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### Vol. 2 No. 1 (2024): Ἀρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership

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## Global Leadership Adaptability Through Servant Leadership and Cultural Humility: A Conceptual Framework

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### Abstract

**Background:** Adaptability is a requisite and indispensable trait for future global leaders. Remaining adaptable through times of change is a mechanism through which leaders can be best prepared to navigate evolving environments and ever-changing circumstances.

**Objectives:** The authors aim to explore the relationships between global leadership mindset and adaptability by applying servant leadership and cultural humility perspectives. **Approach:** Leadership theories and approaches to leadership and adaptability will be discussed relative to leadership traits, skills, and knowledge and their potential relation to the degree of leadership adaptability. A global leader with cultural humility develops cultural awareness and tends to interact and adapt effectively with people of different cultures. By combining servant leadership and cultural humility, mindsets will enhance the development of global leadership adaptability. Being adaptable as a leader allows for creativity and innovation while navigating cultural disparities.

**Conclusion:** Global leaders must be resilient, relevant, and vigilant. They must be prepared to address crises while simultaneously fostering stability and progress for the survival of humanity. Their transformative actions should inspire effective change. The proposed conceptual framework integrates servant leadership and cultural humility perspectives and fosters a global leadership mindset. This mindset enhances leadership adaptability to address contemporary challenges.

**Keywords:** Leadership Adaptability; Global Leadership; Leadership Traits; Leadership Effectiveness; Globalization; Servant Leadership; Global Leadership Mindset, Empathy

**Paper type:** Critical Essay & Perspective

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## Introduction

Change is complex and disruptive in today's world. Global pandemics, climate change, demographic shifts, economic flux, healthcare progression, and natural disasters with catastrophic consequences are a few of the dramatic transitions in recent years. In the work arena, increased globalization, multinational corporate restructurings, downsizings, innovative hybrid work patterns, information technology, and digital evolution and revolution prompted leaders to consider new leadership approaches. They had no option but to adapt to an unprecedented change, sometimes unexpectedly and with varying degrees of ambiguity. Self-awareness and the ability to adapt quickly in times of ambiguity are leadership assets and the foundation for effectiveness.

Adaptable leaders remain humble, and recognize the urgency of having the necessary attitudes and leadership traits (such as empathy, trust, ethics, self-reflection, objectivity, modesty, and cultural competency) to effectively manage change in authentic, accountable, and human-focus tactics. They can adapt to and manage change successfully (Aldhaferi, 2021; Campos-Moreira et al., 2020; Caldwell et al., 2017; Lin, 2016a; Pless et al., 2011). Organizational demands and pressure to address difficulties drive the processes and relationships between navigating change and addressing complex issues (Mahsud et al., 2010; Klus & Muller, 2020; Jameson 2020).

Today, more than ever, global leaders must be readily adaptable, flexible, and agile. Twenty-first-century leadership requires a fresh mindset with global, servant leadership, and cultural humility perspectives (Alvesson et al., 2017; Chin & Trimble, 2015) while being prepared to switch styles based on the circumstances and the people involved (Gill & Booth, 2003). The authors explored the potential link between leadership traits and adaptability proficiency while summarizing current concepts related to adaptability. Cultural humility is both a mindset and a process. It enables individuals to approach others humbly, actively listen to their opinions and suggestions, and demonstrate respectful inquiry and empathy (Robinson, Masters, & Ansari, 2020). The potential degree of connection between leadership traits, cultural humility, and a leader's initiative in adapting quickly and willingly is explored. The authors outline a relationship between leadership traits and adaptation proficiency and provide an overview of contemporary adaptability concepts.

Recent studies have concentrated mainly on leadership adaptability in complex and unexpected situations such as global pandemics and the ways that leaders encountered such unforeseen deviations with hasty and mostly short-term results (Henry, 2022; Paxton & Van Stralen, 2015; Taylor, 2023; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Waldman et al., 2020). The authors highlight the relationship between leadership adaptability, the degree of empathy-driven service, and the practice of cultural humility. Servant leadership (as service to others) is a theoretical framework that showcases the leadership characteristics of someone who aims to put others first, enhancing their human and institutional performance and developing their capacity to serve others better (Collins, 2022; Lin, 2004; Mondy, 2023; Prime & Salib, 2014; Sharma, 2023; Onyalla, 2018; Waldman et al., 2020; White, 2022; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Lin's (2016a) speech, "Embracing and Cultivating Humility," at the Asia Organization Development Summit, emphasized that recent studies have revealed "the importance of leadership's humility in fostering workers' motivation, sense of belonging, inclusive culture, capacity for learning, self-awareness, opportunities for employee's growth, awareness of our own and organization limitations, and so on." (Lin, 2016a, p. 137). The concept of cultural humility is closely linked to the cultural relativism mindset. As Lin pointed out in her 2010 commencement speech:

When we embrace the concept of cultural relativism, we are bound to become more objective in understanding the nature of our interactions with others, and we will become less ethnocentric: the attitude where one tends to think his or her cultural practice is the best among all...Ethnocentrism, the opposite of cultural relativism, will hinder the communication of all kinds. It can become a stumbling block for interpersonal relations and, at a macro level, international relations. Effective communication must start with an attitude that embraces cultural relativism (Lin, 2010; Lin, 2016b, p. 330).

Humility is one of the most critical traits of servant leadership. Campos-Moreira and her colleagues (Campos-Moreira et al., 2020; Wellen, 2023) proposed a culturally responsive leadership framework (CRLF) to improve organizational outcomes equitably. The CRLF framework includes three elements: taking organizational socio-cultural aspects into account, creating inclusive environments to help facilitate distributed decision-making, and a leader's willingness to learn from all people and to adapt to inadequate and inequitable situations.

Effective global leaders must continually perform with an open mindset in a complex and diverse environment. A significant leadership role aims to lead while fostering a changing culture, thus inspiring organizational transformation and effectiveness (Altemeyer, 1988; Bass, 1999; Yahaya, 2011). Recognizing the ways that culture impacts leadership can promote critical self-awareness, making a leader more resilient and committed. Previous leadership studies showed the profound impact individuals willing to change can have on the lives of those they lead and serve. These adaptable leaders, driven by cultural humility, exhibit specific personality traits that enhance their adaptability. Their willingness to change stems from a commitment to serve others. Specifically, their inclination to change because it serves others and contributes to the betterment of others (Chughtai, 2016; Khatri & Dutta, 2018; McLeod & Lotardo, 2023). Leaders must focus on empathy, compassion, and trust. This form of global leadership is critical for long-term effectiveness, empowering others to adapt and navigate diverse situations characterized by complexity, indistinctness, and ambiguity in diverse cultural settings. (Cumberland et al., 2016; Mahsud et al., 2010; Chandynaavuthn et al., 2022; Pless et al., 2011; Kozai, 2023; Hartog et al., 1999).

The authors highlight servant leadership and use methods that give meaning to social and behavioral patterns of effective and influential global leadership (DePoy &



Gitlin, 2020). The authors highlight the significance of comprehending diverse cultural leadership approaches and perspectives through this new conceptual framework. The proposed conceptual framework, *Global Leadership Adaptability through Servant Leadership and Cultural Humility*, integrates servant leadership and cultural humility perspectives, as well as fosters a global leadership mindset.

Global ethics is a new term in the arena of global leadership. Global ethics is a form of responsibility toward our humanity. Social responsibility, religion, power, and politics drive social and ethical behavior, which can be defined differently amongst diverse cultures and societies. Recent studies allow researchers to analyze the approaches that strengthen institutions, their culture, and personal traits. Still, there needs to be a shared understanding of how global ethics is perceived and practiced in shaping authentic and genuine leaders (Onyalla, 2018). The challenge, as some argue, is that, generally, humans pursue their interests and own comforts first, and while egocentric, they force their agendas on others despite the costs (Glauner, 2018). Global ethics are defined, perceived, and acted upon on the values and normalized behaviors of the host culture, making ethics more complex and inconsistent (Buller et al., 2010).

## A New Conceptual Framework

### *Global Leadership Adaptability Through Servant Leadership and Cultural Humility*

Global leadership development has received broad attention in today's changing world (Vijayakumar et al., 2018). *Global leadership* is an awareness of the world as a system— its values, communities, and identities – and a person's place within it. Thunderbird School of Global Management states, "Global leading incorporates the traits of the traditional leader with a Global Mindset. Developing a Global Mindset starts with communicating a clear vision, thinking strategically, and inspiring cooperation. To be a global leader, you must navigate the challenges and harness the opportunities that arise within a dynamic, international ecosystem" (Thunderbird, 2023). Global leadership applies the systems practice of effectively leading and being on teams in a global business or organizational setting. Global leadership invites opportunities to work with others in collaborative, reciprocal, and sustainable ways to achieve a common goal of solving complex problems globally. Globalization increases the acknowledgment of today's leadership, which must be culturally responsive and aware of the interdependence of our global and culturally diverse communities. Global leadership must be able to inspire and influence the thinking, attitudes, and behavior of people representing diverse cultural and institutional systems (Mendenhall, 2008; Sakchalathorn, 2014). Global leadership is an interdisciplinary study of leadership within the fabric of diverse cultures and industries.

*Leadership theory* is critical to understanding and analyzing different frameworks, perspectives, models, and concepts that explain leadership practices and their effectiveness or inefficiencies. The theories examined focused on individual and organizational leadership adaptability (Northouse, 2016). Northouse (2016) pointed out

three strengths of adaptive leadership: (1) It takes a process approach to the study of leadership. “Adaptive leadership underscores that leadership is not a trait or characteristic of the leader, but rather a complex interactional event that occurs between leaders and followers in different situations” (Northouse, 2016, p. 275); (2) Adaptive leadership stands out because it is follower centered; and (3) Adaptive leadership directs attention to the use of leadership to help followers deal with conflicting values that emerge in changing work environments and social contests. The key is to consider how *adaptive theory* is applied and how leadership adaptability is critical to the well-being of those following and the success of the society or team. This leadership approach involves analyzing, interrupting, and transforming to create abilities that align with an organization's ambitions and objectives (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Leadership adaptability enables leaders to stay current, learn present skills necessary to successfully engage in best practices, and develop precise traits to handle complexities in surroundings. To be a *global leader*, the leader must experience complete cultural immersion by living and working in a different (or international) cultural environment. Influential global leaders must be prepared to switch styles based on the situation and the people involved. Global leaders are organizational executives whose responsibilities require leading a company's business and people in a diverse cultural setting with possibly different languages, religions, and even time zones (Northouse, 2016).

*Adaptability* is critical for future global leaders (Gateley PLC, 2020, Nöthel et al., 2023). Global leadership's adaptability requires a particular mindset. Adaptability is the ability to adjust to new situations, learn from feedback, and cope with ambiguity. Adaptability requires leaders to utilize multiple sources of feedback, such as self-assessment, peer review, team surveys, and performance indicators, and humbly absorb recommendations and suggestions from others. It is a mechanism through which leaders can be best prepared to navigate constantly changing environments and shifting circumstances. Being adaptable as a leader also allows for innovation, growth, and the ability to navigate cultural differences and imbalances continually.

