

# EXPLICATING THE SYNERGIES OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY, ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, SERVANT LEADERSHIP, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Using self-determination theory as a foundation, the current study examined ethical leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence to ascertain any shared characteristics contributing to effective leadership. Self-determination theory espouses the centrality of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to human motivation. Servant leadership emphasizes serving and caring for others. Ethical leaders consistently make morally reasoned decisions. Emotionally intelligent leaders are self-aware and self-regulating, nurture motivation, and stress empathy and social skill. An analysis of the literature revealed 10 shared characteristics connecting the three components of self-determination theory, including awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management. Synergies among ethical leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence to leadership in a variety of settings emerged. Effective leaders use awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management contributing to needs satisfaction in followers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In conclusion, leadership effectiveness can increase when leaders demonstrate integrity, trust, and respect, serve others with empathy and fairness, and are personally and socially competent.

## Introduction

Leaders are visionaries (Bennis, 1994; Collins, 2001; George & Sims, 2007; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Greenleaf, 1970; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Through imagination and creativity, leaders translate possibilities into realities in collaboration with others (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders also are lifelong learners (Maxwell, 2008) with personal and professional growth resulting from an eagerness to ask penetrating questions, search for new knowledge, and continuously seek greater understanding (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders listen, empathize, empower people, and expand personal abilities, while motivating others to do the same (George, 2003). Former president John Quincy Adams alluded to the potential synergies among motivation, self-knowledge, values, and leadership when he suggested a leader's actions can inspire others to dream, learn, do, and become more (Luttrell, 2011). The following introduction briefly describes self-determination theory (SDT), ethical leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence (EI) to set the context for an examination of potential synergies shared.

SDT states motivation is central to how people stimulate themselves and others to act (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Ryan and Deci (2000) described SDT as focused on conditions facilitating, or forestalling, the natural processes of human motivation and healthy psychological development. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested three innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—yield the highest quality of motivation resulting in enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity.

*Ethical leadership* requires having a guiding vision, passion, and integrity, with integrity the basis of trust (Bennis, 1994). Through morally reasoned decision-making, leaders develop and nurture a values-based culture through which people grow and thrive (Bennis & Goldsmith, 2003). Ethical leaders consistently model honesty, respect, trust, and fairness and hold coworkers responsible for demonstrating the same values (Cooper, Sarros, & Santora, 2007).

Greenleaf (1970) first articulated the concept of *servant leadership* and proposed a servant-leader was not two adjectives, nouns, or roles, but paradoxically a singular concept or word with its meaning greater than

either part individually. Greenleaf (1977) urged leaders to be servants. He emphasized servant-leaders helped others develop as persons who could in turn lead by serving others. The servant-leader focuses on serving followers while forming meaningful, long-lasting relationships. A servant-leader listens, shows awareness of others, demonstrates empathy, does what is morally right, and commits to serving others (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant-leaders prioritize the learning and development of others more than financial outcomes (Frick, 2004).

*Emotional intelligence* encompasses the management of self and relationships with others effectively (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence, which anyone can develop, is twice as important to organizational and personal success as is possessing just intelligence and technical skills (Goleman, 1995). Emotionally intelligent leaders help people break old behavioral habits and teach others how to develop and model the five components of EI—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Goleman, 1998a).

Humans have innate psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985) emphasized that since people are motivated intrinsically and extrinsically by needs, validation can come through honest and respectful treatment, feelings of fairness and caring, and emotional affirmation.

Unethical behaviors by leaders abound in the workplace, as described by Brown and Mitchell (2010) and many others. For example, abusive supervision occurs when employees are harassed emotionally and even physically, while falsely accusing employees of misbehavior or termination without cause suggests toxic leadership. Corporate scandals, including Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco (The 10 Worst Corporate Accounting Scandals of All Time, 2017), illustrate how top executives chose to act unethically and illegally for personal financial gain regardless of the harm caused innocent victims.

Illegal behaviors are sometimes only the tip of the iceberg. Utilizing company resources for personal use, abusing power over subordinates, and making decisions for personal gain are examples of unethical actions leaders may portray in the workplace, which creates a culture of condoning cutting corners and bending rules filtering down to subordinates. Employees often mimic

leaders' unethical actions when they misuse company time, treat others abusively, steal from employers, lie to employers and coworkers, and violate company Internet policies (Schwartz, 2015).

Servant leadership, a more recent approach to leadership, emphasizes ethical conduct among its foundational themes. Unlike the self-centered and unethical behaviors just described, servant-leaders choose to serve others first. Servant-leaders, through dedication to caring about, showing empathy to, and trusting others, nurture the development of leadership abilities in others. Companies such as Southwest Airlines and TDIndustries have shown the effectiveness of service to others as a successful operational standard (100 Best Companies to Work for, 2017; O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2000).

