

Research Article

Mahatma Gandhi's Leadership Blueprint: Fusing Servant Leadership with Authentic Integrity

Maria Yousef Mohammed AlAqra* 

International Relations Program, School of Graduate Studies, Arab American University of Palestine, Ramallah, Palestine

Abstract

This paper explores the leadership blueprint of Mahatma Gandhi, focusing on the integration of servant leadership principles with authentic integrity. Leadership has evolved through numerous models, but the frameworks of servant and authentic leadership are distinguished by their emphasis on ethical conduct, personal integrity, and a commitment to the well-being of followers. Gandhi's journey from humble origins to a central figure in the Indian independence movement exemplifies a visionary leadership style that not only catalyzed India's quest for freedom but also contributed to global leadership paradigms. This study seeks to address key research questions regarding the defining characteristics of Gandhi's leadership, the extent to which he embodied principles of servant and authentic leadership, and the lessons contemporary leaders can derive from his integrated approach. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research involves a thorough review of primary and secondary sources, including Gandhi's writings, biographies, and historical records, alongside case studies that illustrate the application of his leadership philosophy in various contexts. The hypothesis posits that Gandhi's distinctive leadership model, characterized by selfless service, moral integrity, and an unwavering commitment to social justice, offers enduring insights for today's leaders. Through thematic analysis, the study reveals key themes such as humility, self-sacrifice, and relational transparency that illustrate the convergence of servant and authentic leadership in Gandhi's life, reinforcing the relevance of his philosophy in contemporary leadership discourse.

Keywords

Gandhi's Leadership Style, Leadership Theories, Servant Leadership, Authentic Integrity, Thematic Analysis

1. Introduction

Leadership has been a central focus in both historical and contemporary studies, with various models offering diverse approaches to effective leadership. Among these, servant leadership and authentic leadership stand out for their emphasis on ethical conduct, personal integrity, and prioritizing the well-being of followers. Mahatma Gandhi, a prominent figure of the 20th century, exemplified a

leadership style that seamlessly integrated the principles of different ethical leadership perspectives effectively [1].

Gandhi's journey from humble beginnings to becoming a prominent leader in the Indian independence movement underscores his visionary leadership. His approach was not only crucial to India's fight for independence but also profoundly influenced global leadership models. Gandhi's

*Corresponding author: alakra@yahoo.com (Maria Yousef Mohammed AlAqra')

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philosophy of leadership remains relevant today, offering critical lessons on how ethical and compassionate leadership can drive transformative change [2].

This paper investigates Gandhi's leadership blueprint, aiming to reveal the extent to which he integrated servant leadership with authentic integrity. By analyzing his life and leadership, the study seeks to highlight the lasting relevance of Gandhi's leadership.

1.1. Questions

To explore Mahatma Gandhi's leadership framework and its relevance to contemporary leadership, this research will address the following questions:

1. What are the defining characteristics of Gandhi's leadership?
2. To what extent were servant leadership principles embodied in Gandhi's approach?
3. To what extent were authentic leadership principles embodied in Gandhi's approach?
4. In what ways did Gandhi integrate principles of servant leadership with authentic integrity?
5. What lessons can contemporary leaders draw from Gandhi's integrated approach to leadership?

1.2. Hypothesis

In examining Mahatma Gandhi's leadership framework, this research hypothesizes that Gandhi's approach effectively integrates the principles of Servant Leadership and Authentic Integrity, culminating in a distinctive leadership model characterized by selfless service, moral character and a profound commitment to social justice.

1.3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, an approach considered particularly suitable for analyzing complex and multifaceted concepts such as leadership styles and personal integrity. By utilizing qualitative methods, the research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how Gandhi's leadership aligns with the principles of Servant Leadership and Authentic Integrity.