Organizational adaptability involves responding at a quick pace to allow the organization to thrive (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Harraf et al., 2015; Sherehiy et al., 2007; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Leaders who observe others and adapt their leadership value the perceptions of their teams and enable those to influence them as such, allowing spaces for feedback and reinforcement while reshaping leadership behaviors. Reshaping leadership behaviors implies that leaders who receive more positive feedback are more inclined to continue exhibiting adaptive behaviors and adapt their leadership accordingly (Nöthel et al., 2023).

*Servant Leadership* is a philosophy in which the leader aims to serve (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant Leadership is humble. Servant Leadership's priority is serving and responding to others' needs. Leadership requires leaders dedicated to serving organization members through empathic listening and community-building. Servant leadership researchers often associate this type of leadership with shared leadership



approaches and love, which signifies empowerment and humility but frequently conflicts with specific cultural groups and societies globally and is not as welcomed (Kwasi, 2019). Servant Leadership is viewed as a leadership style or characteristic developed by one's morals and true priorities to meet the needs of those they serve (employees or other stakeholders), putting themselves secondary (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021) to develop their potential in the most efficient ways possible (Merino, 2016). Those are all competencies that can be modified to accommodate the needs of others in any cultural setting because this type of leader will always put others first. Servant leadership complements transformational leadership because they share a few common principles, such as aiming to inspire those they lead. They are rooted in empathy, integrity, and collaborative growth.

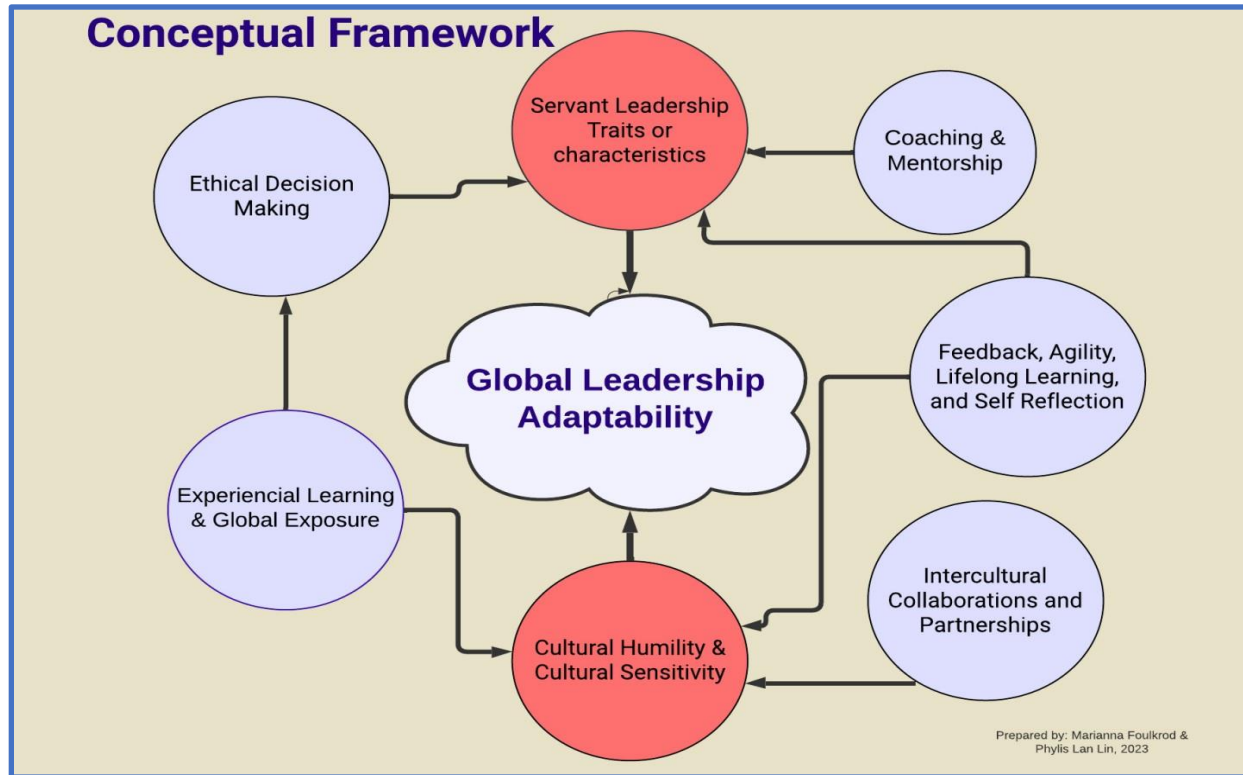
Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) developed eight servant leadership traits constructed by analyzing leadership literature and discussions with servant leaders. Those eight servant leadership traits are (1) empowerment, (2) accountability, (3) standing back, (4) humility, (5) authenticity, (6) courage, (7) interpersonal acceptance, and (8) stewardship. The authors rely on the servant leadership scale (SLS) developed by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) since the scale was validated.

Several authors have defined *cultural humility* (Campos-Moreira, 2020; Hurley et al., 2019; Peng, et al., 2023; Sfetcu, 2021; Yeager & Beuer-Wu, 2013). Humility refers to a state of being humble with an open-minded attitude. It refers to an ongoing process of self-reflection, self-awareness, and willingness to listen to others—cultural humility honors and values other's beliefs, folkways, and morals. *Cultural humility* entails both personal (intentional development, self-reflection, and self-awareness) and interpersonal (empathic communication and mindful listening to others and taking others into account) processes. It is a relationship and goal-building process. Cultural humility is a foundation for developing an environment that promotes an appreciation for understanding and respecting other cultures. Cultivating cultural humility is fundamental to the ethical foundation of global leadership (Lin, 2010; Sandell & Tupy, 2015; Wellen, 2023). Humility fosters an environment of trust, empathy, and respect—three essential ingredients or leadership traits to lead any successful team. Humility involves the stance of others and service orientation. Robinson, Masters, and Ansari (2020) developed the 5Rs (reflection, respect, regard, relevance, resiliency) conceptual model of cultural humility for healthcare leaders. The 5Rs model can be applied to work relations in any setting, especially a setting that engages diverse cultures. The 5Rs entail leaders' personality traits and the work process, which strengthens professional-client relationships and enhances leadership effectiveness in providing services. Cultural humility is driven by empathy.

*Empathy* is the most critical leadership characteristic. It makes a leader efficient and effective and can be the distinction between satisfactory and extraordinary leadership (Deliu, 2019). Developing empathy allows leaders to answer their ethical questions and improve their lives while promoting a global type of citizenship that echoes current societies and global behaviors (Martin, 2010). Many researchers study empathy at an individual level and consider it a personal and central characteristic indicating a leader's ability to process and experience other people's feelings and sensitivities. Global values

such as humaneness, treatment of humans, peace and justice, and partnerships are just some values that should be accepted and applied (Martin, 2010).

*Figure 1*  
 Servant Leadership and Cultural Humility: Global Leadership Adaptability



Source: Author's Illustration, 2023

The above diagram shows a conceptual framework for Developing Global Leadership Adaptability for the present exploration: Servant leadership traits or characteristics and cultural humility (cultural sensitivity) will enhance global leadership adaptability. Components of cultural humility include experiential learning and global exposure, intercultural collaborations and partnerships, feedback, agility, lifelong learning, and self-reflection. Coaching, mentorship, ethical decision-making, and feedback from followers will reinforce servant leadership traits or characteristics.

Findings of past and recent research provide insights into understanding the internal factors at a deeper level (such as personality traits) and external factors (such as perceptions and approaches of others) that influence leadership adaptability and response to such needs. This research is the first phase in understanding how the leader's traits view and promote adaptability, particularly from empathetic and non-dictatorial leadership approaches. Understanding such potential correlations, whether

negative or positive, is vital for leadership professionals who continue to develop new global training and tools while preparing future leaders to evolve and adapt their approaches and behaviors over time while firming up their emotional intelligence, communication, and leadership adaptability (Adaptability Quotient—ability, traits, and environment) and fostering a more collaborative, peaceful, and inclusive environment.

### *Key Questions for Future Empirical Studies*

Based on the conceptual framework addressed in this paper, four key variables that influence a leader's degree of adaptability are servant leadership traits, cultural humility, leadership adaptability, and leadership effectiveness. A follow-up empirical study will focus on the following four areas:

1. Measuring leadership adaptability
2. Servant leadership and the degree of global leadership adaptability
3. Cultural humility and the degree of global leadership adaptability
4. Global Leadership Adaptability and Adaptive Leadership Behavior (Adaptive Leadership Behavior Scale, Nöthel et al., 2023).

In studying leadership and global servant leadership, considering different cultural settings and practices is essential for effective communication. Therefore, future studies investigating cultural groups' similarities and differences are crucial. It is hoped that the future study broadly represents leadership adaptability, approaches, behaviors, and perspectives. Triangulation is critical to an effective cross-validation of the findings, and results from different data sources or methods will be compared to ensure reliability and credibility. Considerations to ensure that this study complies with ethical guidelines, particularly regarding participant consent, confidentiality, data storage, analysis, and how data will be used, are part of engaging the subjects in this research. The key has been to recognize the differences in cultural leadership approaches and how those define and determine leadership behavior. For example, culturally, the term “servant leadership” may be perceived differently in certain countries, influencing how leaders approach that type of leadership and whether they embrace it, apply it, or ignore it.

Four key questions through the lens of three critical variables (Servant Leadership, Cultural Humility, and Leadership Effectiveness) to measure leadership adaptability are:

1. How can we, as leaders, develop effective global leadership adaptability through cultural humility?
2. Do servant leadership traits enhance global leadership adaptability development?
3. To what extent is leadership effectiveness affected by a leader's adaptability?
4. How can we develop effective global leadership adaptability through servant leadership?

It is evident that global leadership involves multidimensional aspects and behaviors influenced by religious, political, social, economic, and cultural factors, and using a mixed-method approach not only brings light to the cross-cultural elements and contexts that influence leadership styles but also helps leaders develop a more holistic perspective, giving a more accurate or complete picture of global leadership tendencies in different cultural settings.

The degree of relatability and connection among personal traits and initiative taken to adapt to meet current demands is a dynamic leadership trait that drives the behaviors and mindsets of leaders and those they lead differently. Such initiative drives effectiveness and continuity. Research (Mendenhall, 2018) has shown that to be an effective global leader means to be willing to modify one's behaviors and learn the ways of the organization they lead while constantly adapting to meet current demands. To be an effective global leader, one must demonstrate multidisciplinary thinking, innovation, inspiration, and adjustability; in some cases, leaders must be able to influence others and follow their subordinates to gain compliance (Mendenhall, 2018). The literature compiled for the current exploration suggests that global leaders who exemplify servant leadership and cultural humility traits will lead their teams more effectively and be ready to cope more readily with challenges from cultural differences and other adverse threats in a foreign work environment.