Emotional intelligence focuses on the capability to identify and manage personal and others' emotions. Goleman (1995) opined EI was an important predictor of success for all individuals, and especially leaders. The larger the repertoire of skills of EI developed, the more capable leaders become in responding to individuals' personalities in a diversity of settings (Vidic, Burton, South, Pickering, & Start, 2017).

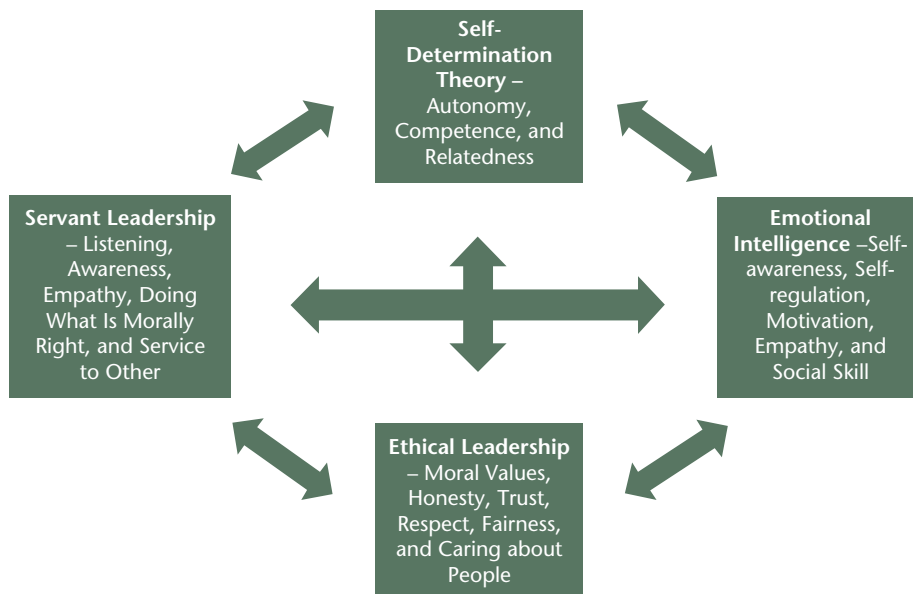
Based on the importance of meeting people's needs, morally based leadership, a greater emphasis on serving others, and the value of managing personal and others'

emotions, the major theses of SDT, ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI are described. The purpose of the current work is to explicate the synergies among SDT, ethical leadership and servant leadership, and EI, and then apply identified synergies to leadership. Figure 1 shows the framework of the discussion about the synergies among SDT, ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI.

### Self-Determination Theory

SDT, a macro theory of human motivation, provides a framework for studying intrinsic and extrinsic motivational forces in life and work. Intrinsic motivation holds the central position with each individual desiring challenges and novelty in life along with opportunities to learn and extend one's capabilities (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985) extended their foundational concept to suggest optimal motivation included both intrinsic and well-internalized extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) claimed meeting a person's psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness was essential to understanding SDT. Supportive contexts cultivated greater satisfaction, increased commitment, improved effort, and high quality performance while fostering self-motivation, personality integration, and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

**Figure 1.** Framework Showing the Interconnections Among Self-Determination Theory, Ethical Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Servant Leadership

