6. I do everything I can to serve other.
7. I am good at helping others with their emotional issues.
8. I am usually good at anticipating what’s going to happen in the organization.
9. I encourage others to dream big about the organization.
10. I believe that our organization needs to function as a community.
11. I sacrifice my own interests to meet others’ needs.
12. I am talented at helping others to heal emotionally.
13. I have good awareness of what’s going on around me.
14. I encourage others to offer compelling reasons for choices.
15. I see the organization for its potential to contribute to society.
16. I go beyond the call of duty to meet others’ needs.
17. I am one that can help mend others’ hard feelings.
18. I am in tune with what is happening around me.
19. I encourage others to have a community spirit in the workplace.
20. I am good at helping others to share their thoughts.
21. I am good at anticipating the consequences of decisions.
22. I am good at gently persuading others without being pushy.
23. I am preparing the organization to make a positive difference in the future.

Behavioral Health Outcomes

Absenteeism

1. In the past 6 months how many sick days did you use for health-related reasons that prevented you from working? (free text response; real number between 0 and 365 required)
2. In the past 6 months how many sick days did you use to avoid work or work-related activities when you were otherwise able to work? (free text response; real number between 0 and 365 required)

Presenteeism

1. In the past 6 months, how many days did you attend work despite feeling ill or unfit to carry out your duties? (free text response; real number between 0 and 365 required)

Psychological Health Outcomes

Participants reported their level of work engagement by rating the extent to which they encountered the stated experience on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1, "never," to 7, "never." Participants reported their level of emotional exhaustion by responding "yes" or "no" to indicate whether they experienced the stated disposition.

Work Engagement

1. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
2. To me, my job is challenging.
3. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
4. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
5. My job inspires me.
6. Time flies when I am working.
7. At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

8. I am enthusiastic about my job.
9. I get carried away when I am working.
10. I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
11. I am proud of the work that I do.
12. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
13. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
14. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
15. I am immersed in my work.
16. At my job I feel strong and vigorous.
17. I feel happy when I am working intensely.

Emotional Exhaustion

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
5. I feel burned out from my work.
6. I feel frustrated by my job.
7. I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
8. Working with people directly puts too much strain on me.
9. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.