Whether global leaders commit to moral codes while focusing on outcomes or consequences of their actions and decision process can often be questionable (Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, 2022). The risk of costs to unethical behavior is always eminent, but there is no solid and consistent infrastructure to hold companies accountable for costs that cause social harm. Global ethics and leadership adaptability are interconnected in that each can influence one another in one's moral principles and values, guiding leaders to adjust their behaviors, processes, and strategies. Moving towards global ethics means expanding values and modes of ethical behavior in global perspectives and creating common ethical frameworks based on universal principles for global ethics (Buller et al., 2010; Valentine et al., 2024). It is essential to understand the differences among global ethics in different countries and their respective approaches and identify globally accepting ethical values as it helps them prioritize their decisions and enhance their ethical sustainability (Blodgett & Dumas, 2012). Empathy (as one of the key traits for servant leadership and cultural humility) is the key to the foundation of influential global leaders and the solution to cultural ethnocentrism that overpowers appropriate ethical behavior. Commitment to leadership that promotes ethical behaviors common to all, such as integrity, respect, and fairmindedness, adds value and adequate progress to organizations (Deliu, 2019), and leaders need to be equipped to lead in such ways.

Approaches used to study leadership traits have supported the notion that crucial traits and other organizational behaviors should always be analyzed from the perspective of the construct of culture itself (Mendenhall, 2018). An individual's mindset also plays a role in their behaviors and approaches. Research links organizational leadership

responses to leadership mindset, which refers to how an individual's mental attitude influences how they construe and respond to situations (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Paxton & Van Stralen, 2015). Researchers would argue that to be a global leader, the visionary leader must also be a responsible leader. A responsible leader is a person of good character with the correct values to be accountable. Being responsible is one of the core values of servant leadership. The leader also assesses the legitimacy of their claims and determines how their needs and expectations should be served (Waldman et al., 2020).

Generally, several overarching themes are common throughout leadership adaptability literature, including the importance of understanding the potential influence of a leader's power or status within an organization. There is a common core of competencies required by all leaders, such as being able to manage interpersonal relationships, being involved with their social environment, having emotional intelligence, having no judgment, being tolerant, self-confident, optokinetic, and emotionally resilient (Hanges et al., 2016). A global leader understands the dimensions of increased complexity in the international context that significantly impact how global leadership is perceived and understood. Multiplicity (types of issues leaders face), interdependence, cultural ambiguity, and adjustability to change (Lane et al., 2004) are the dimensions that add complexity to global leadership and its context.

## Discussion

Understanding current leadership styles and how the degree of personal variables can influence leadership approaches is critical to proposing necessary adaptations to leadership approaches. The key variables are empathy, autocratic leadership traits, cultural competence, and alpha personality traits. The key term for this work is *empathy*, which drives a leader toward inclusiveness and altruistic responsiveness. Empathy is a prominent trait of servant leadership approaches and can be developed through cultural experiences (Greenleaf, 1970), and it strengthens effectiveness, commitment, and ethical approaches. In a quantitative correlative analysis, Manger (2012) explored the attributional association between servant leadership and global leadership, exposed attributes of servant leadership in association with global leadership, and the intercorrelations of different leadership dimensions generally confirming close relationships between them and their characteristics. Similarly, this paper also demonstrated the need to address the increased cultural diversification in fast-moving global markets by looking at a new type of leadership concerning servant leadership and its potential to meet pressing needs (Manger, 2012).

Cultural competency is the foundation for cultural humility which is the ability to know cultures, influencing leadership adaptability. However, the degree could differ depending on the variables examined. For example, key personality variables, such as integrity, consciousness, humbleness, and empathy, designate the degree to which a leader puts others first (Greenleaf, 1970). To be a global leader, one needs to be a responsible leader who demonstrates traits of multidisciplinary thinking, self-awareness, innovation, inspiration, and adjustability, and, in some cases, must be able to influence others and willing to follow their subordinates as needed to gain compliance (Mendenhall,



2018). Cultural humility's lifelong learning process is vital to effective global leadership in diverse cultural settings, and it entails a lifetime commitment, passion, empathy, critical and self-reflection.

Global leadership is dynamic and complex, and for global leadership professionals to be successful, they must continually adapt to new environments and new perspectives, whether global leaders are digital leaders or not (Jameson, 2020). The idea that one leadership style fits all is flawed, as there continues to be a massive negative outcome for leaders who stick with one style for different situations and circumstances. Global leaders who are adaptable, culturally competent, and servants first are better equipped to lead their organizations through transformative times, and their leadership can drive long-term sustainable success (Rooney, 2019).

Findings of past and recent research provide insights into understanding the internal factors at a deeper level (such as personality traits) and external factors (such as perceptions and approaches of others) that influence leadership adaptability and response to such needs. The data to be collected in phase two of this research will add value to the existing knowledge on examining and understanding how the leader's traits view and promote adaptability, particularly from empathetic and non-dictatorial leadership approaches. Understanding such potential correlations, whether negative or positive, is vital for leadership professionals who continue to develop new global training while preparing leaders to evolve and adapt their approaches and behaviors over time. The data collected by the current study aims to develop tools for future leaders to continue to enhance their emotional intelligence, communication, and leadership adaptability (Adaptability Quotient—ability, traits, and environment) while fostering a more collaborative, peaceful, and inclusive environment.

## Conclusion

This exploration investigated the relationships among servant leadership, cultural humility, and leadership adaptability. It adds new knowledge to the essence of global leadership behaviors and their respective relationships to adaptability to help leadership professionals better understand the differences among global leadership behaviors and their respective approaches in relation to adaptability. There is a gap between organizational vision and employees regarding senior leadership practicing what they preach and not necessarily leading through empathetic and ethically appropriate ways (Sharma, 2023). Developing effective and enlightened global leaders is everyone's responsibility, but empathy and the attitude of cultural relativism are the root of the solution.

For future leaders to have the tools, traits, and coaching necessary to create social impact and transformation in their organizations and communities, their development must be a life-long learning process. Practices of intercultural perspectives of servant leadership and cultural humility will promote transformative growth for global leaders. Developing a global leadership mindset requires transformative learning and insight. An all-inclusive leadership style that values and appreciates global perceptions and behaviors is necessary for leadership efficiency in today's intricate world. Today's global

leaders must constantly be prepared to modify their approaches to accommodate complexity and evolution. This study investigates the relationships among servant leadership, cultural humility, and leadership adaptability. It shall add new knowledge to the essence of global leadership behaviors and their respective relationships to adaptability.

Global leadership experiences are linked to adapting an individual's behavior contrary to social norms, reshaping the culture nationally and internationally (Vitolla et al., 2021). While considering the cultural norms of their society, leadership institutions should also consider standard verbiage or a 'code of ethics that would reshape internal processes and regulations to improve processes and behaviors toward social well-being. Institutions globally must continue to have a global mindset as it helps them prioritize their decisions and enhance their ethical sustainability and empathy for others. Leadership strategy in times of change and ambiguity is about accommodating and adjusting skill sets to meet current needs and be consistent with future trends. Strategy and sharing that through effective communication with others is the key to solid leadership's effectiveness. Several universities are offering global leadership studies. However, global leadership is still considered an emerging field in leadership studies. This paper draws a conceptual framework for the study of global leadership adaptability. This article explores the mechanisms of *Global Leadership Adaptability through Servant Leadership and Cultural Humility*. This conceptual framework is expected to influence and strengthen the practice of global leadership and its effectiveness.

Whether humanitarian interventions become challenging or unethical is a matter of circumstances. Our human responsibility is to create a sustainable, peaceful, and equal world that works together in equilibrium, and adaptability is the key. Future research must focus on identifying emerging global ethics and values, exploring how this impacts the future of societies and today's world, and understanding how world issues should be treated and acted upon (Martin, 2010). The authors hope that this work will assist researchers in designing strategies to develop a global leadership mindset and adaptability through various platforms digitally and in person.

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## Leadership Development Interventions to Reduce Imposter Phenomenon in the STEM Fields in Minorities

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### Abstract

**Background:** There is a significant lack of diversity in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Evidence shows that lack of representation can feed into feelings of imposter phenomenon which in turn influences leadership qualities. **Objectives:** An argument is made that by providing leadership development training to minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, confidence will be boosted, feelings of imposter phenomenon will be reduced, and thus these students will be retained. **Approach:** Theories explored to explain this challenge include the imposter phenomenon, servant leadership, and transformational leadership. **Results:** The goal of this article is to demonstrate the need for research into leadership development of minorities in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. **Conclusions:** A program proposal is also introduced as a suggested plan of action based on the findings.

**Keywords:** STEM, Imposter phenomenon, leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, minorities in STEM, leadership development

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## Introduction

There is a lack of diversity in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. According to Van Oosten et al. (2017), only 25% of positions in mathematics and computer professions are held by women. The higher the education or career level in engineering, the more diversity deteriorates. In the article by Jefferson (2019), 24% of doctorates are held by black women, but only 5% of managerial roles are held by black men and women combined, which further highlights the lack of diversity in STEM at the highest education level. The researcher has personal experience as an undergraduate student in the STEM field. During that time, and since, the population of women at the researcher's school has continued to hover around 25% of the student population. Percentages for other minority populations have not made significant improvements either, even though these populations are increasing in college attendance overall. Hispanic workers represent only 15% of the STEM field and American Indians and Alaska Natives make up less than 1% collectively (NSF, 2023, p. 15). Diverse workforces and teams are more likely to keep up with industry trends and markets better than their less diverse competitors (DiLascio, 2022). The positive effects of a diverse workforce further highlight the importance of fostering diverse student success in school and eventually in their careers. The disparity between the benefits of diverse workforces and the lack of diverse students going into these workforces begs the question of "why."

There has been a broad range of research that points to imposter phenomenon being one factor in the low diversity trend. Manongsong and Ghosh (2021) found that high-achieving women are more likely to have feelings of imposter phenomenon which can lead to them leaving their careers. The researcher is interested in examining how leadership development may reduce imposter phenomenon to impact a higher rate of diversity.

Another key factor to know about those in the STEM fields is graduates typically come into the industry underprepared in leadership skills (Farr & Brazil, 2009). "Employers are recognizing that although the necessary technical skills are present, interpersonal skills necessary for effective leadership and collaboration are lacking" and "only 15% of U.S. employers believe that current college graduates are well prepared with regard to awareness of diversity outside the United State" (Akdere, M. et al, 2019). The lack of leadership skills can affect an individual's ability to excel in their careers. In fact, poor leadership skills can impact engineering-dominant companies and can lead to failure to excel in their industries (Farr & Brazil, 2009). Akdere (2019) states that new hires don't lack technical skills; instead, they fail at workplace skills and STEM employers blame academia. To meet the needs of prospective employers, educators should consider introducing leadership development as a prominent component alongside technical skills. In response, educators have begun to research engineering leadership methods, as well as the competencies that employers expect.