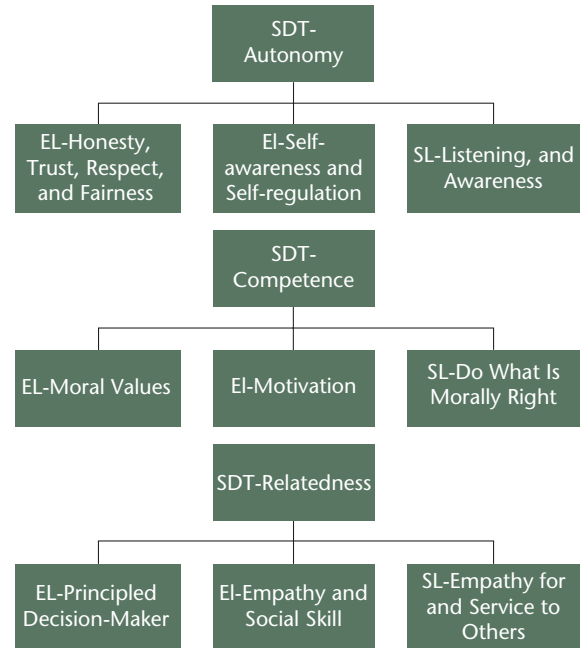


Deci and Ryan (1985) identified autonomy, competence, and relatedness as innate psychological needs of humans. *Autonomy* facilitates making personally relevant choices and exerting self-direction. When freed from external controls about what actions to pursue or decisions to make, people affirm individualized feelings and preferences. As validated and empowered people's intrinsic motivation increases, they achieve and perform at higher levels. *Competence* describes a person's knowledge, skills, abilities, and talents leading to successful and efficient fulfillment of responsibilities. Competence becomes a highly salient factor in intrinsic motivation because people typically pursue enjoyable and rewarding activities. *Relatedness* depends on reciprocity among people when they feel a sense of connectedness and belonging. Positive interpersonal relationships nurture intrinsic motivation through feelings of caring, security, and relatedness. Internalization of feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness extend SDT to illustrate how intrinsic and extrinsic motives simultaneously contribute to overall motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985), Gagne and Deci (2005), and Ryan and Deci (2000, 2007) affirmed how people motivated themselves, internalized motives, and responded to external forces, all essential to personal fulfillment, engagement, and quality of job performance.

SDT suggests leaders and followers find work intrinsically motivating by meeting needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Vidic et al., 2017). Deci, Olafsen, and Ryan (2017) reported it also contributed to high-quality performance and employee wellness. Meeting the three fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness results in autonomous motivation, described as intrinsic motivation and fully internalized extrinsic motivation, wellness, and effective job performance (Deci et al., 2017).

Figure 2 highlights the three SDT components and depicts how ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI interrelate. Autonomy grows out of and is dependent on trust, respect, fairness, listening, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Grounded on moral values and doing what is right, competence relies on internal motivation. Required for relatedness are empathy, service to others, social skills, and reliance on principled decisions. The following paragraphs explicate suggested synergies.

**Figure 2.** Synergies Showing Shared Characteristics Among Ethical Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Servant Leadership Relative to the Three Psychological Needs of Humans Within Self-Determination Theory



## Ethical Leadership

In the wake of corporate misconduct by top executives at Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, and many other companies, the importance of leaders promoting ethical conduct has heightened (Brown & Treviño, 2006; George & Sims, 2007; Hackett & Wang, 2012; Johnson, 2005; Kraemer, 2011; Thornton, 2013). Ethical values, the promotion of ethical behavior in others, and respect for the dignity and rights of others remain central to ethical leadership (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Ethical leadership is *not* finding creative ways to circumvent laws, rules, and codes of conduct to gain an advantage. Ethical leadership is *not* just complying with laws, rules, and codes of conduct, although compliance is essential. Rather, ethical leadership is going beyond legal compliance. Ethical leaders are honest, principled individuals who make fair decisions (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders communicate about ethical expectations, establish clear ethical standards, and administer rewards and punishments to ensure compliance (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders model ethical conduct (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Cathy, 2007; Wooden & Jamison, 2007).

Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) described ethical leadership as normatively appropriate personal and interpersonal conduct based on a respect for ethical values and promotion of ethical conduct in others. Values, the relative importance of things that matter in life (George & Sims, 2007), undergird normatively appropriate conduct. Exuding from values are principles, defined as standards translated into action. Values enable leaders to establish ethical boundaries or limits on actions (Brown et al., 2005).

Brown et al. (2005) developed an Ethical Leadership Scale using social learning theory as its theoretical foundation. Bandura's (1977) emphasis on role modeling or mentoring has become vital to the development of ethical leaders, with more senior leaders nurturing others to behave ethically. Ethical leaders are role models for ethical and moral conduct. Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggested *modeling the way* included clarifying values and setting the example by aligning actions with shared values. Ethical behavior by leaders shapes the ethical climate within a work setting by spreading like a social contagion (Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Roberts, & Chonko, 2009). Ethical leaders achieve social contagion by being fair, honest, and trustworthy and through virtuous behaviors nurture an ethical work climate in which employees flourish.

Pops (2009) used the career of George C. Marshall (Chief of Staff of the United States Army under presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman and Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense under Truman) to explicate ethical leadership. Pop stated that ethical leadership, especially relevant in the public sector, stresses the leader's personal values of trust, fairness, courage, and integrity as they influence organizational effectiveness. Pops lauded the core ethical attributes of Marshall's leadership. These include optimism and flexibility of mind, courage, fairness, professionalism, loyalty to goal first, to people second, integrity and honesty, and decisiveness and the principle of action. Pop summarized Marshall's ethical leadership in this way.

Closer study of the wide-ranging, combined military-diplomatic-cabinet level public administrative career of Marshall adds to greater understanding of the power and role of ethics in public leadership. It does this by focusing attention upon a set of personal

attributes and practices that are not only associated with sterling moral character but also contribute to getting things done and inspiring others to deepen and extend their own performance. (p. 89)

Ethical lapses continue to plague business leaders, potentially due to personal weaknesses and defective character. Contributing factors to potential pitfalls may be five misconceptions about ethical leadership exposed by Brown (2007). Relative to the first misconception, Brown (2007) debunked the claim ethical leaders should not worry about the perceptions of others. Often people have the propensity to rate themselves higher on values than actions as perceived by others merit, potentially causing problems. Since leaders rely on others to get things accomplished, outcomes may decrease when employees perceive leaders as less ethical than the leader's self-perceptions. To rectify such a situation, leaders need to gain insights into others' perceptions of them by inviting candid feedback.