The research will involve a comprehensive review of primary sources, including Gandhi's writings, speeches, letters, and historical records, to uncover how he formulated and applied his leadership principles. Additionally, biographies and autobiographies of Gandhi will be analyzed to offer insights into his personal experiences and leadership philosophy. Secondary sources, such as academic articles, books, and biographies focused on Gandhi's life and leadership will also be reviewed to provide additional context and support. Furthermore, case studies will be conducted on specific events or periods in Gandhi's leadership to illustrate how his leadership style was applied in practice. These case studies will highlight the interaction

between Servant Leadership and Authentic Integrity in various contexts. For data analysis, a descriptive content analysis will be employed to explore how Gandhi's experiences, beliefs, and actions exemplify the principles of servant and authentic leadership. This analysis will focus on significant events and decisions that reflect the integration of these leadership models. Additionally, thematic analysis will be conducted to identify key themes that represent the convergence of servant leadership and authentic leadership in Gandhi's life. Themes such as humility, self-sacrifice, moral integrity, and relational transparency will be explored in detail. The next section will outline the conceptual framework of the study, focusing on leadership as a theoretical concept and its normative theories, with particular emphasis on Gandhi's leadership model.

2. Conceptual Framework and Gandhi's Leadership Model

To thoroughly examine Mahatma Gandhi's leadership framework, it is essential to contextualize his approach within established leadership theories, thereby identifying how Gandhi's leadership aligns with and diverges from these models. This section will provide an overview of leadership as a concept and explore various leadership theories, with particular emphasis on Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership models, which underpin the hypothesis of this research. Following this theoretical exploration, Gandhi's leadership model will be analyzed, with a focus on key aspects of his early life that influenced his leadership style.

2.1. Defining Leadership

Leadership has long been a focal point of scholarly exploration, tracing back to early Greek philosophers like Plato and Socrates, and continuing through to modern management and leadership theorists. In today's fast-paced global environment, the demand for ethical and effective leadership is critical, influencing not only individual and organizational success but also impacting entire sectors, regions, and nations [3].

Despite its importance, leadership remains a complex and often an elusive concept. Badshah [4] highlighted this ambiguity, noting that "almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" exist. He characterized leadership as "an influencing process aimed at goal achievement," focusing on leadership as a method for guiding a group toward a specific objective. Kouzes and Posner [5] frame leadership as "the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations," emphasizing the role of leaders in inspiring commitment to common goals. Similarly, Yukl [6] describes leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it," with a focus on facilitating efforts to achieve shared

objectives. Johnson [7] views leadership as influencing others within a group context, where leaders drive change by advancing both their own and their followers' needs and goals. According to Hogan and Kaiser [8], contemporary understandings of leadership often revolve around four core themes: it is a process, involves influence, occurs within a group setting, and aims at achieving goals. These definitions set the stage for a deeper exploration of various leadership theories and their underlying principles.

2.2. Leadership Theories

Leadership theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how leaders influence, motivate, and guide individuals and groups toward achieving shared goals. The study of leadership has progressed significantly over time, with each theory reflecting the evolving dynamics of organizations and their broader social contexts. Early theories concentrated on identifying specific traits or qualities that differentiated leaders from non-leaders, while later theories shifted focus to the behaviors and actions of leaders. Contemporary theories further expand this understanding by incorporating situational and contextual factors, recognizing that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon the alignment between a leader's style and the operational environment [9]. For this paper, it is crucial to examine the evolution of these theories, highlighting their distinct features, with particular emphasis on the two theories central to the hypothesis of this study: Servant and Authentic Leadership models, as follows:

2.2.1. Early Leadership Theories

Early leadership theories, including the Great Man theory and the Trait theory, focused on the inherent qualities or traits that make leaders effective. The Great Man theory, prevalent in the 19th century, argued that leaders are born with intrinsic qualities that predispose them to lead effectively, suggesting that leadership is an innate trait rather than a skill developed through experience or training. This theory later evolved into Trait theory, which acknowledged that while some individuals may be naturally inclined to leadership, others can develop essential traits like intelligence, confidence, and charisma through practice and training. However, Trait theory faced criticism for overlooking situational factors and struggling to define a universal set of traits that consistently predict effective leadership [10].