Effective leadership skills are crucial for engineers. STEM graduates need professional development to include leadership, communication, and the ability to innovate. However, research has unveiled a significant challenge: the imposter phenomenon. This phenomenon is closely tied to an individual's lack of confidence in their ability to lead. Specifically, it can impact transformational leadership styles (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021). Transformational leadership, which emphasizes

inspiration, vision, and individual growth, aligns exceptionally well with the demands of the STEM field. The central focus of this article is to explore whether leadership development can mitigate the imposter phenomenon and boost transformational leadership skills. By addressing imposter feelings and enhancing leadership competencies – especially those aligned with transformational leadership, educators anticipate a positive impact on STEM graduates' success and persistence in their STEM careers after graduation.

## Definition of Terms

A definition of terms is presented below to provide contextualization. These definitions are through the lens of STEM fields.

*Imposter Phenomenon:* refers to a psychological phenomenon where individuals have feelings of being a fake in either professional or academic success and is highly linked to perfectionism which can be increased by competitive environments such as in the STEM classroom (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021).

*Transformational Leadership:* one method of leading and focusing on motivating the team to exceed their own expectations which focuses on improving morale and increasing employee motivation. Transformational leadership also helps to inspire, motivate, and give direction to their teams (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021; Ntseke et al., 2022). Essentially, transformational leaders not only drive change but also transform their followers into leaders.

*STEM:* STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

*Minorities in STEM:* STEM is dominated by white males. For this perspective discussion, any minority in STEM will be **non-white** and **non-male-identifying** individuals.

## Theoretical Framework in Current Literature

In preparation for this research, numerous frameworks were reviewed to formulate a design that supports leadership development in STEM fields like engineering. These frameworks will be discussed further in the literature review.

In this review of literature, the researcher establishes critical linkages between STEM disciplines, the impact of the imposter phenomenon, and the imperative for leadership development within undergraduate programs. Throughout the analysis, attention is devoted to global leadership and the unique challenges faced by underrepresented minorities in the STEM fields. The underrepresentation of global leaders, particularly among minorities is a pressing concern. This gap must be rectified to make meaningful solutions to the world's problems. Insights from Main et al. (2019), Mendenhall (2007), and Van Oosten et al. (2017) underscore the urgency of this issue. Bridging the leadership deficit in STEM means that diverse engineering leaders will be ready to lead positive change by harnessing an increase in the diversity of thought in new ideas to solve some of the world's toughest problems.

## ***The STEM Fields***

The STEM fields consist of majors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These programs are often incredibly rigorous and competitive. While leaving their undergraduate degrees well adept in technical knowledge, oftentimes students leave their STEM educations lacking in leadership or “soft” skills that will make them truly successful in their professional careers (Robinson et al., 2007). It is not enough for those in the STEM fields to be proficient in their technical skills alone. Scientists, engineers, and mathematicians must also be proficient in professional skills such as leadership, communication, and teamwork (Main et al., 2019; Ntseke et al., 2022; Strubbe, 2022). Though many will start at a lower level as engineers, having the right leadership and teambuilding skills will allow them to move up and contribute to their organizations much quicker. Today’s graduates are tasked with responsibilities earlier in their careers than in the past. This is due to the changing dynamics of organizations that operate on flatter hierarchies due to an aging workforce. While leadership skills will make them more successful, employers feel it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to teach these needed leadership skills (Robinson et al., 2007) (McGunagle et al., 2020). Unfortunately, many students lack these professional skills (Main et al., 2019). Challen (2020) emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to STEM education that includes the arts and leadership to increase critical thinking, inclusivity, empathy, and more.

Main, Wang, and Tan (2019) attempted to examine early career management training (ECMT) as a way of improving leadership roles attained by individuals with PhDs in STEM. There is still room to research earlier leadership interventions in undergraduate STEM fields. Based on their research, ECMT was shown to have a relationship with improved chances of attaining leadership roles for both men and women (Main et al., 2019). This shows promise for leadership development interventions in undergraduate education. Engineers can be stereotypically lacking in communication skills, emotional intelligence, and other leadership skills. So earlier interventions can help engineers gain confidence in these areas and reduce feelings of being an imposter.

## ***Imposter Phenomenon***

The definition of imposter phenomenon, for this perspective essay, is a psychological phenomenon that leads individuals to a feeling of being ‘a fake’ in either professional or academic success. This plague of doubt is highly linked to perfectionism and can be increased by competitive environments in the STEM classroom (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021). Those underrepresented in the STEM fields, such as women, black, or first-generation students, are more susceptible to feelings of imposter phenomenon due to a sense of “other” or lack of belonging (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022). Muslim women are a “minority within a minority” which can result in increased chances of imposter phenomenon. For those women who have persevered, there is an opportunity for mentoring to increase the chances of future generations not feeling so isolated, thus reducing imposterism (Basit, 2022). Good mentors can foster empathy and resilience and help minorities embrace authenticity.

There are a couple of assessments that can help one determine the presence of the imposter phenomenon. Two of these are the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and the Harvey Imposter Phenomenon Scale (HIPS). Of these two, the

CIPS is preferred due to its shorter assessment and higher internal consistency reliability (Chrisman et al., 1995). The CIPS assessment can be found on Dr. Pauline Clance’s website and the type of questions that might be expected include: Do you agonize over the smallest mistake or flaw in your work? Do you often feel you are lacking compared to others’ accomplishments? Do you worry that others will discover you are not as competent as they expected (Clance, 2013)?

Findings suggest that individuals who score high on feelings of imposter syndrome tend to be less driven to lead (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021). In the research done by Dominguez-Soto et al. (2021), it was found that the imposter phenomenon could provide indications for how an individual will lead or defer leading to others. If the imposter phenomenon is felt more strongly by certain demographics, this could also help to explain why there is a lack of diversity in the STEM fields.

### Minorities in STEM

The imposter phenomenon is the most challenging for individuals who occupy the margins as minorities of a given population. For engineering, the prominent population is white males. Women, racial minorities, etc. would be the minorities in STEM. Table 1 shows a demographic breakdown of individuals in the STEM fields.

Table 1.  
Demographics data for STEM-related fields

Household Data Annual Averages						
2023						
Occupation	Total Employed	Percent of total employed				
		Women	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Computer and Mathematical	6502	26.9	63.5	9.2	24	8.8
Architecture and Engineering	3602	16.7	78	6.1	13.1	10.1
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1870	49.8	71.8	8.2	16.5	9.9

\*numbers in thousands

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023

Jefferson’s illuminating study (2019) on Black Women in STEM Leadership reveals a stark reality. While it is impressive that 24% of doctorates are earned by black women, their representation in managerial or leadership roles is a dismal 5% held by black men and women combined. Additionally, the gender disparity persists - women only hold 25% of the positions in mathematics or computer professions and only 12% in engineering professions (Van Oosten et al., 2017). This glaring lack of diversity underscores the pressing need for more inclusive and equitable leadership in the STEM field. Attrition rates in the STEM fields are notably high, especially among women, first-generation students, underrepresented minorities, and those with lower incomes. The prevalence of the imposter phenomenon is believed to be a significant contributing factor to this trend. (Liou-Mark et al., 2018; Maxwell et al., 2023).



In Van Oosten et al.'s (2017) work with the Leadership Lab for women, the researchers see the need to focus not just on external factors such as gender bias, but also to look at more subtle, invisible factors and to work to develop skills that will help them to persist and succeed. Previous studies have revealed that professional development opportunities can foster career advancement in women (Main et al., 2019). Skills such as self-efficacy, adaptability, and personal vision can all affect women's ability to persist (Van Oosten et al., 2017).

Once in the STEM fields, women who hold PhDs and continue their professional development can internalize leadership roles and reduce gender bias in the workplace (Main et al., 2019). Minorities in STEM benefit from safe spaces where they can receive mentoring, professional development, and other opportunities that can assist in boosting their leadership development opportunities (Jefferson, 2019). Additionally, coaches and mentors are beneficial to women in the STEM fields (Van Oosten et al., 2017). A leadership principle that is highlighted by Strubbe et al. (2022) is the importance of shared ownership and a sense of belonging. This is shown to be important to minorities in STEM and could be a factor related to reducing the imposter phenomenon (Lee et al., 2022).

## Leadership

Leadership is not a position, but rather, a series of actions. The related skills to leadership are defined as communication, teamwork, empathy, critical thinking, trust, and encouragement, among others (Challen, 2020; Liou-Mark, 2018; Main et al, 2019; MacIntyre, 2016; Suleman 2018). Transformational leadership is one method of leading and focuses on motivating, inspiring, and empowering the team and its individual members to exceed their own expectations (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021; Ntseke et al., 2022). There are significant indicators that transformational leadership is associated with a global mindset (Osland et al., 2006). A global mindset enables leaders to appreciate and adapt to different cultures, perspectives, and challenges while maintaining a clear vision and purpose. By combining transformational leadership with a global mindset, aspiring leaders can amplify their impact and collaborate across borders. Not only that, but it can lead to greater global team effectiveness and cohesion (Ntseke et al., 2022). If transformational leadership development is adopted, this could assist in developing global engineering leaders. However, if students with imposter phenomenon are shown to struggle with transformational leadership, then the need for leadership development will be necessary to find a way to minimize the feeling of imposterism. The use of a global leadership curriculum could provide some of the skills necessary to combat feelings of imposter phenomenon, thus increasing abilities as transformational and global leaders (Gagnon, 2013; Ntseke, 2022).

Figure 1  
Impact of Leadership Intervention



Source: Author's illustration (2024)

## Global Leadership Development

Beyond mastering technical knowledge, STEM professionals must also have strengths and skills in leadership (Main et al., 2019; Strubbe, 2022). Companies increasingly seek leaders who bridge cultural divides with skills in intercultural communication and empathetic leadership (Osland et al., 2017). There needs to be a focus on global leadership skills specifically since STEM professionals can expect to collaborate with diverse teams on complex projects. Numerous studies show that companies need and expect leaders who communicate interculturally and have empathy for a variety of backgrounds and cultures (Osland et al., 2017). Empathy becomes a catalyst for innovation. Developing inclusive leadership in STEM is important and requires an inter-disciplinary approach to meld technical expertise with emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, and collaboration (Challen, 2020; Hudson et al., 2012; Strubbe, 2022). To nurture well-rounded STEM leaders, experiential leadership training is vital. Study abroad immersion opportunities would be one way to accomplish this (Davidson et al., 2017; Strubbe, 2022). Global immersion opportunities can help develop skills that are associated with transformational leadership such as listening, open-mindedness, and encouraging, as well as developing a global mindset (Davidson et al., 2017; Suutari, 2002). Within the global leadership development curriculum, the use of the Global Mindset Inventory which was created at Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management, would be another way to focus on student global development (ASU, 2020).