Abundant evidence documenting how people influence other people disproves the second misconception—employees do not need ethical guidance from leaders (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Ciulla, 1995). Leaders cannot count on people automatically behaving ethically; rather, followers need encouragement, support, and ethical role models.

Addressing the third misconception, Brown (2007) stated ethics has become less important than focusing employees' attention solely on obeying the law. Ethical conduct is much more than lawful actions, which means legal obedience is insufficient. Society expects corporate leaders to demonstrate ethical behavior, not just technical legal compliance. Just because something is legal does not make it morally acceptable or ethically responsible.

The fourth misconception alleges that ethics and effectiveness are incompatible. As such, many believe taking the ethical high road impedes advancement, or "nice guys finish last." Unprincipled actions leading to financial windfalls and cheaters win reaffirm the fourth misconception. In contrast, Brown (2007) reported, "People who study organizations have found that trust and fairness are related to many positive attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes in organizations" (p. 149). Ethical leaders who exhibit trustworthiness and fairness contribute to positive ethical behaviors

and outcomes (Brown & Mitchell, 2010), while ethical leadership harmonizes well with strong individual and team performance (Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg, & Fahrbach, 2015).

The fifth misconception Brown (2007) stated was that what leaders do personally outside of work is irrelevant. Brown suggested making poor ethical choices at home could be a harbinger for making poor ethical choices at work. Leaders must act consistently while realizing others continually judge personal and professional conduct.

Ethical leaders consistently demonstrate values such as integrity, respect, beneficence, and compassion or caring for others. They make morally reasoned ethical decisions. Ethical leaders lead by example, respect and treat fairly other people, identify and effectively communicate values and ethical standards, and reinforce ethical standards and expectations continuously (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

## Servant Leadership

Greenleaf (1977) established servant leadership on the premise of individual commitment to serving first, with meeting other people's needs as the priority. Servant-leaders help individuals served become servants (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership in its simplest form means leading by serving and meeting the needs of others. Greenleaf's approach to leadership is unique because it inverts the typical leadership pyramid and commences with the leader on the bottom supporting individuals served (Russell, 2001). Servant leadership necessitates having leaders devoted to serving the needs of organizational members by listening and building a sense of community (Frick, 2004). Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) categorized the variance in servant-leaders and other leadership thought as a difference in primary intent and self-concept. The servant as leader is a steward engaged in acts of service (Greenleaf, 1977). While placing others first has been included in other leadership theories, van Dierendonck (2011) placed serving others first in the core position in servant leadership. Servant leadership is not another leadership style, instead Frick (2004) described it as a philosophy and Spears (2002) proposed it was an operational framework for institutions.

Servant leadership requires self-knowledge, which makes the fulfillment of one's basic psychological needs essential for being a servant-leader, as suggested by SDT (van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006). Servant leadership focuses on the relationship between leader and follower instead of on leader as a position (Reinke, 2004). The focus on people in the organization allows for creation of a secure leader/follower relationship (van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006).

Characteristics of servant-leaders include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to people's development, and building community (Spears, 2004), each of which will be described briefly. Servant-leaders listen to followers intently and reflectively, leading to understanding and empathizing people who want acceptance and recognition as unique individuals. Servant-leaders recognize how to help others heal. Awareness includes self-awareness and a holistic view of situations. Servant-leaders focus on persuading or convincing others to follow. Conceptualization involves being able to see the bigger picture, while remaining connected to day-to-day realities. Servant-leaders have foresight, learn from the past, understand the present, and see potential consequences of future decisions. Servant-leaders focus on the needs of others as stewards fully committed to serving others. Stewardship connects with the commitment a servant-leader makes to developing people. Finally, Spears explained how a servant-leader built community within a work environment.

Additionally, servant-leaders are accountable and self-reflective (Graham, 1991) and empower followers (Russell & Stone, 2002). After reviewing literature on servant leadership, van Dierendonck (2011) offered six key characteristics of servant leadership including empowerment and development of others, humility, authenticity, acceptance of each unique individual, establishment of direction, and stewardship. van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) advanced three propositions. First, they argued, "A leader's compassionate love is related to a stronger virtuous attitude in terms of humility, gratitude, forgiveness, and altruism (p. 126). Their second proposition reaffirmed van Dierendonck's (2011) identification of the servant-leader characteristics of empowerment, authenticity, stewardship, and providing direction. In proposition three, van Dierendonck and Patterson

(2015) claimed, “Servant leadership behavior is related to follower’s optimal functioning, sense of community, and meaningfulness” (p. 127).

