

# Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership as Job Resources for Achieving Workers' Subjective Well-Being Among Organizations Based on Values

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**Introduction:** Empirical evidence shows that leadership style is a job resource that promotes employee subjective well-being among workers of value-based organizations. These organizations try to create cultures with strong values to which employees adhere, increasing their subjective well-being and transmitting the identity values. Concretely, religious organizations are characterized by transmitting their values while they perform their services. The value-based management model of religious entities is an appropriate setting for studying the effects that this style based on values has on subjective well-being.

**Purpose:** In organizations with strong value-based cultures, the most appropriate styles are moral leadership and, among them, servant and authentic leadership; thus, this research contributes from the theoretical framework of job demands-resources (JD-R) model to the open debate on leadership as job resource to promote subjective well-being and the common characteristics of these leadership styles.

**Patients and Methods:** To reach the aim of this research, a sample of workers in Catholic organizations located in Spain was used. The data was processed using partial least squares (PLS) technique.

**Results:** The results show that while authentic leadership is a job resource to achieving greater well-being among workers of value-based organizations, servant leadership is merely a resource in the presence of a perceived authentic leadership. In other words, authentic leadership exerts a total mediation in the relationship between servant leadership and subjective well-being.

**Conclusion:** The main contribution of this research lies in demonstrating that servant and authentic leadership are job resources that together promote subjective well-being among workers of religious organizations. This result rejects the previous theory that defend the redundant outcomes of these leadership styles, what undoubtedly constitutes an interesting finding for the academy. These findings also complement the social identity theory, as the identity of a service entity could justify that servant leadership generates higher levels of perceived authentic leadership.

**Keywords:** authentic leadership, governance, JD-R model, servant leadership, subjective well-being, value-based organizations

## Introduction

Academic literature on subjective well-being (SWB) has grown exponentially in recent years. As Diener et al<sup>1</sup> warn, approximately 170,000 scientific papers on the topic have been published in the past 15 years. Most of this research has focused on explaining how SWB constitutes a final objective that organizations should try to maximize. However, another line of research suggests that SWB is mainly a means of promoting the emergence of specific outcomes, such as job performance, productivity, creativity, physical and psychological health, good interpersonal behaviour and relationships, self-regulation, and longevity.<sup>2,3</sup> There is no doubt that employee well-being has become a significant concern for organizations,<sup>4,5</sup> especially those that compete intensely to attract and retain talent. Therefore, the most proactive

organizations in people management do not limit themselves to achieving business results but instead set more ambitious goals related to the health and well-being of their employees.

In this context, the leadership style is a fundamental mechanism in guiding efforts to achieve these goals, as it exerts a significant influence on the lives of subordinates<sup>5</sup> and is the most significant source of positive and negative emotions at work.<sup>6</sup> However, the effects are not as clear as might be thought at first. In the academic literature, it is found both positive and negative effects between leadership style and well-being, and even mixed effects. Thus, for example, studies by Djourova et al<sup>7</sup>, Krishnan<sup>5</sup>, McMurray et al<sup>8</sup>, Nielsen et al<sup>9</sup>, and Bono and Ilies<sup>10</sup> highlight the positive effect of transformational leadership on well-being. On the other hand, other research has confirmed that the leadership style can act in the opposite direction. For instance, Burke<sup>11</sup> shows leadership style as a work stressor, and Yang<sup>12</sup> notes a negative relationship between spiritual leadership and well-being. Finally, other authors, such as Skakon<sup>13</sup>, highlight a mixed relationship between transactional leadership and improving well-being.

One of the fields in which leadership must play a more relevant role is in managing the values that make up the culture of the organization. In the transmission of organizational values, leaders play a leading role,<sup>14,15</sup> given that an organization's ethical policies and practices are strongly influenced by those of its managers.<sup>16</sup> In this process of managing values some managers take a compliance control approach, while others seek a shared vision between employees and the organization.<sup>16</sup> In this area, Huang et al<sup>17</sup> highlight the research gap between perceived ethical leadership and psychological well-being among healthcare workers.

If there is an organizational context fundamentally focused on a culture of values, and from which quality scientific evidence can be obtained on this issue, it is the field of religious entities. Their ultimate purpose is nothing more than to deploy those values in their ordinary activity, such as caring for the elderly, feeding the homeless, or meeting children's basic needs with problems in their family environment. On the one hand, Mea and Sims<sup>18</sup> suggest that, in a business context in which predominates a climate where people is valued above material things, a spiritual perspective could contribute to improving business ethics. On the other hand, faith-based organizations are a category within non-profit entities, and they increasingly contribute to the development of world economies by providing numerous services.<sup>19</sup> These entities probably provide final services similar to other for-profit organizations in their field (education, health, social services, among others), at the same time that generate a large number of social benefits while transmitting peculiar and idiosyncratic values that shape the nuclear axis of their mission.

In recent years, morally based leadership styles have been identified, including servant leadership and authentic leadership,<sup>20</sup> which are leaderships capable of provide a more effective and consistent response to value-based organizations' cultures. Servant leadership has attracted significant interest in the scientific world,<sup>21,22</sup> but the primary efforts have been aimed at defining this concept or determining its relationship with organizational results.<sup>23</sup> The role of supportive leaders can enhance motivation and overcome mental health concerns. There is also a crucial need to investigate servant leadership in healthcare employees as it may influence workers' psychological distress and make them feel motivated. The research on servant leadership is also significant for jobs as the demand for psychologically competent people increases among organizations.<sup>24</sup>

Notably, there has been an interest in focusing these studies on the followers' perspective since a decade ago.<sup>25,26</sup> Although some research has studied the positive benefits of servant leadership for employees of for-profit organizations, such benefits have rarely been investigated among members of religious organizations. Among the most analysed benefits is workers' SWB, a primary objective for most entities,<sup>27,28</sup> as it generates beneficial effects for both the community and organizations, makes employees happy and healthy, and contributes to increasing productivity, participation and effort, as well as other aspects.<sup>29</sup>