A study by Liou-Mark et al. (2018) looked at peer-led leadership teams with an expectation of collaborative learning. The imposter phenomenon is typically exacerbated by a competitive environment, so focusing on peer-led, collaborative learning for under-represented students in STEM could reduce imposter syndrome (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021). The use of a peer-led team learning program in a biology course demonstrated a significant impact on imposter phenomenon (Maxwell, 2023). Higher education institutions should implement peer cohort leadership programs aimed at mitigating imposter phenomenon and enhancing leadership skills among STEM majors. (Palid et al., 2023). It is a goal of this researcher to explore the

feasibility of such a program and assess its impact on students' growth and development.

In a study by Main, Wang, and Tan's (2019), participants reported increased confidence and improved leadership after receiving training, regardless of the content of the training. This positive impact extends beyond the individual growth of the participant; it also contributes to reducing career inequality. These findings have led to the following research question: Can early interventions focused on global leadership affect imposter phenomenon, particularly for minorities in the STEM fields?

### *Program Proposal*

Based on the evidence provided above, the researcher proposes the implementation of a Global Leadership Development program. This program will address some of the concerns and reduce the feelings of imposter phenomenon, increase transformational leadership skills, and persistence in their STEM careers (both educationally and vocationally).

### **Strategic Plan: Empowering STEM Minorities through Global Leadership Development at a small, private STEM-focused institution**

#### **Goal:**

Implement an early intervention leadership program centered around global leadership skills, with the goal to reduce imposter phenomenon and enhance leadership skills among underrepresented minorities in STEM fields and thus increase persistence.

#### **Objectives:**

##### **1. Identify Target Population:**

- 1.1. Define the target audience: undergraduate and graduate students from diverse backgrounds pursuing STEM degrees.
- 1.2. Prioritize minorities, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and first-generation college students.

##### **2. Develop Program Design and Curriculum:**

- 2.1. Collaborate with faculty, industry experts, and leadership development specialists to design a comprehensive curriculum.
- 2.2. Incorporate global leadership competencies, emphasizing cross-cultural communication, adaptability, and empathy.
- 2.3. Blend theoretical knowledge with practical experiences through workshops, seminars, and experiential learning.

##### **3. Integrate Transformational Leadership:**

- 3.1. Inspire a Vision: Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring a vision.
  - 3.1.1. Infuse the program with a vision of inclusive STEM leadership that transcends borders.
  - 3.1.2. Focus on educating on how to inspire vision for others.
- 3.2. Empower and Motivate: Transformational leaders empower participants to take ownership of their roles. Encourage students to lead with confidence and resilience.

**4. Develop Global Mindset:**

- 4.1. Understanding and Embracing Different Cultures: A global mindset requires understanding cultural nuances. We will expose students to diverse perspectives and foster cultural intelligence.
- 4.2. Openness and Adaptability: Transformational leaders embrace change. We will cultivate openness to new ideas, adaptability, and a willingness to learn from global contexts.

**5. Facilitate Experiential Learning Opportunities:**

- 5.1. Study Abroad Immersion: Create study abroad partnerships and opportunities for students to utilize and experience various cultures while applying their STEM knowledge.
  - 5.1.1. Provide scholarships or grants to reduce the barrier for entry for STEM students to participate in international study programs.
- 5.2. Internships and Research Abroad: Facilitate global internships or research experiences.
- 5.3. Virtual Exchange Programs: Creating another method for students to gain global experiences.
  - 5.3.1. Connect students with peers from diverse countries through virtual platforms.
  - 5.3.2. Provide alternative options to in-person study abroad opportunities.

**6. Assess and Evaluate:**

- 6.1. Regularly assess participants' imposter feelings using validated scales (e.g., Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale).
- 6.2. Measure leadership skill development through self-assessment, peer evaluations, and faculty feedback.
- 6.3. Collect qualitative data on participants' experiences and growth.

**7. Train Faculty and Staff:**

- 7.1. Train faculty and advisors in transformational leadership principles.
- 7.2. Sensitize them to the unique challenges faced by minority STEM students.
- 7.3. Encourage faculty to develop global study opportunities.
- 7.4. Provide workshops to assist faculty in entwining global leadership principles in their classrooms.

**8. Integrate Community Engagement:**

- 8.1. Collaborate with industry partners, alumni, and STEM organizations.
- 8.2. Host guest speakers, panels, and networking events.
- 8.3. Foster a sense of belonging and community among participants.

**9. Foster Campus Partnerships:**

- 9.1. Center for Global Engagement to assist in increased global mobility.
- 9.2. Leadership Development office to guide leadership development education practices.
- 9.3. Career Services to build partnerships globally with various businesses to provide internship and job opportunities.
- 9.4. Community Engagement office to connect campus with potential organizations and partners.

9.5. Curriculum Committee to implement additional curriculum requirements into course offerings and potential degree requirements.

#### **10. Long-Term Impact:**

- 10.1. Track participants beyond graduation to assess career trajectories, leadership roles, and imposter feelings.
- 10.2. Establish an alumni network to support ongoing professional development.

#### **11. Continuous Improvement:**

- 11.1. Regularly review and update the program based on participant feedback and emerging research.
- 11.2. Seek external funding and grants to sustain and expand the initiative.

## **Conclusion**

By integrating transformational leadership principles and fostering a global mindset, we empower STEM minorities to lead with authenticity, resilience, and a vision that transcends borders.

## **Summary**

Women have demonstrated stronger skills in being transformational leaders than men. Developing these leadership abilities can enhance career growth for women. However, there remains a significant underrepresentation of women (and other minorities) in STEM fields. (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021; Van Oosten et al., 2017). The imposter phenomenon, which is associated with a lack of confidence in leadership skills, often leads to early discontinuation of education. This phenomenon could be a key factor contributing to the limited persistence of women and other minorities in the STEM careers. Since leadership development has been shown to increase leadership success later in careers, it would seem relevant to look at early interventions for leadership development that could improve the confidence of the individual, thus reducing imposter phenomenon and increasing skills as transformational leaders and persistence through their education and careers (Dominguez-Soto et al., 2021; Main et al., 2019). Components of transformational leadership such as motivating and inspiring team members to reach their potential can help to warm the “chilly climate” of the STEM fields which often leads to minorities in STEM leaving the field (Ntseke et al., 2022; Palid et al., 2023). Finding ways to increase retention of minorities in STEM, both in education and later in their career, is critical. By developing more transformational global leaders in the underrepresented STEM populations, this could prove beneficial in overall retention in the field. As previously mentioned, diverse workforces are more innovative and productive. By researching ways to reduce the imposter phenomenon through early education leadership interventions, it is possible to impact retention of diverse talent. In summary, addressing imposter feelings and supporting transformational leadership skills are crucial steps toward creating a more inclusive and successful STEM workforce.

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## About the Author



Kristen Merchant, a Terre Haute local, found her passion in guiding students at Rose-Hulman after falling in love with her own undergraduate experience there. Her role as Associate Director of Union & Student Activities offers a variety of experiences, from campus events to leadership training, keeping every day exciting. In addition, directing Rose-Hulman's Leadership Education and Development (LEAD)

program has sparked a new enthusiasm for nurturing students' leadership skills. In the fall of 2022, Kristen pursued her other passion of education and began her journey in the Ph.D. in Global Leadership program at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, in Terre Haute, Indiana. Outside of work, Kristen enjoys decorating her first home with her husband, being a dog mom, and indulging in cozy reading sessions. She also enjoys playing on the "Girls that Golf" team in the intramural league, despite their lack of skill.



## Healthcare Workers Around the Globe Face Increased Stress and Burnout: The Need for a Response from Healthcare Organizations

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### Abstract

**Background:** Estimates are that the world will face a nursing shortage of 13 million nurses by 2030. Stress, burnout, and the recent global pandemic have worsened a growing crisis of physical and psychological strain among healthcare workers worldwide. Current research has not identified organizational or verified self-care interventions to improve this situation long term; however, healthcare leaders and organizations are urged to provide individualized resources to support healthcare workers across the globe while more rigorous studies are developed and implemented.

**Objectives:** Previous studies have reported some benefits of stress reduction with the use of relaxation spaces, mindfulness-based stress reduction, yoga, Tai Chi, cognitive behavioral therapy, psychotherapy, as well as other interventions when individualized to match the unique healthcare worker and the severity of their symptoms. **Approach:** The National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety in the United States and the World Health Organization have developed resources and guidelines for healthcare organizations to utilize while awaiting further research. **Conclusion:** This perspective essay aims to increase awareness of the current crisis and promote future research studies and funding for appropriate interventions to support the healthcare workforce globally.

**Keywords:** stress, burnout, healthcare workers, pandemic, global

**Paper type:** Critical Essay & Perspective

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## Introduction

More than half of United States (U.S.) healthcare workers (HCW) report burnout along with the frequent accompanying symptoms of depression, anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, apathy, headaches, and weight changes (Murthy, 2022; Cleveland Clinic, 2022). The impact on the healthcare worker is concerning, but the subsequent effect on patient outcomes should alarm the general population. Research has shown that improving the emotional and psychological health of HCWs could reduce the current 250,000 deaths a year caused by medical errors. Inappropriate workloads, interpersonal difficulties, and extensive work hours all contribute to HCW burnout, fewer workers, and ultimately decreased patient safety (Garcia et al., 2019).

## Global Nursing Shortages

In addition to the negative emotional and psychological impact on nurses, the increased stress and pressures of the COVID-19 era have exacerbated an already worrisome nursing shortage. HCW burnout, exhaustion, and HCW deaths will have created a global crisis deficit by 2030 of an estimated 9 million nurses according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2022a), or worse, 13 million nurses according to the International Council of Nurses (ICN, n.d.). Specific shortages are expected to number 123,000 in Australia, 117,000 in Canada, 140,600 in the United Kingdom (UK), and 275,000 in the U.S. (Baumann et al., 2023; Royal College of Nursing, 2022., Victoria University Online, 2022; WHO, 2022a).

*Table 1*  
**Anticipated Nursing Shortage by 2030**

Country	Shortage
Australia	123,000
Canada	117,000
United Kingdom	140,600
United States	275,000

The problem is compounded in historically diverse and marginalized groups. In their 2021 Work and Wellbeing Survey results, due to work stressors and discrimination, Black and Hispanic workers, male LGBTQ+ workers, and disabled workers report being significantly more stressed. And they are likely to seek employment outside of their current workplace within the next year compounding an already disturbing pattern of worker mental stress, burnout, and an attrition dilemma (APA, 2021).

In an unfortunate irony, the solution that many economically privileged countries have implemented has created a worsening crisis for underprivileged nations as skilled nurses have been recruited internationally to wealthier nations. This is devastating in some African nations which possess only 4% of the world's healthcare workers yet face 25% of the disease burden. In fact, this situation has weakened approximately 55 national healthcare systems in lower-income nations. This creates an urgent need for all nations to commit to respecting the recommendations of the WHO Global Code of Practice by reducing nursing migration and expanding domestic education and workplace pay and benefits to maintain global access in all nations. These potentially unethical recruiting practices have created dissatisfaction among domestic nurses as recruited or traveling nurses are often paid a much higher rate for their services

(Agyeman-Manu et al., 2023; Baumann et al., 2023; Buchan et al., 2022; WHO, 2022b).