2.2.2. Behavioral and Contingency Theories

Behavioral and Contingency theories emerged as advancements over the limitations of the Great Man and Trait theories, redirecting the focus from inherent traits to the actions of leaders. Behavioral theories assert that effective leadership is determined not by possessing specific traits but by engaging in appropriate behaviors [11]. In contrast,

Contingency theories propose that the success of a leadership style is contingent upon the context or situation. They highlight the importance of adapting leadership approaches to fit the specific needs of different situations, acknowledging that no single leadership style is universally effective. According to Contingency theories, factors such as the nature of the task, the leader-follower relationship, and the organizational environment are critical in determining which leadership style will be most effective. This perspective recognizes that flexibility and adaptability are essential in leadership, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach [12].

2.2.3. Contemporary Leadership Theories

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, leadership studies evolved to include more dynamic and relational approaches. This shift is evident in theories such as Situational, Transactional, Distributed, Charismatic, Leader-Member Exchange, Aesthetic, Responsible, Transformational, Servant, and Authentic Leadership [13].

Situational Leadership advocates for flexibility, urging leaders to adjust their style based on followers' competence and the situation's demands [14]. Transactional Leadership, focused on clear exchanges of rewards and penalties, ensures order and compliance but limits innovation, making it effective in routine settings while lacking the transformative power needed for personal growth and lasting change [15]. Distributed Leadership decentralizes authority, promoting collaboration and collective intelligence to tackle complex challenges [16]. Charismatic Leadership leverages leaders' vision, communication, and charisma to inspire and motivate. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory explores the distinct, trust-based relationships between leaders and followers, which enhance job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance [7]. Aesthetic Leadership treats leadership as an art form, focusing on the sensory and emotional dynamics within organizations [7].

Responsible Leadership centers on ethical behavior, morality, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability. Leaders act with integrity and transparency, prioritize fairness, and consider the impact of their decisions on a wide range of stakeholders. They are committed to transparency and accountability, striving to balance organizational goals with broader social and environmental responsibilities [17]. Transformational Leadership focuses on inspiring and motivating followers with vision and passion to transcend their self-interests for the benefit of the organization. Transformational leaders are characterized by their idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration [7]. Transformational leaders raise awareness of moral standards, increase followers need for achievement, highlight important priorities, create healthy ethical climate, provide coaching and appeal to the ideals of the followers.

Servant Leadership, introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in

the 1970s, redefines the leader's role as a servant who prioritizes the needs and development of others while fostering a culture of empathy, humility, and ethical behavior. According to Johnson the essence of Servant Leadership is the belief that leaders should prioritize the well-being and development of their followers over their own interests. Servant leaders prioritize their followers' best interests, preventing power misuse and ensuring ethical and consistent actions. Johnson identifies the following key principles of Servant Leadership [18].

Stewardship: Leaders are responsible for guiding their teams to achieve goals through collaboration and serving the common good, rather than exerting control.

Obligation: Servant leaders prioritize financial stability, relationship building, resource provision, and leaving a meaningful legacy. They also emphasize developing future leaders and fostering a positive organizational culture.

Partnership: Servant leaders view followers as partners rather than subordinates. This perspective fosters fairness in power distribution and involves empowering followers through information sharing, delegating important tasks, and encouraging personal growth.

Emotional Healing: Leaders assist followers in overcoming setbacks and trauma by showing empathy and fostering a supportive environment for open discussion and emotional recovery.

Elevating Purpose: Servant leaders are committed to higher ideals and causes, which makes their work more meaningful for both themselves and their followers. They aim to fulfill a moral purpose, thereby amplifying the impact and significance of their leadership.

Authentic Leadership emphasizes being genuine, transparent, and ethically grounded. Anchored in positive psychology and humanistic principles, this model is defined by four critical components: self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency [19].

Self-awareness involves a deep understanding of one's own motives, desires, and self-image. Leaders who cultivate self-awareness align their actions with their core values, acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, and build profound trust and credibility with their followers.