Another emerging style of leadership is authentic leadership, which has gained ground due to the general loss of trust in leaders around the world<sup>30</sup> and, in particular, as a result of financial scandals.<sup>31</sup> In reaction, there has been a call to adopt a value-based leadership style.<sup>32</sup> For structural reasons, faith-based entities carry out their activities according to the values of their charism, and, consequently, this leadership is possibly one of the most appropriate styles to achieve their mission. Authentic leadership does not follow the traditional top-down perspective of strategic human resources management but dynamically considers the relationship between followers and leaders, who co-create a sense and perception of authenticity through their interactions.<sup>33</sup> Authentic leadership occurs as a result of a process of legitimation,

in which the follower's perceptions of the authenticity of the leader are activated by moral judgements, regarding which the value systems of the leader and followers overlap. Thus, the mere authenticity of the leader cannot be considered leadership if it is not adopted by a follower who confers legitimacy.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, some authors propose that authentic leadership helps reinforce other leadership styles.<sup>30,35</sup>

The above discussion highlights that servant and authentic leadership may represent relevant available resources to enhance SWB among religious organizations' workers. In this context, the theoretical framework of job demands-resources (JD-R) acquires a particular relevance, as the profession is characterised by its faith-based nature, the provision of human services and the highly varied performed roles.<sup>36,37</sup> This model defends that workers' well-being is related to different workplace variables classified as either job resources or job demands, irrespective of occupational context.<sup>38,39</sup> However, Tims et al<sup>40</sup> argue that managers and organizations should work on resources, as they are considered more changeable than job demands. The organization has more room to act on resources than on demands as jobs' characteristics determine the last ones. Perceived servant leadership and authentic leadership could be considered job resources as they are likely to encourage employees to achieve work goals, facilitate personal learning and development, or reduce different job demands, thus promoting their well-being.<sup>35,38,39,41</sup> To our knowledge, previous research has not investigated the fundamental role that these job resources could play to promote SWB in workers in general, and even less in employees of religious organizations in particular, what undoubtedly adds value and novelty to this research.

Therefore, this research aims to demonstrate that servant and authentic leadership are job resources that separately, but also together, generate a work environment where workers have a higher SWB. To this end, first, this research seeks to show that servant leadership results in greater SWB in religious organizations, mainly because they are service entities. In these service organizations, servant leadership should help managers present higher authenticity's levels and hence, superior authentic leadership, through their social identity. Therefore, the second goal is to demonstrate that servant leadership, accompanied by authentic leadership, can generate a higher level of well-being in these workers. If empirical research confirms this second approach, both leadership styles may be viewed as not exclusive but as complementary strategies to reinforce worker's SWB in religious organizations. This last finding would contribute to social identity theory and leadership literature's criticisms. These criticisms have been abounding throughout much of its academic life, including a perceived lack of theoretical development, overlapping constructs, redundant outcomes, or questionable measurement.<sup>42-44</sup> In this line, this investigation would also respond the research question that Eva et al<sup>21</sup> pose, asking if servant leadership predicts follower outcomes above and beyond authentic leadership.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, the theoretical framework where the concepts under study and their primary relationships are presented, from which the research hypotheses are derived. The methodology used to meet the objectives of the research is then detailed. Next, the results obtained are described. Then, the discussion examines the most relevant empirical outcomes. Finally, the article summarizes the conclusions, as well as the main implications, limitations and future lines of research.

## Theoretical Framework

This research bases on the theoretical framework of JD-R<sup>38,39</sup> and social identity theory<sup>45</sup> to propose that servant and authentic leadership are job resources that separately and together may promote SWB among workers of religious organizations. Positive effects of job resources can contribute to create and improve personal and organisational outcomes such as well-being, work engagement, and performance.<sup>38,46-48</sup> Notably, little attention has been given to JD-R theory regarding the effects of leadership as a job resource, highlighting the concrete importance of servant leadership.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the literature has noted the importance of extending JD-R research to heterogeneous samples and at the individual and organizational levels of analysis.<sup>50,51</sup>

## Servant Leadership and SWB

This research considers as a starting point that servant leadership is the most consistent style of leadership with non-profit organizations in general and with faith-based entities in particular.<sup>52,53</sup> Servant leadership was initially developed as a Christian way of life, not as a kind of leadership, so the service leader must first be a server and then a leader.<sup>41</sup> This

process occurs because servant leaders motivate their followers to pursue a shared goal that reflects their own religious and social beliefs, thus fostering a sense of connectivity between the worker and the organization.<sup>52,54–56</sup>

Greenleaf<sup>41</sup> introduced the concept of servant leadership decades ago, considering it a vehicle to serve workers, the organization and the community by putting stakeholders' interests above personal ones. Greenleaf<sup>41</sup> and later Spears<sup>57</sup> believe that servant leaders are characterized by a desire to help and serve the development of others and groups, foster community-building in the work environment, listen to workers, and demonstrate a high level of empathy and confidence in persuasion without coercion.

Later, Reinke<sup>58</sup> understands the concept of servant leadership as a participatory leadership style that prioritizes the needs of others and the organization. Following the social identity theory, this author asserts that this leadership strategy results in the construction of a community within the organization. This author points out that a servant leader works to promote the growth of the individual and the organization. Adopting as a starting point the ten essential characteristics defined by Spears, Reinke<sup>58</sup> establishes that servant leadership is a three-dimensional construct formed by openness, stewardship and vision. Openness means a servant leader's ability to listen and empathize with others. Stewardship refers to the leader's persuasion, management and commitment to people's growth. Finally, vision envisages the leader's ability to contextualize scenarios by analysing them with perspective, as well as to plan and anticipate future needs. This research uses Reinke's<sup>58</sup> concept of servant leadership.