## Burnout in Nurses Around the Globe

In a 2022 report, the ICN found countries around the world reporting a burnout crisis in nurses. Recent studies have reported burnout statistics as high as 40% of Ugandan nurses, 22% of Australian nurses, 60% of Belgian nurses, and 63% of U.S. nurses, as summarized in Table 2 below. In addition, they reported depression, insomnia, work dissatisfaction, and suicidal ideation in a concerning number of nurses in locations such as Lebanon, the United Kingdom, Australia, and China (Buchan et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2019; Ferry et al., 2021).

*Table 2*  
**Numbers of Nurses in International Locations Reporting Burnout**

Country	Percentage
Belgium	60%
Uganda	40%
United States	63%
Australia	22%
United Kingdom	79%

How did we arrive at such an extreme situation of burnout among our global nursing workforce? There is no doubt a previously troubling trend was only compounded by the recent global pandemic.

## Conclusion

### *Where Do We Go from Here to Improve the Global Nursing Workforce*

With such staggering statistics, it is imperative that nurse leaders and HCWs around the world focus resources and education aimed at improving the working conditions and mental well-being of the global healthcare workforce. Unfortunately, across multiple studies, there has not been a clear determination of the most effective evidence-based strategies for improving burnout in nurses worldwide (Pollock et al., 2020). Therefore, first and foremost, a renewed dedication to continued research to determine the best evidence-based interventions to assist our global nurses to reduce burnout and improve resiliency is in order. Some potential interventions and areas for further research are described in the following studies and organizational directives.

A 2023 systematic review consisting of 117 studies with a combined total of 11,119 HCW participants found that interventions aimed at allowing subjects to focus on their stress by discussing their feelings and stressors and/or participating in cognitive behavioral therapy or skills training were effective for up to a year. Likewise, interventions aimed at assisting patients to not focus on their stress, such as yoga, Tai Chi, and acupuncture were also effective for up to one year. Unfortunately, not all the studies included blinding in their randomization limiting the overall confidence in the interpretations. Lack of blinding means that the participants or researchers were aware of the treatment assignment. This could introduce bias. This review concurrently looked at the effectiveness of work-related interventions, such as adjusting workload



demands, and found there may be some benefit for, again, up to one year. The authors concluded that more rigorous, prolonged follow-up studies should be developed and conducted (Tamminga et al., 2023).

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a division of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has developed a new program aimed to assist HCWs with mental health needs. The Health Worker Mental Health Initiative:

aims to raise awareness of mental health needs including suicide-risk and substance use disorders, eliminate barriers to accessing care, identify workplace and community supports for HCWs, reduce the stigma for seeking and receiving mental health care, identify and improve data, screening tools, trainings, resources, and policies to address health worker mental health (NIOSH, 2022, para 2).

A rapid review which includes 14 studies published in 2020 addresses stress reduction techniques for healthcare workers specifically affected by pandemics, describing organizational and self-care interventions. The review describes the symptoms of stress, and post-traumatic stress syndrome experienced by some HCWs following front-line care experiences during a pandemic. Psychological stress and symptoms are compounded by concern for personal and family well-being while providing care for seriously ill patients. This was especially true for Chinese healthcare workers, specifically those providing care in Wuhan. Personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages only served to worsen psychological wellness during Covid-19 (Callus et al., 2020).

This review stressed the importance of personal preferences and needs among HCWs in how they desire to address their mental health needs. Some subjects desired training in self-care techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness-based stress management, and other relaxation techniques, while others wanted training to help address the distress they were witnessing among others. Some HCWs expressed a desire to obtain training from multimedia sources, while others, usually those with more severe symptoms, desired face-to-face interventions such as psychotherapy or counseling from professionals (Callus et al., 2020).

Callus et al., in the 2020 review, also describe an evidence-based approach used in the U.K. to support psychological health. Here, digital platforms for providing support were explored. Virtual appointments and digital applications can improve accessibility for some HCWs needing psychological support. This UK project developed a digital package using the “Agile methodology” providing team leaders with guidance on “reducing social stigma, increasing peer and family support, self-care strategies to improve sleep and rest, shift work, healthy lifestyle behaviors, and emotion management strategies” (p.7).

In addition, the review addresses the need for organizational interventions to support HCWs in some of the following ways: reduced workload, improved workflow, improving, and offering opportunities for open communication, rest and relaxation areas, and financial support for HCWs and family members experiencing personal illness. HCWs should have adequate access to food, supplies, and PPE. Assuring

HCWs of adequate supplies of PPE and the availability of stress management resources, which consider personal preferences for delivery methods, has been shown to provide psychological support and reduce distress among these providers (Callus et al., 2020).

One initiative for consideration is promoting the importance of mental wellbeing in healthcare students before they transition to the workforce. Not only will this provide students with the necessary skills and resources needed to improve academic performance, but these skills can be carried into their careers, benefiting the nurse and their patients. Ohio State University (OSU) has developed wellness programs for students, faculty, and healthcare workers within their colleges and medical facilities. Their MINDBODYSTRONG program is an evidence-based program providing education to healthcare students with research results reporting decreased depression, suicidal ideation, improved mental resiliency, academic improvements, and other mental and physical benefits through cognitive-behavioral and resiliency training (Ohio State University College of Nursing, 2023). Expansion of such programs that begin in the formative, academic training years of nurses could lead to a healthier, more resilient future workforce and improve retention. Future research globally could benefit the student nurses and practicing nurses utilizing the model OSU has provided through its expansive programs.

Throughout much of the world, HCWs have reportedly experienced elevated levels of stress and burnout for decades. Recent pandemics, especially the worldwide impact of Covid-19, have exacerbated an already overwhelming and severe situation. With current, and projected HCW shortages, it is more urgent than ever that healthcare organizations and world health leaders turn their attention to the physical and psychological health needs of these workers around the globe. Unfortunately, few rigorous studies demonstrate the long-term benefits of stress management interventions and increasing resiliency among the health worker population. Healthcare researchers and world leaders need to address this vitally important subject with increased funding and resources for studying and developing evidence-based approaches for reducing the burden of elevated stress, burnout, and the resulting physical and psychological consequences for HCWs. In addition, healthcare organizations should promote psychological well-being by providing organizational and self-care interventions aimed at supporting the HCW in ways the worker feels most beneficial to their individual needs and circumstances.

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## About the authors



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Dr. Myers achieved double board certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner and a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. Beyond her professional pursuits, she finds her greatest joy in her role as a mother to three children.



## Global Movement Crisis: A Case Study

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### Abstract

**Background:** Physical inactivity has become a global crisis and is adversely impacting the health of our world. Being physically active, even at a minimal level, can positively change physical and mental health. As little as ten minutes a day can result in significant health improvements, such as a decrease in blood glucose levels.

**Description:** Service-learning courses are a way to provide students with job-related training as college credit and offer a needed service of safe physical activity to members of the local community.

**Learning Outcomes:** Student participants learn from teaching exercise, building programs, and implementing a training program for the college employees. **Significance and Impact:** Physical inactivity is a global health crisis. The lack of activity is causing major health concerns as well as death. This is a call to action to expand healthy activity to the general population using trained student leaders. **Teaching Notes:** The case includes links to various documents to guide instructors to take advantage of a similar activity.

**Keywords:** movement, physical activity, service-learning, campus community, exercise training

**Paper type:** Case Study

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## CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

This case study discusses how a service-learning course can bring physical activity to a college campus. This study addresses the application of classroom concepts with real clients, to both meet a health need and integrate job-related experiences with learning. This approach allows students a safe place to teach proper exercise techniques while also developing quality human interaction skills. Participants can practice removing exercise barriers, such as understanding what exercise to do, how to reach personal goals, and creating a commitment for activity engagement (Abbott & O'Connell, 2021).

The purpose of this case study is to share how a college course for credit can be used to improve the health and well-being of staff and faculty members. Students need exposure to real-life scenarios and members of the college community need to increase their physical activity movement and knowledge. This case study can be used as a road map for other educational or professional development opportunities around physical activity (PA). Much of the world does not meet PA requirements, therefore, increasing the opportunity for activity is highly recommended.

At a small liberal arts college in southwest Indiana, Exercise Science students were given the opportunity to teach and design a one-on-one personalized exercise program for a college employee. As a result, students earned credit toward degree completion. This service-learning environment resulted in beneficial results for both students and employees. Bringle and Hatcher (2009) define service-learning courses as

... course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (p. 38).

Bringle and Hatcher continue to lead service-learning globally, noted by 2013 Service-Learning Teaching Excellence Award Recipient, Pratt Cassity, "Global service-learning applies academic knowledge to the real world in an international, cross-cultural, or multi-national context. It is community service that builds intercultural relationships. Global service-learning involves a meaningful, community-driven project where a vital need has been identified" (Cassity, 2013, para 3-6).

Students eligible for this course are typically in their junior year and have completed coursework to prepare for this applied experience. Ideally, students have a good understanding of exercise training and techniques, as well as precautions to consider before exercise engagement. The student learning process results from providing correct, effective, and sound exercise programming for their client. In this case, the client is a member of the college community, either staff, faculty or others that are associated with the college. This case study can serve as a template or a catalyst for any organization to start a physical activity initiative in their community.

The unique nature of this course offers real individual situations that are difficult to replicate in a traditional classroom setting. Exercise Science students will go on to careers of Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, Strength and Conditioning, and other



service-based, human-centered careers. This course creates exposure to job-related experiences in a controlled environment under qualified supervision.

One example of a real-life experience occurred during a recent training class when a client experienced an episode of vertigo. This client's response to an activity is an example of a relatively common real-life occurrence but one which students could be unprepared to respond to correctly in an unsupervised environment, or if only learning from lectures and textbooks. This experience allowed students to experience an adverse effect to exercise, see the appropriate response, and observe the communication between the healthcare professional and the client. As noted in Howell et al., after a service-learning course, students felt more confident about their ability to help others, enjoyment from client interaction, and their exposure to an older adult population (2021).

Howell et al. found that service-learning supplied students with the needed preparation in undergraduate studies that students highly desired (2021). It makes sense to allow students plenty of practical experience with clients prior to engagement in actual healthcare environments. This case study begs the question, are students being prepared with the necessary skills for career success, or merely the theory and foundational information?

## Participants

College community employees and related adults associated with the college were invited to participate. When considering the number of participants, it is important to identify the number of students the clinician can safely oversee and the readiness of the students for the experience. The clients selected should be considered for the unique needs, physical limitations, and diversity they can bring to the student experience, focusing on providing students with real-life situations requiring interpersonal communication, rapport building, and skill delivery.