Balanced processing requires leaders to objectively evaluate information and feedback, confronting uncomfortable truths rather than distorting them. Authentic leaders welcome diverse viewpoints and feedback, even when it challenges their own beliefs, promoting equitable decision-making and enhancing trust.

Internalized moral perspective refers to a leader's commitment to ethical principles and values, resisting external pressures and the temptation of rewards. Authentic leaders adhere firmly to their internal ethical standards, fostering an ethical culture and encouraging principled behavior within their organizations [7].

Relational transparency entails openly sharing one's true

self, including honest thoughts and feelings, in a suitable manner. Authentic leaders build trust and respect by being forthright, fostering a culture of open communication. They are characterized by a deep understanding of their own values and those of others, demonstrating confidence, optimism, and resilience supported by a strong ethical foundation. Authentic leaders tackle challenges directly; making decisions based on core principles, and are unwavering in their commitment to moral responsibilities [20].

Having explored the defining characteristics of various leadership theories, the next section will shift focus to Gandhi's leadership framework. This examination will begin with an exploration of Gandhi's early life and the experiences that shaped his leadership philosophy.

2.3. Mahatma Gandhi: Brief Biography

Mahatma Gandhi, born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, India, became one of history's most influential leaders, known for his unwavering dedication to nonviolence and his key role in India's independence. Raised in a devout Hindu family, Gandhi was deeply influenced by his mother's spirituality and his father's role as a local official, instilling in him strong moral principles. At 13, he married Kasturba, a partnership that shaped his life. Gandhi's intellectual journey took a decisive turn in 1888 when he studied law in London, where he encountered transformative ideas on civil disobedience and nonviolence, inspired by the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy. Struggling initially as a lawyer upon his return to India, Gandhi moved to South Africa in 1893. It was there, in the face of racial discrimination, that he began forging his philosophy of Satyagraha, the truth and nonviolent resistance [21].

By 1915, upon returning to India, Gandhi emerged as a driving force in the fight for independence. His leadership crystallized in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920, which championed nonviolence, ethical governance, rural upliftment, and the empowerment of marginalized communities, especially the "Untouchables." Central to his vision was "Sarvodaya," the upliftment of all. Gandhi's unyielding commitment to justice played a pivotal role in India's independence in 1947. On January 30, 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist who opposed Gandhi's efforts to reconcile with Muslims and his commitment to nonviolence [22].

To grasp Gandhi's leadership through the lens of contemporary theories, the next section will examine how his approach intersects with and enriches modern leadership perspectives, especially Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership.

2.4. Gandhi's Model of Leadership

The researcher hypothesizes that Gandhi's leadership

exemplifies both Servant and Authentic Leadership styles. This section will critically analyze how these leadership models apply to Gandhi's approach.

2.4.1. Gandhi as a Servant Leader

Gandhi's leadership journey highlights his deep commitment to serving others and his relentless pursuit of self-sacrifice. He embraced simplicity and humility, forsaking material wealth and personal comfort to serve the masses more effectively. His leadership philosophy was rooted in selfless service, stewardship, humility, commitment, empathy, responsibility, and leading by example. Gandhi believed that true leadership centers on prioritizing the needs of others and modeling the behavior expected of a leader. He asserted that leaders lose effectiveness when acting against the people's will and that genuine impact comes from helping others. The following examines Gandhi's leadership through the lens of Servant Leadership principles [23].

(i). Commitment to Serve Others

Throughout his life, Gandhi emphasized the importance of serving others and prioritizing their needs above one's own. Gandhi's speeches consistently promoted self-sacrifice for the greater good, urging individuals to act for the collective benefit rather than personal gain. In his address to the Indian National Congress, Gandhi said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" [24]. Gandhi always stressed, "The only way to deal with the world is to do what we can to help others". These are not mere words. For example, Gandhi's intervention in Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 reflected his deep commitment to serving marginalized communities. The peasants were being exploited by British landlords, forced to cultivate indigo under harsh conditions. Gandhi's leadership in this movement was rooted in his desire to serve the oppressed, not for personal gain but to uplift those who had no voice. Gandhi decided to live among the peasants, adopt their way of life, and personally lead their fight for justice, which yielded the British government to reform agrarian laws, benefiting the entire farming community [25].