Different authors have shown that employee well-being increases in the face of the perception of servant leadership in their organizations.<sup>23,60,61</sup> SWB is a concept that has been highly relevant in the scientific literature in recent years.<sup>62,63</sup> Diener et al<sup>64</sup> understand SWB as a multidimensional construct composed of three dimensions: flourishing, positive and negative feelings, and satisfaction with life. First, flourishing entails a sense of the satisfaction of universal human psychological needs (competence, autonomy and relatedness)<sup>65</sup>, as well as participation in significant and meaningful activities<sup>66</sup>. Second, the dimension of positive and negative feelings includes the subjective perception of feelings of well-being and discomfort (positive or negative, happy or sad, happy or angry, etc.).<sup>64</sup> Finally, life satisfaction encompasses those cognitive aspects of well-being,<sup>67</sup> ie, a general and subjective assessment of each person's quality of life, according to each person's criteria about their standard.<sup>68</sup> This research studies SWB concept using Diener et al's<sup>64</sup> multidimensional construct.

A controlling and poorly supportive leadership style, with little responsibility and lack of feedback, is linked to low levels of well-being.<sup>69,70</sup> However, a supportive environment provides positive affection and a sense of predictability and recognition of self-esteem,<sup>71</sup> attempts to meet the needs of employees,<sup>72</sup> and promotes their development and empowerment,<sup>23</sup> even above the interests of leaders.<sup>73</sup> To achieve long-term organizational goals, leaders must facilitate the growth, development and overall well-being of their teams.<sup>74</sup> Among these few pieces of evidence, one longitudinal study supports that those followers who perceive their superiors as showing an active style of supportive leadership report higher levels of well-being.<sup>69</sup> Later, other studies, such as Utriainen et al<sup>75</sup> confirmed this positive association between supportive leadership and well-being at work. Concretely, servant leadership focuses on followers' growth in different areas, such as their well-being, ethical wisdom, and emotional maturity.<sup>21</sup> Parris and Peachey<sup>76</sup> conducted a systematic review of the literature on servant leadership, obtaining a population of 39 studies, in which they observed that servant leadership is a viable leadership theory that helps organizations and improves the well-being of employees among different contexts. Later, Eva et al<sup>21</sup> also recompiled some studies that found that servant leadership and well-being are positively related such as those of Gotsis and Grimani<sup>77</sup> or Panaccio et al.<sup>78</sup> However, as far as our knowledge goes, these studies have not reported the relationship between servant leadership and SWB in the organizational context of religious organizations. Hence, this research questions whether the link between this leadership style and SWB presents any particularity in such organizations, as it is a context in which employees are attracted to the organization by shared religious and social values,<sup>79</sup> and the commitment to the organization extends, in many cases, beyond the contractual relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is based on a leader who, following the organization's vision, motivates workers in the direction of these shared values and fosters their sense of well-being.<sup>80</sup>

It states the following:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Servant leadership is positively related to subjective well-being among organizations based on values.

## The Mediating Role of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders are those who behave sincerely with their workers and in alignment with their values and beliefs,<sup>35</sup> being fully aware of how these values manifest in their behaviour, as well as how their followers perceive them. Authentic leadership fosters greater self-awareness, internalized morality, balanced information processing<sup>81</sup> and transparency in the relationships between the leader and followers.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, authentic leadership is considered by Walumbwa et al<sup>82</sup> a multidimensional concept consisting of four dimensions. The first dimension is self-awareness, which encompasses leaders' knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of their followers, and how the conduct of leaders influences others. Second, leaders' internal moral perspective refers to self-regulation of conduct according to one's values and principles, despite pressures from different groups of the organization or society as a whole.<sup>82</sup> The third dimension is balanced processing, which refers to leaders' ability to carefully analyse relevant information before making a decision, meet organizational objectives and request others' point of view even if they are contrary to their own.<sup>35</sup> Finally, relational transparency between leaders and followers refers to the openness of leaders with others, showing themselves as they really are and creating a working environment of trust that facilitates the sharing of thoughts and emotions. This research analyses authentic leadership through Walumbwa et al's<sup>82</sup> consideration.

Different authors, such as Avolio and Gardner<sup>35</sup> or Luthans and Avolio<sup>83</sup>, emphasize the high ethical standards that guide the behaviours and decision-making of authentic leaders. In this line, servant leadership and authentic leadership share the idea of the ethical component, morality, altruism, and the development of followers. They also agree on positive modelling and support of self-determination as mechanisms of influence over collaborators. As explicit components of the model, they also share leaders' self-consciousness and ethical behaviour and, as implicit elements, listening, empathy, support and help, persuasion, conceptualization and vision.<sup>35,41</sup> Consequently, some academics even claim that the presence of both leadership styles is redundant.<sup>42,84</sup> Servant leadership recognizes the importance of acting authentically and being faithful in interacting with others.<sup>35</sup> Hence, social identity theory<sup>45</sup> has illustrated how servant leaders make employees feel like partners by promoting solid bonds with them through their authentic and follower centric nature.<sup>21</sup> Following these arguments, servant leadership should lead to an environment of perceived authentic leadership. Concretely, due to the characteristics that predominate in service sector entities, servant leadership probably carries higher authenticity levels than other leadership styles. Therefore, this leadership style should create an identity that reinforces authentic leadership in these types of organizations.

Recently, different studies have analysed the relationship between both leadership styles. For instance, Banks et al<sup>85</sup> reported a large positive correlation between servant and authentic leadership (0.60). Later, Ortiz-Gomez et al<sup>53</sup> in their servant leadership scale's validation, found a positive and significant correlation between followers' perception of servant leadership and authentic leadership (0.845). Also, the three dimensions of servant leadership, independently, showed a positive and significant correlation with perceived authentic leadership: openness (0.749), vision (0.822) and stewardship (0.688). Therefore, as a consequence of all the literature exposed above, Hypothesis 2a (H2a) of this work is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Servant leadership is positively related to authentic leadership among organizations based on values.

