

## How servant leadership is defined in leadership literature

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Servant leadership stands apart from other types of leadership in the leadership literature, with its most synonymous forms of value-based leadership approaches being transformational, authentic and ethical leadership. In this \*commentary\* I will explain just how servant leadership differs from its closely related subsets of leadership.

Starting with transformational leadership, which is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems creating valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders [1]. While there is a lot of overlap between transformational leadership and servant leadership as they are both follower-centric, van Dierendonck's review conceptually distinguishes servant leadership from transformational leadership as he stated that in transformational leadership the organisation's goals eclipse the needs of the followers [2]. Essentially, transformational leaders' focus on followers' needs is a means to an end as this technique is intended to enable the followers to achieve organisational goals. Conversely, servant leaders' focus on their followers is purely to develop them (i.e., an end in itself).

Authentic leadership is defined as a form of leadership where leaders are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and other's values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character [3]. This relates to servant leadership as servant leadership also acknowledges the importance of being authentic and true in one's interaction with others [4]. However, servant leaders are authentic due to altruistic and ethical orientations rather than being authentic for the sake of being authentic.

Finally, ethical leadership is defined as leadership related to consideration behaviour, honesty, trust in the leader, interactional fairness, socialized charismatic leadership (as measured by the idealized influence dimension of transformational leadership), and abusive supervision, but is not subsumed by any of these [5]. While servant leadership is still closely related to this, servant leadership takes stewardship into account more. That is, while ethical leadership emphasises the importance of being honest and trustworthy, servant leadership is more focussed on serving followers in order to make a positive difference.

As you can see, servant leadership has an overlap with a range of other forms, implementing values and practices from ethical, authentic and transformational leadership thus allowing us to see where it fits in the leadership literature. However, servant leadership itself is defined as an other-oriented approach to leadership manifested through one-on-one prioritising of follower individual needs and interest, and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organisation and larger community [6].

### *References*

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