Similarly, in the Ahmedabad Mill Strike of 1918, Gandhi mediated a wage dispute between textile workers and mill owners, using his position to advocate for the workers' needs and undertaking a fast to apply moral pressure, resulting in a fair wage increase. This act of personal sacrifice exemplified his prioritization of others' welfare over power. Furthermore, Gandhi's campaign against untouchability¹, including the establishment of the Harijan Sevak Sangh² and his personal

engagement in tasks assigned to untouchables, highlighted his commitment to social justice and equality. Although untouchability persisted beyond his lifetime, Gandhi's efforts were instrumental in raising awareness and promoting greater social integration. By doing this, Gandhi consistently placed the needs of marginalized groups at the forefront of his actions [26].

(ii). Stewardship, Empowerment and Responsibility

Servant leadership emphasizes the role of a leader as a steward of the organization or community, responsible for the well-being and growth of those they lead. Gandhi focused on empowering the Indian population, particularly the marginalized and the oppressed. He initiated movements like the Salt March and the Quit India Movement, which were efforts to instill a sense of empowerment and self-reliance among the Indian people. The Quit India Movement of 1942, aimed for the immediate withdrawal of British rule from India. Fueled by dissatisfaction with British responses to Indian demands for independence, Gandhi's call for mass civil disobedience under the slogan "Do or Die" mobilized widespread support despite severe British repression. While the movement did not immediately achieve independence, it intensified the push for freedom and accelerated India's path to independence in 1947 [26].

The Salt March of 1930 stands as another defining example of Gandhi's stewardship and responsibility. During this event, Gandhi declared, "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. I want to change the world, but I am not going to do it alone." This statement epitomized his unwavering commitment to shared responsibility and the power of unity in driving social change. The Salt March, a 240-mile journey from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal village of Dandi, was a strategic act of nonviolent resistance against the British monopoly on salt, a commodity essential to all Indians. By choosing salt, Gandhi made the protest universally relevant, ensuring that the movement transcended social and economic divisions. The British government's response was swift and severe, with mass arrests, including that of Gandhi himself. However, the movement's impact was undeniable; it shifted the dynamics of the Indian independence struggle and gained international attention, highlighting the moral and ethical strength of the Indian cause. Gandhi endured the same hardships as his followers, walking alongside them and embodying the principles of self-sacrifice, humility, and nonviolence. His actions were not just about protest, but about inspiring a nation to believe in its capacity for change through peaceful means. His leadership during the Salt March remains a powerful testament to the effectiveness of his ethical leadership, demonstrating how empathy, courage, and

¹ "Untouchability", a term rooted in ancient Hindu social stratification, where society was divided into varnas (classes). The Dalits were outside of this varna system and faced severe discrimination. They were assigned menial tasks deemed impure, such as scavenging and handling dead bodies, and were segregated "upper" castes.

² The Harijan Sevak Sangh (HSS) was an organization founded by Mahatma

Gandhi in 1932 to promote the welfare and upliftment of Dalits (then known as "Harijans," or "children of God"). It came as a response to the severe social discrimination faced by Dalits and was part of Gandhi's broader effort to eradicate untouchability and improve social integration.

collective action can challenge oppressive systems and inspire lasting change [27].

Further, Gandhi promoted the use of khadi (hand-spun and hand-woven cloth) as a way for Indians to gain economic independence from British imports. He believed that the revival of village industries would empower rural Indians, reduce poverty, restore self-sufficiency and lead to economic independence. By encouraging Indians to spin their cloth, Gandhi was empowering them to take control of their livelihoods as a response to the exploitation of the Indian labor by the British industrialization and was aimed at uplifting the rural population. One of Gandhi's most significant efforts toward empowerment was his campaign for uplifting of the Dalits (the Harijans). He was committed to removing the stigma of untouchability. He lived among Dalits, shared meals with them, and even cleaned latrines as a symbolic act to break down caste barriers. His leadership aimed at empowering the most marginalized members of society, not just through words but also through action, encouraging social reforms that would uplift Dalits into equal citizens of the nation [28].