Values, which play an important role in improving trust, are essential elements of servant leadership, with humility and respect expressly linked with servant leadership (Russell, 2001). According to Hunter (1998), servant-leaders demonstrated patience, were kind, honest, respectful, and selfless, show humility, were willing to forgive, displayed commitment, and led to serve and sacrificed for others. Put simply, servant-leaders prioritize meeting others’ needs and desires (Kouzes & Posner, 2010).

van Dierendonck and Heeren (2006) suggested three levels of servant leadership behavior—personal strength, interpersonal behavior, and contribution to the organization’s well-being and sustainable development. Personal strengths include integrity, authenticity, courage, objectivity, and humility. At the interpersonal level, there are two dimensions—empowerment and EI. Finally, the organizational level includes a focus on stewardship and conviction. At the organizational level, Spears (2002) suggested the group-oriented approach of servant leadership could strengthen institutions and improve society.

Researchers have examined servant leadership across many fields, including investigations of the influence of servant leadership on employees and organizations in business. Parris and Welty Peachey (2013) in their systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts concluded, “...servant leadership is a viable leadership theory that helps organizations and improves the well-being of followers” (p. 377). In sales organizations, Schwepker and Schultz (2015) reported salespeople performed positively when working for a servant-leader. For followers of servant-leaders, needs satisfaction mediates positive effects on performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2015). Jaramillo, Bande, and Varela (2015) reported the creation of an ethical work climate partially explained the impact on performance of managers practicing servant leadership.

Burton and Welty Peachey (2013) called for servant leadership as a viable leadership paradigm in intercollegiate athletics. Servant-leaders created an environment promoting employee engagement in challenging tasks, focusing on development and reflection, and increasing

team effectiveness (van Dierendonck, 2011). Goh and Low (2014) and Reinke (2004) suggested servant-leaders created trust and had a positive effect on organizational commitment and performance. Servant-leaders maintain a people-centered focus founded upon moral values and foster an ethical climate in sport organizations (Burton, Welty Peachey, & Wells, 2017).

Servant leadership means doing what is morally right, and a person’s character determines whether decisions are or are not morally right (Frick & Spears, 1996). Based on universal rules of conduct, people demonstrate character through the courage to act consistently with core values such as integrity and respect (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). A renewed focus on character sparks the best in people and fuels personal journeys of others to become better servant-leaders (Greenleaf, 1977). Values, such as humility and respect for others, are central to the very core of servant leadership (Russell, 2001).

Servant leadership offers an approach that matches the times we are in where both leaders and followers should seek to do the right things, seek the humanity within us all and offer real-world solutions that are based on moral and virtuous strengths.” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 128)

The ethical component of servant leadership remains important because of the moral ineptitude of many corporate leaders (Sendjaya, 2015). The connection between serving and holding oneself to a high moral standard persists as significant to servant leadership. Servant-leaders serve followers through high moral character, as do ethical leaders. Servant-leaders show humility, demonstrate integrity, have the courage to do what is right, encourage people to work together toward a common goal, build relationships with those served, and commit to decisions serving the needs of others. Servant leadership demonstrates a shift to leadership focused on behaving ethically, enhancing the growth of people, and facilitating teamwork for greater success.

## Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1990) crafted the term EI and defined it “as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them

and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). Essentially, EI describes the relationship between cognitive capabilities and emotions and cognitive processes of managing emotions (George, 2000). Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999) concluded EI qualified as another standard of intelligence. Additionally, Goleman (1998b), who has written extensively on EI, suggested the working relationship between thinking and the emotional brain comprised the essence of EI.

Goleman's (1998a) model of EI included self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. *Self-awareness* is the knowledge and recognition of one's emotions and influence on others. Self-aware people recognize personal strengths, weaknesses, and capabilities. *Self-regulation* is the ability to control emotions and think before acting. Being in control of one's emotions helps build a trusting environment. Goleman suggested self-regulation could enhance integrity and make leaders more adaptable and flexible. The third component, *motivation*, is the pursuance of goals with energy and persistence that seeks to achieve for the sake of achievement, not for external rewards. Understanding the emotions of others and being able to treat people accordingly describes *empathy*. It is important for leaders to display empathy to encourage employees to stay with an organization. Finally, *social skill* is the ability to manage relationships and build networks and common ground. Social skill is the outcome of all other EI dimensions. Goleman (2001) provided a more concise model including the four domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, which essentially combine the motivation component within relationship management. Most often people use related abilities in conjunction with each another.