Prior to the course, expectations were set for attendance, feedback, and oversight of the activity. These expectations were defined for both the students and the participants, and all signed a commitment agreement which established accountability for consistent attendance including agreement to only one unexcused absence during the defined period.

Selection of participants was based on personal need to increase physical activity level, clearance for exercise from primary care physician, and the commitment to attend twice per week for 30 minutes, during a 12-week period. Each participant also completed a health history questionnaire and provided physician-signed clearance for involvement. The health questionnaire used can be found at The International Standard of Pre-Participation Screening on this website <http://eparmedx.com/> entitled Physical Activity Questionnaire for Everyone (Says et al., n.d.).

An important benefit of this controlled environment for students is that clients recognize the unique learning environment and respect the learning process of the young, soon to be professionals. Many times, clients bring questions and personal goals to the students which would stimulate thought and verbal responses. Students learn from these client interactions, supervisor evaluation, and peer reflections.

## Supervision

Qualified faculty supervision is needed throughout each session to protect the client and to fully observe the student leadership and decision-making. The faculty supervisor reviews and observes student client engagement and ensures safe execution of each exercise. Exercise programs are designed based on the individual client's goals; however, some basic parameters also apply. These include all clients and students performing warm-up exercises, a conditioning phase, and a cool-down. If appropriate, clients engaged in strength training, cardiovascular exercise, and flexibility training. Additionally, the American College of Sports Medicine guidelines and recommendations for programming were followed (Liguori, 2022).

To ensure safe exercise training, pre-screening measures are necessary. This course used the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) informed consent for participation in a health and fitness program, health history questionnaire, and medical clearance form (2022). All noted forms can be found in the ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription textbook, many are also available online (Liguori, 2022).

## Significance and Impact of Global Movement

The global problem of sedentary lifestyles is quickly becoming the most prevalent cause of human illness (Guthold et al., 2018). The Lancet reported a pooled analysis on global physical activity levels and found insufficient physical activity, particularly among high and rising high-income countries worldwide (2018). Further, this study confirmed that from a global perspective, women are less active than men (Guthold et al., 2018). To renormalize movement into our daily lifestyle, movement-based living must be prioritized by governments, communities, and agencies and promoted through accessible programming wherever possible.

The global lack of physical activity was emphasized in the Lancet in one of the largest global studies of 168 countries and found that over a quarter of all adults were at risk for developing chronic lifestyle-type diseases (Guthold et al., 2018). There was variation within countries revealing that higher-income countries had the highest level of sedentarism, and the lower-income countries engaged in active transport, i.e., walking, and cycling, while higher-income countries tended to have more sedentary occupations. Another interesting finding was the lack of activity among females, especially in South and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa (Guthold et al., 2018).

Further, The World Health Organization (WHO) reinforced the need for regular physical activity when ten key physical activity facts were defined (2020):

1. Physical activity has significant health benefits for hearts, bodies, and minds.
2. Physical activity contributes to preventing/ managing noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes.
3. Physical activity reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety.
4. Physical activity enhances thinking, learning, and judgment skills.
5. Physical activity ensures healthy growth and development in young people.

6. Physical activity improves overall well-being.
7. Globally, 1 in 4 adults do not meet the global recommended levels of physical activity.
8. Up to 5 million deaths a year could be averted if the global population was more active.
9. People who are insufficiently active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of death compared to people who are sufficiently active.
10. More than 80% of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently physically active.

There are many reasons for the onset of sedentarism and a lack of overall movement in the global world. However, the impact of living a sedentary lifestyle is vastly expanding the healthcare costs that contribute to worldwide financial burdens. Between 2020 and 2030 the cost of physical inactivity will cost the US 27 billion dollars per year due to heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases (WHO, 2022). According to the WHO, less than 50% of all countries have a national physical activity policy and only 40% of all countries have standards to allow for safe walking and biking (WHO, 2022). The WHO is trying to show countries how to improve this by providing a Global Action Plan on Physical Activity, 2018-2030 (GAPPA) which sets out 20 recommendations to increase physical activity and programming. The 104-page report can be downloaded here for free:

- More Active People For A Healthier World (2018-2030)
  - <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf>

Through courses such as this, clients are taught the importance of physical activity to improve health outcomes and reduce morbidity while building confidence, knowledge, and motivation to continue leading an active lifestyle. American College of Sports Medicine and the CDC recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week (Liguori, G., 2022). Currently, only a quarter of the US reach this targeted level.

## Key Stakeholders

Every institution, organization, and community needs to recognize themselves as a stakeholder in this worldwide issue. Global health is at an all-time low and activity has become the responsibility of everyone. “It is good for public health and makes economic sense to promote more physical activity for everyone,” said Dr Ruediger Krech, Director Department of Health Promotion, WHO. “We need to facilitate inclusive programmes for physical activity for all and ensure people have easier access to them.” The WHO’s GAPPA 2018-2023 is a “call to all countries for stronger and accelerated action by all relevant stakeholders working better together to achieve the global target of a 15% reduction in the prevalence of physical inactivity by 2030 (WHO, 2020).”

The stakeholders for increasing physical activity are those motivated enough to start an initiative. We need leaders of all shapes, sizes, and activity levels to lead a movement that will promote more activity. This can range from biking and walking lanes, free access to fitness classes, and community sports team activity, the list is endless. The challenging part is to continue to support efforts that encourage physical activity and its worth of time in health, which to some, might be priceless.

Using service-learning on a college campus has helped bridge the gap for many underserved populations in the college community (Resch & Schrittmesser, 2021). The responsibility to increase daily movement belongs to everyone. Designated walking trails, riding a bike, and requiring activity breaks during work hours can be a good starting point.

The fatal impact of sedentary lifestyles can no longer be ignored. Obesity, diabetes, and heart disease resulting from such life choices are killing people worldwide at a higher rate than ever before per the World Health Organization (2020). As a result, promotion of physical activity must become a priority for us all.

## Results

The results of this case study include very tangible health outcomes i.e., lower blood glucose levels, stronger gait, and more confidence using fitness equipment. Clinical health indicators have been proven to improve with increased physical activity in many ways, see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm>.

At the conclusion of the course term, students provided clients with a full report on their progress, challenges, and suggestions for future activity. This information was provided in an oral presentation to the participant group which also allowed students to overcome public presentation inhibitions.

This course supports commitment to movement, enhanced student preparation, and quality movement instruction. Service-learning reinforces the continued physical activity of the participants and the relationship built between the students and clients. Considerations for the future entail adopting an app to track fitness, including an accountability partner, and health and wellness goal setting. The possibilities for health enhancement are endless.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this course is an effective means of changing the promotion of positive health behavior while also serving as a tool to develop future wellness providers more effectively, when supervised by qualified healthcare professionals for the safety and learning of all participants. Identification of participants and qualified supervision are pivotal for the success of the program. This must include the use of a screening tool, equipment availability, and stakeholder acceptance.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that 75% of Americans do not meet the recommended requirements for physical activity (Liguori, 2021). The WHO recognizes that over 80% of adolescents and over 27% of adults do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity (WHO, 2020). It is vital to our global health that every community:

- 1) recognize the global movement crisis,
- 2) define how to increase physical activity in their community, and
- 3) promote opportunities for learning about this problem and how to rectify it.

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## Higher Education and Higher Inequality: Case Study

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### Abstract

**Background:** This case study focuses on gender inequality in a higher education setting. It involves both human resources and leadership management situations. By participating in this study, students will be able to do the following: critically examine a gender inequality case study; recommend a solution or outcome regarding a case of gender inequality in a global setting; and justify and defend their decision-making skills in uncertain and complex ethical situations and gender inequality. This case study is best suited for undergraduate students in a human resource, ethical leadership, or social change theory course. In addition, this case study is also appropriate for business professionals in the human resource field. **Objectives and Learning Outcomes:** Learning outcomes include: 1) Critically examine a gender inequality case study; 2) Recommend a solution or outcome regarding a case of gender inequality in a global setting; 3) Justify and defend their decision-making skills in uncertain and complex ethical situations and gender inequality; 4) Research examples of gender inequality in the workplace. Some information has deliberately been excluded from the case study to promote further research and discussion to give students an opportunity to give an end to the story. **Teaching Notes:** Teaching notes are available with this case study.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, higher education, human resources, ethical leadership, social change theory, discrimination in the workplace.

**Paper type:** Instructional Case Study

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## Case Description

This case is about Jane Patterson, who is celebrating six-months at her new job in Student Affairs, at a predominantly male college. As she adjusts to the new work environment, she is also learning how to adjust to comments from her new direct male supervisor. Jane is wondering if she is facing a case of discrimination in the workplace and is questioning next steps in the situation.

## Case Synopsis

Throughout this case study, students will have the opportunity to consider and create various responses regarding the potential workplace gender discrimination situation of Jane Patterson. Students will be encouraged to answer the discussion questions and recommend a solution or outcome regarding a case of gender inequality in a global setting. Students will also be able to justify and defend their decision-making skills in uncertain and complex ethical situations and gender inequality.

## Background & Case Story

### ***Higher Education and Higher Inequality***

Jane Patterson smiled as she opened the door to the Student Affairs office, with her warm coffee in her hand. This was officially her six-month work anniversary at Bayou University, a well-known higher education institution. Not only was Jane celebrating half a year at the college, but she was also still proud of being the first female in her residence life role at the college. Although Bayou University was a well-known college for academics, it was also well-known that it was not a very diverse campus. Jane knew that it was a continuous goal of the campus to continue to diversify, and she was hopeful for the future of her tenure and the impact she might be able to make.

“Hi David,” said Jane as she spotted her direct supervisor and dean of students in the conference room of the office, “what are you working on this morning?” she asked. “

We have a big reunion coming up for homecoming – and I am working on the invitations to the guys for it. Excited to have the men back on campus to see all the new changes!” stated David.

Jane sat down with excitement and started to help with the invitations. “That does sound really exciting! Do the men and women have different reunion groups?” she said with a confused look on her face.

David gave her a smile; “No, of course not. But this reunion is for a class that was here before Bayou University went co-ed. Now don’t get me wrong, I think BU has had some great benefits with being co-ed, but there was something so special about having this group of guys back. You’re certainly learning more about the traditions of Bayou, and this group of guys was really something special.” said David.

After helping David with the invitations, Jane left the conference room to work on an event for a global conference for women in STEM. She was excited to have a panel of influential female leaders visit to speak to the current students about their experience

in STEM and work worldwide. As she was working on the event, she couldn't help thinking about the comment that David made. Before she took the job at Bayou University, some trusted mentors had shared with her that BU used to be considered the "good ole boys" club, because they had been an all-male campus for all those years. But women had been allowed to attend for the past 25 years, surely things were different now.