(iii). Emotional Healing

Gandhi's leadership style showed commitment to emotional healing for his followers. He engaged with deep empathy, listening to their struggles and providing not just solutions but emotional support. During the Champaran Satyagraha³, Gandhi's immersion in the lives of oppressed farmers exemplified his approach, helping to alleviate their emotional suffering and instill hope. His dedication to uplifting marginalized communities, such as the Dalits, involved actions like living among them and publicly advocating for their rights, aimed at restoring their dignity and addressing the emotional trauma inflicted by caste discrimination. Additionally, his efforts to bridge religious divides and promote interfaith harmony were rooted in healing emotional rifts and fostering a sense of unity and mutual respect.

Gandhi played an instrumental role in promoting healing and reconciliation, particularly during the communal riots and the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. His leadership during these times was marked by a steadfast commitment to non-violence. As communal violence erupted and millions were displaced, Gandhi dedicated himself to alleviating their suffering, providing relief, and supporting those affected. He opposed the partition, and worked to guide the process with minimal harm, emphasizing peace and reconciliation. Gandhi engaged in dialogue with key Pakistani leaders such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the All-India Muslim League, and Liaquat Ali Khan, who would become Pakistan's first Prime

Minister. He undertook personal sacrifices, including fasting in January 1948 to quell violence in Delhi, demonstrating his dedication to justice and harmony. Gandhi's leadership during this critical period exemplified his selflessness and unwavering commitment to serving others amidst immense challenges [29].

Similarly, in 1932, he famously undertook a fast unto death to oppose British proposals for separate electorates for Dalits, which he believed would exacerbate societal fragmentation. This act of self-sacrifice exerted immense moral pressure, ultimately resulting in the Poona Pact, which reserved legislative seats for Dalits within a joint electorate. Gandhi's fasts were far more than symbolic gestures; they were deliberate, strategic actions designed to awaken the moral conscience of both leaders and the public. His leadership during these moments highlighted his role as a servant leader, using his personal suffering to inspire collective ethical change and prioritizing the welfare of society above all else. Gandhi's approach demonstrated that true leadership involves nurturing the emotional well-being of followers, alongside addressing external injustices, to drive meaningful and transformative change [25].

(iv). Partnership

Gandhi's leadership reflected true partnership emphasizing the power of inclusive alliances to unite diverse groups around common goals. His ability to forge connections among a wide range of stakeholders, from impoverished farmers to international activists, exemplifies how collaboration can drive meaningful social change. An example of this partnership is the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917. When Gandhi was asked to assist the oppressed indigo farmers in Bihar, he chose not to impose a predetermined solution. Instead, he engaged collaboratively with local leaders, lawyers, and the farmers themselves to understand their issues and develop a strategy for peaceful resistance. By immersing himself in their lives and struggles, Gandhi demonstrated that true leadership lies in empowering others to lead their own liberation. This collective action ultimately compelled the British to reform exploitative agrarian practices, displaying the power of partnership in achieving significant results [26].

Gandhi's commitment to partnership extended to fostering religious and political unity. In the early 1920s, amid rising Hindu-Muslim tensions, he allied with the Khilafat Movement, which aimed to protect the Ottoman Caliphate. Collaborating with Muslim leaders like the Ali brothers, Gandhi integrated their cause into the broader Indian independence movement, temporarily strengthening Hindu-Muslim relations and expanding the scope of the struggle for independence. This partnership underscored Gandhi's belief that national progress depends on unity and cooperation among diverse communities [30].