Authentic leadership implies that leaders get to know themselves and the environment around them, thereby resulting in little or no difficulty in maintaining their course and communicating it to their followers in terms of principles, values and ethics.<sup>86</sup> Through such behaviours, these leaders can increase the satisfaction of their followers, as well as their motivation and commitment, through the creation of personal and social identification with the organization.<sup>28,87</sup> Various studies support the positive relationship between authentic leadership of superiors and well-being of followers.<sup>88,89</sup> These authors explain that authentic leadership promotes first workers' authenticity, which thereby increases their well-being. Recently, Lemoine et al<sup>42</sup> identified 11 studies, including among them Semedo et al's investigation<sup>90</sup>, that relate authentic leadership and well-being. Based on the above, Hypothesis 2b (H2b) is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Authentic leadership is positively related to subjective well-being among organizations based on values.

The overlap of leadership styles in general has been studied in the scientific literature. For instance, Bass<sup>91</sup> appeals to the complementarity of transformational leadership over transactional leadership (augmentation hypothesis), and Avolio and Gardner<sup>35</sup> support the contribution of the authenticity of the leader within the various styles of leadership. The latter goes so far as to state that the difference between a true and a pseudo-transformational leader is authenticity, which they place at the root of many leadership styles. Recent studies, such as those of Kiersch and Peters,<sup>92</sup> suggest a combined effect of servant leadership and authentic leadership that would increase the efficiency of the organization. This overlap of characteristics of servant and authentic leadership could be based on the spiritual or altruistic reason for serving others.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, such mentioned overlap, in the context of religious organizations where a servant leadership style prevails, the characteristics of an authentic leadership style are also likely to be presented. In this line, and to resume, those workers who perceive a servant leadership, could also identify the characteristics of an authentic style (H2a), which would motivate their SWB (H2b). Hence, the latter two hypotheses constitute Hypothesis 2 (H2), which suggests the following:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Authentic leadership mediates the servant leadership and subjective well-being relationship among organizations based on values.

This set of hypotheses suggests that both servant and authentic leadership are job resources that promote workers' SWB in the context of religious organizations.

Figure 1 depicts both the research model and the hypotheses proposed:

## Methodology

### Participants and Data Collection

A self-filled questionnaire was sent through Google Forms to employees working in 47 educational and social centres from Catholic religious organizations operating in Spain (30 social centres, 9 schools, 3 children's education centres, 1 language school, 1 sports school, 1 employment training centre, 1 music school and 1 comprehensive care centre). First, the questionnaire was sent to all the employees of the 47 centres, amounting to 1019 (499 workers in the 30 social centres and 520 school workers). Among the 499 workers in the 30 social centres, 283 responded to the survey; of the remaining 520 school workers, 231 answered the questionnaire. Following a data-cleaning process, 51 questionnaires out of 514 were rejected due to incomplete parts. It resulted in a 45.4% final valid response rate (260/499 valid questionnaires (52.1%) were retained from the social centres, and 203/520 valid responses (39.0%) were obtained from the educational

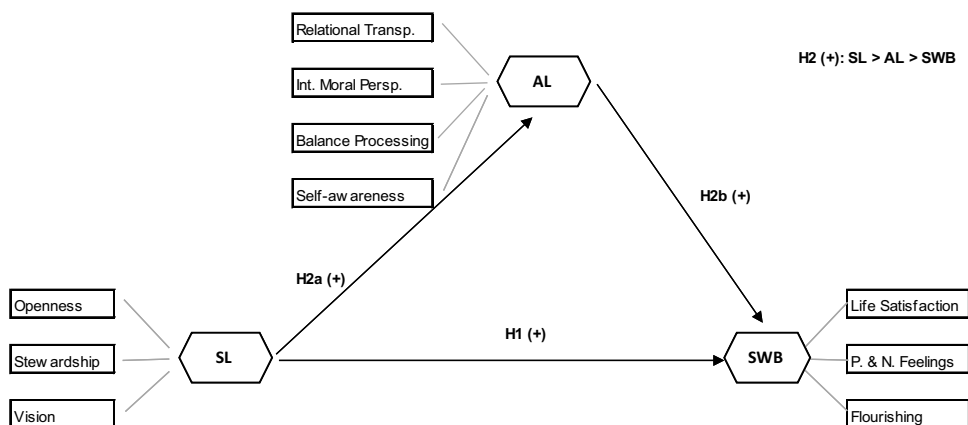


Figure 1 Research model and hypotheses.

Abbreviations: AL, Authentic Leadership; H1, Hypothesis 1; H2, Hypothesis 2; P. & N. Feelings, Positive & Negative Feelings; SL, Servant Leadership; SWB, Subjective Well-being.

centres). Data collection took place between May and November 2019. The ethics committee of Universidad Loyola Andalucía approved the research, which was developed under the standards of the Helsinki Declaration.

Among the 463 valid responses (260 from social centres and 203 from educational centres), the percentage of managers is 20.7%, while nonmanagers account for 79.3%. These organizations are highly feminized since the percentage of women (70.8%) far exceeds that of men (29.2%). The average age and seniority at work is 39.4 years and 7.4 years, respectively. The level of education is very high, as most workers have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree (91.1%).

## Questionnaires and Scales of the Variables Analysed

All variables used in this research are measured by valid questionnaires whose reliability has been tested in previous investigations. The language of the sent questionnaire was Spanish. Servant leadership is measured from the follower's point of view, using the Spanish version of Ortiz-Gómez et al called SSLS6-3F (Spanish Short Servant Leadership Survey),<sup>53</sup> which is developed from Reinke's version<sup>58</sup> and includes the original three dimensions of openness, stewardship and vision. Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), on which a higher score represented a higher perception of servant leadership.