While competing models of EI exist, all models include management and awareness of one's emotions and the emotions of others (Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006). Properly managed emotions influence productivity by encouraging trust and loyalty (Cooper, 1997). Additionally, individuals with higher EI are more successful, develop better interpersonal relationships, lead more effectively, and enjoy better health. Schutte et al. (2001) reported connections between EI and many interpersonal relations. Higher EI

scores relate to higher scores for empathic perspective, self-monitoring, social skills, greater cooperative responses toward partners, more desire for inclusion and affection, and higher marital satisfaction. Goleman (2001) stated emotionally intelligent leaders created a nurturing and encouraging working environment for employees.

Goleman (1998a) described EI as more important for employees, and leaders, than traditional intelligence quotient (IQ). Since work environments often elicit a variety of emotions (Brown, 2014), leaders who deal with the emotions of others effectively are the most successful (Goleman, 1998a), suggesting the most effective leaders have strong EI. At the upper echelons within organizations, because differences in technical skills level out, EI becomes stronger and more important for differentiating among effective leaders (Goleman, 1998a). George (2000) explained how EI and effective leadership interacted. Leaders with high EI develop a vision by enhancing personal abilities to process information on challenges, threats, issues, and opportunities (George, 2000). Leaders with EI also carefully reevaluate judgments by taking into account the influence of personal moods on decisions (George, 2000). Leaders with EI improve communication with employees by understanding followers' emotions and enhance the company's effectiveness through effective leadership, while also directly affecting others' moods and behaviors (Goleman et al., 2002).

Deliberate training potentially improves EI in employees and leaders (Cherniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan, & Adler, 1998; Groves, McEnrue, & Shen, 2008). Nafukho, Muyia, Farnia, Kacirek, and Lynham (2016) reported EI scores changed after a 5-day training workshop focusing on the four dimensions described by Goleman (2001). Cherniss et al. (1998) suggested a four-phase process for improving EI in organizations—preparation, training, transfer and maintenance, and evaluation. During the *preparation* stage, individuals need to be motivated to change and maintain motivation. In the first phase, the process includes identifying the organization's needs, assessing personal strengths and limits, providing feedback with care, maximizing learner choice, encouraging participation, linking learning goals to personal values, adjusting expectations, and gauging readiness to change. Next,



the learner advances into the *training* phase, which includes fostering a positive relationship between trainer and learner, maximizing self-directed change, setting clear goals, breaking goals into manageable steps, maximizing opportunities to practice, providing frequent feedback on practice, relying on experiential methods, building support, using models, enhancing insight, and preventing relapse. In the third phase, learners have to *transfer* skills to the workplace and then *maintain* improvements, thus encouraging the use of skills on the job, supporting a learning culture, and removing situational constraints. Finally, conducting an on-going *evaluation* of the change is essential during the fourth phase. Determining the level of program effectiveness often stimulates improvement.

Goleman (2001) concluded EI should be a more important consideration for promotion than IQ. Additionally, Goleman (2001) suggested higher education institutions should be developing EI in students because 80% of the factors determining success were associated with EI (1995). The potential influence of high EI on success in the workplace and satisfaction in life make improvement an important consideration for leaders.

## Discussion about Leadership Synergies

Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1979) argued leadership was situational with effectiveness requiring different styles of leadership. Even though the command-and-control leadership style has become popular, it often detracts from autonomy, competence, and relatedness by limiting employees' engagement and commitment (Anderson & Anderson, 2017). With social and cultural factors influencing an individual's volition, employees prefer choices when assigned duties (Chiniara & Bentein, 2015). Organizational culture, leadership style, and leader characteristics can thwart or negate intrinsic motivation and internalization to the detriment of achieving autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Chiniara & Bentein, 2015; Deci et al., 2017; Howard, Gagne, Morin, & Van den Broeck, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2007).

Self-aware and self-regulating EI leaders help others develop personal autonomy (Goleman, 1998a). Ethical leaders encourage individual autonomy by being

honest, respectful, trustworthy, and fair while expecting reciprocal actions from others (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Servant-leaders listen attentively and show awareness of and empathy for each person's uniqueness as more intrinsically motivated individuals develop personal competence (Frick & Spears, 1996). Servant-leaders and ethical leaders ensure the competence of others is congruent with moral values (Chiniara & Bentein, 2015; Ciulla, 1995; Russell, 2001). Servant-leaders, through serving others, motivate followers to develop autonomous leadership skills (Vidic et al., 2017). Internalized extrinsic motivation within a supportive environment strengthens relatedness (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Brown et al. (2005) emphasized how ethical leaders care about people while stressing the importance of meeting the highest ethical standards. Servant-leaders display empathy toward others (Parolini, 2005). To the EI leader, managing relationships requires social awareness and relationship management (Goleman, 2001). Similarities among the characteristics of ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI, especially associated with relatedness, strongly suggest how leaders serving as extrinsic motivators help others internalize synergistic traits and build stronger bonds (Brown et al., 2005; Howard et al., 2016; Parolini, 2005).