Another example of Gandhi's partnership principle was his work to empower women. At a time when women were

³ Champaran Satyagraha, led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1917, addressed the exploitation of farmers by British indigo planters. Through non-violent resistance, Gandhi secured reduced cultivation and compensation for the farmers, establishing his leadership in the Indian independence movement.

often marginalized, Gandhi actively included them in the freedom movement. By collaborating with prominent women leaders such as Sarojini Naidu and his wife, Kasturba Gandhi, he encouraged women to participate in civil disobedience, protests, and the promotion of Khadi. Recognizing women as equal partners, Gandhi broadened the movement's reach and mobilized millions towards the shared goal of freedom. Gandhi's partnership also encompassed his relationship with Dalits (Untouchables), whom he termed Harijans (Children of God). His approach to combating caste-based discrimination was marked by genuine collaboration rather than paternalism. His negotiations with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar during the Poona Pact of 1932 exemplify this, as Gandhi engaged in constructive dialogue that resulted in a compromise securing reserved legislative seats for Dalits without exacerbating caste divisions. Gandhi's personal commitment to living among Dalits and advocating for their rights highlighted his belief in partnering with marginalized communities to drive social change [31].

Globally, Gandhi's partnership principle had a profound impact. In South Africa, he collaborated with black leaders like John Dube, the first president of the African National Congress, to fight racial discrimination, exemplifying his belief in cross-community solidarity. Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha inspired global figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, showing how his collaborative approach transcended national and racial boundaries. Within the Indian National Congress, Gandhi's commitment to inclusive decision-making was evident as he encouraged open debate and collaboration among leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Subhas Chandra Bose. His facilitation of collective discussions, such as those regarding the Cripps Mission in 1942, ensured that the independence movement was driven by shared leadership rather than a single vision. Gandhi's collaborative efforts highlighted that effective leadership is rooted in inclusivity and cooperation, demonstrating that true progress emerges from collective action and a unified vision [32].

(v). Obligation

Gandhi's leadership was guided by his sense of obligation, reflecting his unwavering commitment to serving others and fostering meaningful change. During the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917, Gandhi's deep sense of duty led him to personally engage with the oppressed indigo farmers, working alongside them and local leaders to secure crucial agrarian reforms. His dedication to combating caste discrimination was equally evident in his efforts with the Dalit community, where he actively fought against social injustices and advocated for their rights, demonstrating his commitment through personal sacrifice and advocacy. Gandhi's development of Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance) further highlighted his obligation to uphold ethical leadership, as he adhered to moral principles despite facing significant challenges. Within the Indian National Congress,

his promotion of inclusive decision-making ensured that diverse perspectives were considered, guiding the movement with fairness and collective agreement. Additionally, Gandhi's influence extended globally, inspiring leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, and reflecting his belief in a leader's duty to contribute to the global pursuit of justice and human rights [33].

(vi). Elevating Purpose

Gandhi's leadership was driven by a profound commitment to justice, equality, and human dignity. His quest for Indian independence was not just about ending British rule but also about fostering a just society. This was evident in his support for the Khadi movement, aimed at self-sufficiency and unity, and his efforts to eradicate untouchability and uplift Dalits. Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha, nonviolent resistance, sought to transform societies through compassion and ethical conduct. His initiatives, including bridging religious divides and supporting the Khilafat Movement, showcased his vision for communal harmony. Gandhi's principles have left a lasting global impact, influencing leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. His leadership was dedicated to advancing a more just and equitable world [7].

Having examined Gandhi's leadership from a servant leadership perspective, the next section will assess whether his approach aligns with the principles of authentic leadership.

2.4.2. Gandhi as an Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is grounded in key principles including self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency [34]. These principles will be examined below in relation to Gandhi's leadership approach.

(i). Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection

Gandhi's self-awareness was evident in his deep commitment to truth (Satya) and nonviolence (Ahimsa). His autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, offers an account of his personal struggles and moral dilemmas, illustrating his ongoing self-reflection and growth. His openness about his challenges, including his struggles with anger, celibacy, and dietary choices, underscores the importance of continuous self-examination in authentic leadership. Gandhi's public acknowledgment and correction of his mistakes further demonstrate his dedication to aligning his actions with his principles. Transparency was another hallmark of Gandhi's leadership. He practiced what he preached, ensuring that his public and private lives reflected his values. For instance, Gandhi's adoption of khadi (homespun cloth) was more than a symbolic gesture; it was an authentic representation of his belief in self-sufficiency and simplicity. By spinning his own cloth daily, he

demonstrated that his advocacy for khadi was grounded in personal practice, reinforcing his authenticity and consistency in action [35].