Authentic leadership is measured by the Spanish version of the ALQ (Authentic Leadership Questionnaire), developed by Molero et al<sup>87</sup> from the original scale of Walumbwa et al.<sup>82</sup> This questionnaire is designed to evaluate the four fundamental components of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized morality, balanced processing, and relationship transparency. It includes 16 items for which followers indicate how often each statement fits the leadership style of their superior. Ranking is conducted through a Likert scale ranging from 1 (nothing) to 5 (always), with a higher score indicating a higher level of perception of this style of leadership.

Finally, SWB is measured by the scale designed by Diener et al,<sup>64</sup> which evaluates the three dimensions of this construct:

- Five items on satisfaction with life (SWLS) from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).
- Twelve items on positive and negative feelings (SPANE) from 1 (very rarely or never) to 5 (very often or always).
- Eight items on flourishing (FS) from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). A scale adapted to the working context developed by Mendonca et al<sup>93</sup> evaluates this dimension.

## Data Analysis

The technique used to carry out the study is Partial Least Squares (PLS), a model of structural equations based on variance (SEM: structural equation modelling). This strategy has been adopted because the constructs of the research model are composite.<sup>94,95</sup> Moreover, PLS is remarkably adaptable to the social sciences.<sup>96</sup> The adaptability of PLS to composite measurement models allows the analysis of their reliability and validity, as well as the estimation of the significance of the relationships among the constructs of the structural model.<sup>97</sup> Hair et al<sup>98</sup> affirm that PLS-SEM has several advantages compared to other SEM techniques. It is a more flexible technique since it is not necessary to assume a normal distribution of the data, being the recommended ordinal measure on a Likert scale, and it can be used for small sample sizes.

Given the multidimensionality of the constructs, it was decided to use the SmartPLS 3.2.8 software to implement a two-stage methodological strategy.<sup>99</sup> First, the first-order latent variables are the dimensions of the study variables, which become the observed indicators of second-order constructs: servant leadership, authentic leadership and SWB;<sup>100</sup> these have been estimated in Mode A (reflective). Following the recommendations of Ringle et al,<sup>101</sup> this research evaluates both the measurement model and the structural model.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the main descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), as well as the bivariate correlations of the first-order latent variables (dimensions of the second-order constructs). All the dimensions present high average levels,

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of the Research Variables

| Variable                       | Range | Average | SD   | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 10 |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----|
| 1 Openness                     | 1-5   | 3.90    | 1.04 | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 2 Stewardship                  | 1-5   | 3.94    | 0.96 | 0.576** | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 3 Vision                       | 1-5   | 4.10    | 0.93 | 0.766** | 0.742** | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 4 Relational Transparency      | 1-5   | 3.94    | 0.87 | 0.718** | 0.654** | 0.756** | 1       |         |         |         |         |         |    |
| 5 Internal Moral Perspective   | 1-5   | 4.05    | 0.83 | 0.671** | 0.642** | 0.742** | 0.801** | 1       |         |         |         |         |    |
| 6 Balance Processing           | 1-5   | 3.81    | 0.93 | 0.677** | 0.603** | 0.750** | 0.802** | 0.764** | 1       |         |         |         |    |
| 7 Self-awareness               | 1-5   | 3.77    | 0.91 | 0.709** | 0.634** | 0.780** | 0.832** | 0.791** | 0.835** | 1       |         |         |    |
| 8 Life satisfaction            | 1-7   | 5.37    | 0.95 | 0.221** | 0.130** | 0.177** | 0.206** | 0.211** | 0.195** | 0.171** | 1       |         |    |
| 9 Positive & Negative Feelings | 1-5   | 3.68    | 0.69 | 0.151** | 0.226** | 0.198** | 0.168** | 0.179** | 0.200** | 0.137** | 0.149** | 1       |    |
| 10 Flourishing                 | 1-7   | 6.29    | 0.58 | 0.424** | 0.257** | 0.353** | 0.400** | 0.464** | 0.387** | 0.384** | 0.382** | 0.168** | 1  |

Note: \*\*p < 0.01.



highlighting the vision dimension in the case of service leadership, internal moral perspective in authentic leadership, and flourishing in SWB.

## Common Method Bias (CMB)

Table 2 shows the internal variance inflation factors (VIFs) of second-order constructs to analyse whether common method bias (CMB) occurred. To this end, a comprehensive multicollinearity test based on the VIFs of the structural model was carried out. VIFs greater than five indicate pathological collinearity.<sup>101</sup> In this research, no VIF exceeds this level, so the structural model does not present a risk of CMB.

## PLS Models

The models developed using PLS are evaluated in two stages. First, the reliability and validity of the measurement model are evaluated. The structural model is then analysed by weighting path significance.

### Measurement Model

Both the first- and second-order measurement models displayed valid and reliable results. The first-order model is not presented in the main text because of its length (it is available upon request). As shown in Table 3, the second-order measurement model consists of servant leadership, authentic leadership, and SWB constructs, which were estimated in Mode A (reflective). First, the individual reliability of the items was evaluated, and all exceeded the critical level of 0.707.<sup>102</sup> This measurement model also met the reliability requirements of the constructs, as Cronbach's alpha, Jöreskog's rho (rho\_A) and composite reliability values were greater than 0.7.<sup>103</sup> Last, the convergent validity criterion is also met, with the values of all average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5,<sup>104</sup> as well as