Gagne and Deci (2005) concluded interest in and satisfaction from participating in an activity was associated with intrinsic motivation and linked with feelings of autonomy and competence. One important way a leader can facilitate greater motivation is through building a sense of community and serving others as servant-leaders do, showing empathy and managing relationships as emotional intelligent people do, and through shared values with ethical leaders (Ciulla, 1995; Goleman, 1995; Greenleaf, 1977). Chiniara and Bentein (2015) reported servant leadership strongly predicted the needs' satisfaction for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

When viewing morally correct behaviors, employees are more likely to reciprocate with higher levels of ethical behavior, increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and positive perceptions of organizational culture and climate (Neubert et al., 2009). Employees quickly perceive what is acceptable and unacceptable by observing rewards and punishments

and acting in congruence with expectations (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In a review of the ethical leadership literature, Brown and Treviño (2006) found ethical leaders typically had a proximate, ethical role model earlier in their careers, demonstrated agreeableness and conscientiousness, and used moral reasoning in decision-making processes, which supports Sivathan and Fekken's (2002) emphasis on the importance of moral reasoning as an essential component of ethical leadership. Brown and Treviño (2006) posited how ethical leaders developed organizational cultures supporting ethical conduct and affected followers' decision-making, satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the literature suggests synergies exist among ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI, especially as they satisfy the needs of employees' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Future researchers could use the proposed model to examine the relationships among these variables. The model below, based on the literature and synergies presented, suggests higher levels of EI will affect how individuals lead by encouraging them to be servant-leaders who, through both servant leadership and ethical leadership, increase employees' intrinsic motivation and improves employees' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Leaders in a variety of settings and roles could benefit by incorporating shared, synergistic characteristics to become more successful personally and interpersonally with coworkers. Testing the model could determine whether relationships interact and result in positive outcomes for employees, providing more

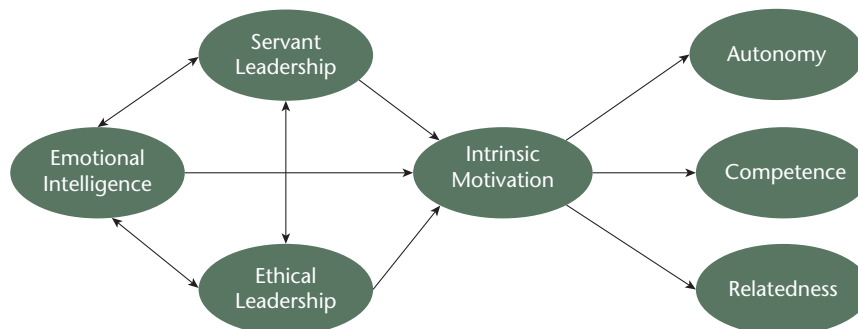
support for the adaptation and application of these concepts in the workplace.

### Applying the Synergies of Ethical Leadership, Servant Leadership, and Emotional Intelligence

Ten shared characteristics among ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI emerged from the literature review—awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management. Potentially, leaders at a variety of organizational levels could demonstrate each characteristic. A few examples of the synergies serve as a potential guide to leaders.

Southwest Airlines, Cisco Systems, and The SAS Institute rely on servant leadership, ethical leadership, and EI to achieve extraordinary results by demonstrating most, if not all, of the shared characteristics (O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2000). According to *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work for (2017), SAS, which holds the 15th position, works diligently to reduce employees' stress through flexible work schedules and on-site services to make daily life easier. These measures demonstrate care for employees, which exemplify the servant leadership orientation of the organization. Cisco, listed 67th, gives employees the freedom to innovate and make meaningful differences. TDIndustries, ranked 44th, affirms on its website five values including build and maintain trusting relationships, lead with a servant's heart, and celebrate the power of individual differences. Southwest Airlines, an airline

**Figure 3.** Model for Measuring Relationships Among Ethical Leadership, Servant Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Self-Determination



founded in 1967, remains one of the most admired companies in the United States. Each employee embraces the Southwest Way through the values of a warrior spirit, servant's heart, and fun-LUVing attitude. Through listed values, companies demonstrate organizational commitment to serving employees, which demonstrates a servant leadership orientation.

Ethical leaders with EI serve constituents by realizing how decisions influence others. While no one controls all circumstances, each person can choose to make morally responsible decisions when facing ethical dilemmas. Johnson and Johnson, a consumer products company, faced its worst nightmare in 1982 when Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules laced with cyanide killed seven people in Chicago (Rehak & International Herald Tribune, 2002). Adhering to the core values stated in its Credo (Johnson & Johnson, 2017), Johnson and Johnson pulled 31 million bottles of Tylenol capsules off the worldwide market at a \$100 million loss. As another example of viewing success while caring about how decisions affect others, Starbucks explicitly states concern about performance while still caring about humanity. Through core values, the company describes the ethical foundation for operations (Satterfield, 2015).