#### **Residence Hall Renovation... a few days later**

"We should probably divide what roles and responsibilities we each want to take on with this project before we meet with David," explained Cody. The team of residence life professionals were meeting this Wednesday morning to discuss plans for the new residence hall renovation. Cody Ryan had been at Bayou University for six months, just like Jane, but he had graduated from Bayou and was a graduate assistant when he was a student. Due to being a graduate assistant, Cody had experience working within all the residence halls, both male and co-ed. Cody was an easy-going guy, and was the definition of a team-player. At the same time, Jane had gathered that he didn't love to ruffle feathers or rock the boat in uneasy situations.

Aaron Lucas stretched his arms over his head and stifled a yawn. "Well, you know I do enjoy taking on a creative role when possible – so I'm happy to help with any piece of build and plan that makes sense for that." Aaron had been in residence life for a few years longer than Cody and Jane, and he graduated from Bayou University. Aaron loved creating new programs and experiences for students and was certainly the brainstormer of the group for new ideas. Jane was learning that Aaron could also go with the flow, but certainly was passionate about specific areas. While Cody would be a team player about anything; it was evident that Aaron drew clear boundaries about what he felt was his concern to address, and what wasn't.

"What about you, Jane? Anything specific you feel your strengths lend well within this project?" said Cody, as he leaned into the discussion.

Jane thought about it for a second before responding. Clearly, residence life was new for her – but this wasn't the first time she had helped with a building plan or renovated a building space. In her previous job, she had helped fundraise and strategically plan for a renovated historical building for a nonprofit. She was excited about this opportunity in her new position, too. "I would love to be able to help manage the overall pieces of the project finance and help with the budget, if possible. Given my previous experience and organization skills, I think that would be a good fit."

"Perfect" stated Cody, "I will keep us on track with routine meetings and next steps, Jane will ensure budgetary pieces and communication with facilities on each piece of the project to make sure it works, and Aaron will work on the creative pieces and even design aspects. I think we are set for our meeting with David!"

#### **The Team Meeting.... a week later**

A week later, the residence life team is sitting in David's office, getting ready to meet about the new residence hall renovation. There was clear excitement in the room from the three young professionals because this was the first big project they would

get to tackle together as a team. “Alright kids, let’s talk about residence hall renovations. Oh Jane, would you be a doll and take notes for us? Thanks!” said David.

Jane nodded in to accept the note-taking role but felt herself bristle slightly under that comment. Although she had only known David for six months, she couldn’t shake the fact that he would make comments like that, but not to Cody or Aaron. Not to mention, David never asked them to take the meeting notes. It is probably nothing, she thought to herself. David was a beloved staff member in Student Affairs and had given many years of service to the college, he surely didn’t mean anything by it.

“Okay, pitch me your proposal” stated David.

Both Aaron and Jane looked at Cody, “Well, we met last week, and spent some time thinking about what strengths we each had, and interesting areas of the project we felt passionate about,” said Cody. As Cody was explaining the roles, Aaron and Jane would pipe up with additional information when needed.

“Yeah, you know I love coming up with creative things, David. And I feel we could do something neat with the design of the residence hall to make it more interactive for the students,” expressed Aaron with excitement.

“And David, I know I mentioned this in my interview – but I do have background experience with managing the budgetary and collaboration aspects of a project, and also pitching in when needed” shared Jane.

David thanked the group for their contributions and for spending time thinking about this project. He asked the group to let him marinate on the roles, and they would follow up on Monday for the next steps within their roles and the project.

### **New Week, New Responsibility**

It was the start of the week, and Jane was feeling accomplished and confident. The Global Leaders Panel that she had planned with Lisa in Student Activities had gone so well over the weekend, and the feedback from students was extremely positive. They even asked to host more female panelled events, to talk about experiences in their STEM-designated fields and share their global experiences. Plus, Jane got to spend some time at Coffee Corner on Sunday, the local coffee shop, putting together an itemized spreadsheet with thoughts and considerations for the residence hall project, including a budget and an estimated timeline of the project. She felt particularly confident because she had also planned a proposed ribbon cutting around the reunion that David was planning for, so graduates could see how campus residence halls were changing and improving.

“Thanks again for your ideas and brainstorming last week,” said David, to kick off the meeting. I spent some time over the weekend thinking about next steps and roles, and I think we have a good plan.” Jane could feel herself smile. This was such a neat first big project to work on. “With that being said, I have made some changes in the responsibilities for some of you, as I think it just makes more sense.” Aaron, Cody, and Jane all looked up from their notepads, and waited to hear what those changes may be.

David continued, “Cody, I think it still makes sense for you to plan the weekly or bi-weekly meetings concerning the project. We want to ensure we all stay on track with what is expected. Aaron, I know you like being on the creative side, but for this project, I would like you to work more directly with facilities about next steps. Given that you have been here longer, I think you have a more established relationship with them.” Although Jane could feel a little disappointment, she could see how that may make more sense in terms of length of relationship. She hoped she would still get to help with the budget items and overall planning pieces.

David continued, “Jane, although you have worked on financial pieces of renovations before in previous roles, I think for this project it makes more sense for you to be on the design part of the project - picking out colors of paint, carpet, and furniture pieces. Plus, girls like that kind of stuff, right? Leave the budgetary pieces and numbers to us and Bayou University grads, since we know the campus best.” Aaron and Cody looked at her, with weary smiles on their faces. “Let’s do this team!” exclaimed David. And with that, the meeting was over in a flash.

Jane walked back to her office, trying to shake the confusion from her face. Why would David have made that switch, and why would he have assumed that because she was a girl, she would like that part of the project?

### **Design or Destruction**

As Jane dropped into her chair in her office, she suddenly felt uneasy about the situation and less confident in her role. As she thought through the comments David had made directly or in passing in just the past week, she started to wonder if she was overthinking it, or not thinking about it enough. She took a sip of her lukewarm coffee and began to wonder why she didn’t speak up in that meeting and advocate more for herself.

Jane spoke under her breath, “Well, I need to remember I’m the first female in this role, and it’s only been six months. But certainly, David knew better, or maybe he was just joking? But it certainly didn’t feel like a joke to me” she thought to herself.

As she continued to reflect on conversations, she reminded herself that David was beloved in the office, and that he had some great leadership qualities. However, whether his comments were or were not a joke, would it make sense for her to say something?

She continued to think out loud: “On one hand, I don’t want to rock the boat because I’m new and am still learning about the office. Plus, at outside of work events, David and his wife Shelby, the HR Director of Bayou University, were always so kind and welcoming to me. On the other hand, if I never speak up about how the comments make me feel, how can I expect change or seek further understanding?” Jane continued to go back and forth in her own thoughts about the interactions as a whole.

As Jane continued to sit in her office and puzzle over the situation, Achilles Angelos, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, stopped by her office. Achilles, who was an expatriate from Greece joined Bayou University at the beginning of the academic year and was a new addition to the leadership team of the school. He

recently relocated to the US from Greece to follow his wife, who was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of a world-renowned hospital in Houston.

“Hey, just wanted to check in on how everything is going...” suddenly Achilles’ voice trailed off. “Hey, is everything okay? You look like you might be a little upset or troubled by something.”

Achilles, who, among other things, was in charge of the newly created mentorship program for the school and had quickly grown into an excellent mentor for Jane, showing her the ropes of Bayou University and ensuring she had everything she needed in her new career with the team. Jane took a deep breath and then another sip of coffee. She wasn’t sure how Achilles would respond to what she was about to share.

## Learning Outcomes

By participating in this case study, students should be able to do the following: critically examine a gender inequality case study; recommend a solution or outcome regarding a case of gender inequality in a global setting; and justify and defend their decision-making skills in uncertain and complex ethical situations and gender inequality. Students should also be able to utilize social change theory and additional research or case studies to develop their responses and actions to this type of potential gender discrimination.

## Case Study Questions

- What are the central issues that need to be addressed in this case study?
- How do you define gender equality?
- Discuss the ethical considerations of the actions taken by David.
- What is the impact of segregated events on an organization's goal of equality? For example, Jane is disappointed that there aren't more activities for women planned for the reunion because David thought that the all-male school was "something special." But the next week she was excited that she had been asked to host more women-only events. Discuss why this may be?
- What do you think Jane will share? Would you advocate for her to tell Mr. Achilles Angelos about the comments made by David? Why or why not?
- What actions do you propose Mr. Achilles Angelos take in response to the situation presented in the case?
- If you were Jane, would you have gone to HR about this situation, even if the Director of HR was David's wife? What are some key ethical considerations regarding this decision?
- Why or why not do you believe Jane should or shouldn't speak up and advocate directly to David?



- If you were Aaron or Cody, how would you respond to the situation presented in the case?
- Justify and defend your decision and solution to this situation.

## Character List

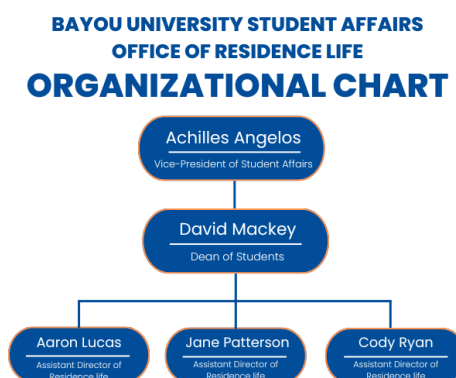
- *Jane Patterson*: Protagonist of the story and has been in a new role at Bayou University for six-months.
- *David Wilkins*: Direct supervisor of Jane Patterson. Has worked at Bayou University for several years and was a graduate of the college as well.
- *Cody Ryan*: Co-worker and teammate of Jane.
- *Aaron Lucas*: Co-worker and teammate of Jane.
- *Achilles Angelos*: Vice-president of the Student Affairs division, and mentor to Jane.
- *Shelby Wilkins*: Director of HR and married to David Wilkins.

## Teaching Materials

Teaching materials are available upon approval by emailing the journal at [arete@smwc.edu](mailto:arete@smwc.edu). The request for teaching materials should be from a valid instructor. You can show validity by linking to your faculty directory or copying your badge or identification. Teaching materials include potential answers to the discussion questions, a suggested schedule, suggested teaching strategies, and an epilogue.

Figure 1

Bayou University Student Affairs: Office of Residence Life Organization Chart



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## About the authors:



Emilee Roberts is a seasoned community engagement partner, with a love of connecting individuals and organizational development through enthusiastic and positive leadership. Her passion is within nonprofit organizations, navigation of leadership challenges, and helping nonprofits prepare for next steps and succession plans. Emilee is known for helping such organizations have the crucial conversations they need to grow and improve.

Currently, Emilee serves as the Director of Strategy and Impact for Chances And Services for Youth (CASYS) in Terre Haute, IN and is a third-year doctoral student at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College. She was selected to be a member of the inaugural cohort at the historic 200-year institution, and currently serves as a Program Engagement Graduate Assistant in the Ph.D. in Global Leadership program. Over the past 10-year journey of her career, Emilee has served with a passion of dedication to program development, community connection, organization storytelling and overall organization visibility. Throughout her career, she has led teams through leadership changes, financial deficits, organizational structure challenges, group dynamics, crucial conversations, and self-assessments for organizational and individual growth.



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