**Table 2** Full Collinearity VIFs

|    | AL    | SWB   |
|----|-------|-------|
| AL | 1.000 | 3.607 |
| SL |       | 3.607 |

**Abbreviations:** AL, Authentic Leadership; SL, Servant Leadership; SWB, Subjective Well-being.

**Table 3** Measurement Model. Reliability and Convergent Validity

| Variable | Loadings                     |       | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A        | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|----------|------------------------------|-------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Servant Leadership</b>    |       | <b>0.874</b>     | <b>0.884</b> | <b>0.922</b>          | <b>0.799</b>                     |
| 1.1      | Openness                     | 0.886 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 1.2      | Stewardship                  | 0.849 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 1.3      | Vision                       | 0.943 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Authentic Leadership</b>  |       | <b>0.943</b>     | <b>0.943</b> | <b>0.959</b>          | <b>0.854</b>                     |
| 2.1      | Relational Transparency      | 0.928 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 2.2      | Internal Moral Perspective   | 0.910 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 2.3      | Balance Processing           | 0.923 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 2.4      | Self-awareness               | 0.936 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Subjective Well-being</b> |       | <b>0.709</b>     | <b>0.756</b> | <b>0.834</b>          | <b>0.628</b>                     |
| 3.1      | Life satisfaction            | 0.690 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 3.2      | Positive & Negative Feelings | 0.817 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |
| 3.3      | Flourishing                  | 0.860 | ***              |              |                       |                                  |

**Notes:** The loading and weights significance was estimated by bootstrap 95% confidence interval (based on n = 5000 subsamples). \*\*\*p ≤ 0.001 (based on t(4999), two-tailed test). Reliability and convergent validity results of the second-order constructs in bold.

discriminant validity, following the Fornell and Larcker criterion.<sup>105</sup> The criterion of discriminant validity is met when the square root of the AVE (represented in the diagonal) exceeds the correlations between the constructs (see Table 4).

### Structural Model

For the evaluation of the structural model, a bootstrapping technique (5000 subsamples) was applied by which the main parameters were generated for the evaluation of the statistical significance of the relationships established as hypotheses: path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values and 95% confidence intervals with corrected bias. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) represents the amount of variance explained in endogenous constructs by all exogenous constructs linked to it. The authentic leadership construct features an  $R^2 = 0.7227$ , suggesting a good predictive capability. However, SWB has an  $R^2$  value of 0.2376, indicating that there may be other variables aside from these two leadership styles that help to explain the variance of SWB. These other explanatory variables have not been included because they are not the main object of this study and because they could damage model parsimony. We construct a parsimonious model that is not intended to explain the SWB construct but to analyse the complementarity of servant leadership and authentic leadership to produce greater well-being in the worker. It is difficult to provide general rules about which  $R^2$  values might be considered acceptable, as this depends mostly on the complexity of the model as well as on the research field. While  $R^2$  values of 0.2 would be considered sufficient in disciplines such as consumer behaviour, in studies that aim to explain commercial success (such as customer satisfaction or brand loyalty), researchers typically expect much higher values of approximately 0.75.<sup>106,107</sup>

As shown in Table 5, the results obtained generally confirm the positive and significant direct relationships of the H2a and H2b hypotheses, as well as the indirect relationship of the H2 hypothesis. However, the direct relationship between servant leadership and SWB is rejected (Hypothesis 1). This result highlights the total mediation exercised by the variable authentic leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and SWB.<sup>98,108</sup> That is, servant leadership, by itself, does not show a significant direct relationship with SWB, but it does show an indirect relationship through authentic leadership.

### Assessing Predictive Validity

Prediction and explanation serve two different purposes, but both could be analysed in any research.<sup>109</sup> The results have confirmed the model’s predictive validity, both for authentic leadership and SWB and for the dimensions that comprise both of them. (see Table 6). Cross-validation<sup>110</sup> was conducted through the PLS prediction algorithm,<sup>111</sup> available in

**Table 4** Discriminant Validity

| Fornell-Larcker |        |        |        |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | AL     | SL     | SWB    |
| AL              | 0.9242 |        |        |
| SL              | 0.8501 | 0.8938 |        |
| SWB             | 0.4838 | 0.4426 | 0.7924 |

**Note:** Italicized numbers represent the square root of the AVE.  
**Abbreviations:** AL, Authentic Leadership; SL, Servant Leadership; SWB, Subjective Well-being.

**Table 5** Structural Model

|     | $R^2$ SBW = 0.2376; $R^2$ AL = 0.7227<br>Relationship | Path Coefficient | T-Statistics  | p-values     |     | 2.5%         | 97.5%        | Significance |
|-----|---|------------------|---------------|--------------|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|     | <b>Direct Effects</b>                                 |                  |               |              |     |              |              |              |
| H1  | SL -> SWB   | 0.113            | 1.232         | 0.218        |     | -0.063       | 0.297        | No Sig.      |
| H2a | SL -> AL  | <b>0.850</b>     | <b>50.835</b> | <b>0.000</b> | *** | <b>0.814</b> | <b>0.879</b> | <b>Sig.</b>  |
| H2b | AL -> SWB   | <b>0.388</b>     | <b>4.540</b>  | <b>0.000</b> | *** | <b>0.212</b> | <b>0.549</b> | <b>Sig.</b>  |
|     | <b>Total Indirect Effects</b>                         |                  |               |              |     |              |              |              |
| H2  | SL -> SWB   | <b>0.330</b>     | <b>4.476</b>  | <b>0.000</b> | *** | <b>0.181</b> | <b>0.470</b> | <b>Sig.</b>  |

**Notes:** Bootstrapping bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (based on n = 5000 subsamples). \*\*\*p ≤ 0.001 [based on t(4999), two-tailed test]. Significant relationships in bold.  
**Abbreviations:** AL, Authentic Leadership; SL, Servant Leadership; SWB, Subjective Well-being.