- Creating a culture of warmth and belonging, where everyone is welcome.
- Acting with courage, challenging the status quo.
- Being present, connecting with transparency, dignity, and respect.
- Delivering the very best in everything done with accountable for results.
- Being performance driven through the lens of humanity.

Servant-leaders make right decisions and behave in ethical ways based on values and integrity. In competitive and challenging environments, the opportunities to cut corners or make unethical decisions are endless. By behaving ethically and serving others, servant-leaders build trust and cultivate an environment of caring and respect, which discourages employees from making unethical decisions. For example, *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work for (2017) identified 17 among companies known for practicing servant leadership,

including Aflac (#57), Marriott International (#71), and Starbucks (#98) (*Fortune's* Best Companies to Work for with Servant Leadership, 2017).

Evidence links EI with a variety of outcomes in multiple industries, including performance, job effectiveness, objective performance outcomes, and workplace success (Cherniss et al., 2006). Brown (2014) advocated EI was important in careers in sales, as leaders with higher EI cultivated more successful work environments. Individuals with high EI emphasize solving problems, rather than focusing on who is at fault (Carmeli, 2003). After studying senior managers, Carmeli concluded individuals with higher EI were more committed to careers and satisfied with jobs, enjoyed a better balance between work and family, and were less likely to leave organizations. Freedman and Stillman (2016) opined, "The evidence is increasingly compelling. The *measurable, learnable skills* of emotional intelligence makes a significant impact on organizational performance. EQ (*emotional quotient*) may be essential to differentiating world-class organizations in an increasingly complex and competitive marketplace" (p. 3).

Daily print, electronic, and social media expose the need for ethical leaders, servant-leaders, and leaders with EI. Unfortunately, misplaced values and acting unethically easily and negatively affect the experiences of those led. However, when emotionally intelligent servant-leaders and ethical leaders supplant negative outcomes with awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management, benefits to others become significant.

Leaders should consider professional development to cultivate EI. One option might be completing an assessment of EI and determining any weaknesses; then, leaders could focus on personal improvement by attending workshops, enlisting employees' feedback, or working with an internal or external executive coach. For example, leaders who struggle with managing personal emotions might see a counselor to talk through strategies to manage emotions. However, if a person requires a deeper or more therapeutic approach, a licensed counselor might be the preferred option for developing EI.

Leaders can hone many of the shared characteristics, such as awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral

values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management, through self-reflection and education. Getting to know employees as individuals and investing in relationships that go beyond assigning job tasks can develop empathy. A university course on ethics could improve a leader's moral reasoning process and solidify moral values leads to improved integrity, fairness, and respect for others. Investing time and resources through self-evaluation and continual education could strengthen leaders' capabilities.

## Conclusion

Every organization is a sum of many parts. Leaders recognize how leading from the ground up with integrity, empathy, and respect nurture environments where people feel secure, supported, and motivated. Leaders who serve others will create employees who will serve each other and customers. Recognizing the interactions among ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI as driven by SDT allows leaders in all settings to create a guiding philosophy to improve organizations.

The current paper elucidated how SDT, ethical leadership, servant leadership, and EI share numerous interwoven tenets. Synergies suggest how satisfying autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs provide a foundation for developing servant leaders who are ethical and demonstrate EI. Synergies may suggest ethical servant-leaders with EI are more likely to affect followers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. If so, feelings and behaviors may positively affect organizational culture. The literature suggests effective leaders demonstrate awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management. The literature recommends effective leaders serve as ethical role models who manage themselves and others while serving others. Future leaders have the potential to develop each characteristic and model the way for others. The significance of leaders doing the right thing in service to others potentially could affect society dramatically and positively.

Potentially, ethical leaders with EI serve others while fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The literature indicates ethical leaders do what is morally

right as do servant-leaders and leaders with EI. In addition, the literature proposes emotionally intelligent leaders are personally and socially competent in facilitating strong relationships with others. Servant-leaders exemplify service to others. Furthermore, the literature suggests people are more motivated and will thrive when work environments meet individual psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Meeting individual psychological needs may be more likely to occur when people are led by (a) ethical leaders who model and nurture trust and respect with integrity at the core of all interrelationships; (b) emotionally intelligent people who display empathy and social skill; and (c) ethical leaders who are servant-leaders and prioritize serving others. Synergistically, the literature reviewed indicates the best leaders set and achieve high ethical standards, manage themselves and relationships effectively, and serve others with integrity.

Advocacy of the synergies among SDT, ethical leadership, EI, and servant leadership indicates the need for quantitative and qualitative explorations of whether there may be direct causal relationships. Specifically, recommendations for future studies include examining a variety of organizations using existing instruments and case study analyses of how integrally SDT, ethical leadership, EI, and servant leadership may affect the actions of leaders and followers.

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