**Table 6** PLS Prediction Assessment

| Variable                     | Q <sup>2</sup> |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>AL</b>                    | <b>0.722</b>   |
| Relational Transparency      | 0.632          |
| Internal Moral Perspective   | 0.597          |
| Balance Processing           | 0.600          |
| Self-awareness               | 0.632          |
| <b>SWB</b>                   | <b>0.190</b>   |
| Life satisfaction            | 0.058          |
| Positive & Negative Feelings | 0.117          |
| Flourishing                  | 0.172          |

**Notes:** PLS prediction assessment's results of the second-order constructs in bold.

**Abbreviations:** AL, Authentic Leadership; SWB, Subjective Well-being.

version 3.2.8 of the SmartPLS software.<sup>101</sup> Positive Q<sup>2</sup> values indicate that the prediction error of PLS results is smaller than the prediction error that would be obtained if only the mean values were used, so the structural model has the ability to predict both the level of authentic leadership and of SWB.

## Discussion

Nowadays, the number of companies that base their strategic model on values is increasing. Therefore, it is essential that managers of these companies know the keys to promoting the well-being of their workers. Religious entities are par excellence entities that base their management on values, so studying them marks a script for the government of all those entities that pursue this end. Moreover, the importance of the study of religious organizations lies not only in the role they play in the economy but also in the particularities of their organizational culture, which are firmly rooted in human values and in the promotion of the individuals who collaborate in such organizations.<sup>52</sup> The employees of faith-based organizations play a central role in the fulfilment of the social function entrusted to such organizations, since they are the ones who, through the development of their daily activity, transmit the organization's identity values. Therefore, the experience of well-being at work is of great importance for these employees because such experience will influence not only the transmission of the organizational values but also the quality of the service provided and, therefore, the organization's long-term sustainability. The well-being of employees is fundamental for both organizations and communities<sup>25</sup> and has become, in recent decades, a primary objective for most entities.<sup>27</sup> Workers spend much of their time in the workplace, which means that a critical element of their well-being depends on their satisfaction with their working life.<sup>112,113</sup> If workers experience negative feelings, it is unlikely for them to evaluate their lives as ideal.<sup>114</sup>

This value-based management model adopted by faith-based entities will determine much of workers' well-being, so moral leadership styles are best suited to these organizations' ends.<sup>115</sup> Among them, servant leadership and authentic leadership are two appropriate leadership styles for energizing such organizations. This study provides empirical support for the scant attention that the relationship between servant leadership and employee well-being has received from the academy; indeed, some authors, such as Maula-Bakhsh and Raziq,<sup>27</sup> have drawn attention to the absence of sufficient empirical research in this area. Specifically, this research addresses the investigation model from the theoretical framework of JD-R, stating that servant and authentic leadership are job resources that promote workers' SWB in value-based organizations. Part of the novelty of this research lies in the study of the servant and authentic leadership as job resources that working together could achieve greater SWB in religious organizations' employees. Moreover, to our knowledge, previous literature on the JD-R model has not considered these leadership styles in terms of resources that increase well-being in the cited context.

One purpose of any religious organization should be to promote the well-being of its workers; therefore, the first hypothesis of this research suggests that servant leadership is positively related to the SWB of the organization's employees. The results show that this relationship is not significant in the religious entities investigated, an outcome

that contradicts those obtained by other authors, who have managed to demonstrate this linkage in other organizational contexts (eg, Winston and Fields,<sup>60</sup> Liden et al,<sup>61</sup> Van Dierendonck<sup>23</sup>). Here it is remarkable to highlight the inter-correlations among the dimensions of both variables. The explanation for not obtaining a significant relationship among them could be that, although all the dimensions present significant correlations, just flourishing has robust and high intercorrelations with servant leadership's dimensions (Table 1). It could mean that while those workers who perceive servant leadership could have a greater sensation of flourishing, their life satisfaction and positive or negative feelings may not be influenced. The rejection of this hypothesis raises a very controversial issue as these results suggest that, while in other types of organizations, servant leadership management stimulates this beneficial state of SWB in employees, service faith-based institutions need to complete this style with other job resources. So, how can the lack of a significant relationship between servant leadership and workers' well-being be understood in an organization whose mission is based on values and service to others? The answer lies in incorporating authentic leadership into the model, showing that followers need to perceive, in addition to a servant leadership style, additional features in their leaders that complement such a style.

The above reasoning leads to the second research hypothesis of this paper, which envisages servant leadership as positively related to authentic leadership, which in turn relates to SWB. Accordingly, this research hypothesizes that authentic leadership plays a mediating role in the relationship between servant leadership and the SWB of workers in religious organizations. The results obtained provide empirical evidence of both direct and indirect relationships. Direct relationships have been previously analysed in different contexts, both in the case of servant and authentic leadership (eg, Avolio and Gardner;<sup>35</sup> Luthans and Avolio,<sup>83</sup> Greenleaf<sup>41</sup>) and of authentic leadership and SWB (Jensen and Luthans;<sup>89</sup> Gardner et al<sup>88</sup>). However, to our knowledge, the indirect relationship assessed in this work has not been previously investigated in the working context. This indirect relationship has special relevance since the results obtained show a total mediation. This means that this study does not find a significant direct relationship between servant leadership and employees' SWB; it supports a total mediation of authentic leadership, demonstrating that followers need to perceive in their superiors a servant and authentic management to achieve SWB. Religious entities are a relevant example of those organizations that base their services on their values and beliefs. Hence, it is necessary to highlight the practical relevance of this finding (ie, the necessity of authentic leadership to achieve greater worker well-being in a servant-based management style) for any entity that bases its management on values. Their leadership model must also be grounded on such cultural values, emphasizing both leadership styles. In addition, these entities may attract employees who share their values. Thus, workers need to see such values reflected in the daily performance of their leaders, as this will impact employee SWB. When the management seeks employee adherence to cultural values, it requires servant leadership to be complemented by authentic leadership characteristics, as this support will lend credibility to the organizational narrative.

However, these results could be conditioned by the peculiarities of the research context. It probably defines the specific job demands and resources. On the one hand, the activity carried out by the target entities will condition the labour demands since they serve vulnerable groups such as minors, the elderly, or people in a situation of social exclusion. On the other hand, the religious component will determine the resources available in this type of value-based organization since its mission is transmitting foundational values. Therefore, achieving identified workers with a high level of SWB will facilitate fulfilling this mission. This set of peculiarities makes it possible that these findings could be helpful for those service organizations that base their management on values as they share similar job demands, but maybe they should be cautious if they present different job resources.

These results also contribute theoretically to the open discussion in the scientific literature about the differences among the three styles of moral leadership (ethical, servant and authentic leadership), as evidenced by Lee et al.<sup>20</sup> In line with Lemoine et al's proposals,<sup>42</sup> the findings of this study identify differences between the two moral leadership styles analysed (servant and authentic leadership), in the sense that servant leadership is reinforced by authentic leadership, which some authors have identified as the root of good leadership.<sup>35</sup>

This research also caters to the call for the purported sustainability of contemporary entities. The new perspectives on sustainability argue that such sustainability also encompasses psychological dilemmas regarding the promotion of well-being and quality of life for individuals, groups, and organizations. From the labour and organizational psychology perspective, sustainability is essential to promoting human and productive entities. In this sense, so-called "positive

sustainability” draws attention to respecting and regenerating resources to promote sustainable well-being and organizations’ sustainability.<sup>116,117</sup> Emotional imbalance, inability to achieve desired results, trauma, and difficulties lead to obstacles and illnesses for employees.

Moreover, during the post-pandemic and endemic period of COVID-19, the well-being of workers has been more damaged,<sup>118</sup> so the results of this study acquire even more relevance to improve this situation. This damage to employee well-being is detrimental not only to the work environment but also to the organization and the growth and success of the work environment. Employee well-being is undoubtedly influenced by multiple factors, among which leadership style is one of the most important.<sup>27,28</sup> Servant leadership seems to be a sustainable strategy involving caring for followers’ needs, growth, and learning, improving worker well-being, and promoting a healthy organizational environment.<sup>119</sup> However, a particular finding of this research is that religious organizations also need the presence of authentic leadership to achieve this sustainable strategy and to influence their employees’ SWB.

## Conclusion

Nowadays, improving the SWB of those workers who develop their activity in organizations that base their management on values is fundamental for their charismatic management. However, there is a lack of studies on how the management of these entities can improve the SWB of their employees through their leadership style. Hence, this research, based on the JD-R model and using PLS technique, try to demonstrate that servant and authentic leadership are job resources that result in greater SWB among employees of organisations based on values. Using a sample of 463 workers from 47 Catholic service centres, this investigation has shown that servant leadership by itself does not translate into greater SWB but that workers of religious organizations also need to perceive an authentic leadership from their superiors. Therefore, both leadership styles are job resources in faith-based organizations that working together could increase the well-being of their employees.

This research contributes to the theory in different ways. This result is opposite to that obtained by other authors, who argue that these leadership styles are similar; thus, this research contributes to the open debate in the academy on the redundancy or complementarity of both of these leadership styles. These findings also complement the social identity theory, as the identity of a service entity would justify that a servant leadership generates higher levels of perceived authentic leadership. The present investigation also contributes to the research gap between perceived ethical leadership and psychological well-being among healthcare workers identified by Zada et al<sup>24</sup> and Huang et al.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, this research responds to the call of authors such as McMurray et al,<sup>8</sup> who state the need for deeper research on leadership in non-profit entities, since leadership may work differently in such organizations than in the context of for-profit companies. Similarly, it also contributes to the JD-R model, where Bakker and Leiter<sup>49</sup> highlight the importance of studying the effects of leadership as a job resource, as well as to extending the JD-R research to heterogeneous samples and at the individual and organisational levels of analysis.<sup>50,51</sup>

The main practical contribution of this research lies in demonstrating that, in religious organizations with a context of perceived servant leadership, the probability of feeling a higher SWB could increase among those members who also perceive a strategy of authentic leadership. Hence, understanding the perspective of employees is critical for managers of these organisations to obtain the greatest possible benefit when they implement a style of leadership based on service to others. In this line, this research helps to manage the delicate balance between efficiency, effectiveness, vision, and mission that drive religious organisations. These results also have practical implications related to the social responsibility of value-based organizations by demonstrating that leadership style is fundamental to the well-being and psychological health of their workers as well as to management principles related to sustainable, responsible human resources practices.

## Limitations and Future Research Lines

This paper has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research was carried out in different Catholic centres, all located in Spain, which could restrict the ability to generalize its findings. This limitation could be overcome in future research through the incorporation of organizations located outside Spain to control the possible influence of geographical, economic, social and cultural factors. It could also be extended to faith-based entities of

other religions, such as Islam, Judaism, Orthodox, etc. In addition, subsequent studies could test this model in for-profit organizations and nonreligious non-profit institutions, as we believe that the management implications of these results could be useful for any entity that bases its governance on values. These management strategies are increasingly demanded by organizations seeking new leadership styles that go beyond economic incentives, achieving a workforce with higher well-being, and employees who look for entities that care about values and allow them to find meaning in their work.

A second limitation is the possible response bias caused by self-administered questionnaires,<sup>120</sup> which could be addressed by incorporating more objective complementary measures in future investigations. Third, it should be noted that the data analysed are cross-sectional. A longitudinal study would help to understand the cause-effect relations and causal explanations among variables. Fourth, future lines of research could study the relationships between these leadership styles through other objective variables for these faith-based organizations, such as work engagement or leaders' level of authenticity. Finally, the JD-R model theorises that workers' well-being is related to different workplace variables classified as either job demands or job resources.<sup>38,39</sup> As this research focused on job resources, future lines of research could study how job demands of religious organisations affect the relationship between the job resources object of study and well-being.

## Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available as individual privacy could be compromised but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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