During the Champaran Satyagraha, Gandhi recognized the shortcomings of his initial strategies and adapted his approach based on the evolving circumstances and feedback from local leaders. His self-awareness was further demonstrated through his personal sacrifice during the Salt March of 1930, where he undertook a 240-mile march to challenge British salt taxes, symbolizing his deep commitment to Indian independence and his willingness to share in the hardships of his people. Additionally, Gandhi's responsiveness to feedback from colleagues like Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel reflected his ability to integrate diverse perspectives into his strategies. His adherence to principles of simplicity, truthfulness, and non-violence, even in the face of immense personal and political challenges, highlighted his profound understanding of his own values and their impact on his leadership. Through these actions, Gandhi exemplified how self-awareness can enhance leadership effectiveness and inspire others [36].

(ii). Balanced Processing

Gandhi's leadership reflected balanced processing, a critical aspect of effective decision-making, through his careful consideration of diverse perspectives and thoughtful evaluation of information. His famous words, "Your belief becomes your thought, your thought becomes your word, your word becomes your action, your action becomes your habit, your habit becomes your value, and your value becomes your destiny," underscore the importance of moral values in leadership. Gandhi exemplified this principle, consistently reflecting on his actions and decisions with integrity.

During the Cripps Mission negotiations in 1942, Gandhi carefully assessed the proposals and broader political implications for India's independence. He engaged in open dialogue with key Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Subhas Chandra Bose, incorporating their perspectives to form a balanced, well-rounded stance. In the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917, Gandhi collaborated with local leaders, farmers, and lawyers to understand the grievances of indigo farmers, leading to impactful reforms through collective action. Similarly, during the Poona Pact negotiations in 1932, Gandhi demonstrated his ability to integrate conflicting views by considering Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's demands for Dalit representation. Despite initial opposition, Gandhi worked toward a compromise that addressed both Dalit rights and broader social harmony. The Salt March of 1930 further illustrated his skill in uniting diverse viewpoints, as he incorporated feedback from various groups to mobilize a mass movement against British salt taxes [26].

In the 1920s, Gandhi demonstrated his ability in uniting diverse factions by integrating the Khilafat Movement into

the Indian independence struggle, bridging Hindu-Muslim divides. Within the Indian National Congress, he promoted open debate and consensus, emphasizing inclusive decision-making. Gandhi's approach not only tackled immediate challenges but also set the stage for sustainable, broadly accepted solutions that drove social and political change. His ability to evaluate multiple perspectives allowed him to navigate complex political landscapes effectively, securing widespread support for his initiatives [26].

(iii). Internalized Moral Perspective

Gandhi's leadership displayed an internalized moral perspective, evident through his unwavering commitment to ethical principles. In response to the 1947 partition violence, Gandhi employed fasting as a powerful tool to promote peace and communal harmony, reflecting his dedication to moral values amidst chaos. His relentless fight against untouchability was marked by living among Dalits, advocating for their rights, and participating in their rituals, demonstrating his resolve to eradicate caste discrimination.

During the Quit India Movement of 1942, Gandhi's steadfast adherence to nonviolence despite severe British repression illustrated his belief in ethical action over expediency. His creation of the Wardha Scheme for Basic Education in 1937, which infused moral values into the curriculum, highlighted his view of education as a means to cultivate ethical character. Gandhi's support for the Khilafat Movement in the 1920s, despite potential political fallout, underscored his commitment to fairness and inclusivity. In South Africa, his 1913 nonviolent Satyagraha against discriminatory laws and the 1930 Salt March, where he defied British salt laws by leading a 240-mile journey, further demonstrated his dedication to justice and nonviolence. These actions emphasize Gandhi's adherence to his core values, showing that true leadership is grounded in a steadfast commitment to principled action and social. Moral perspective was evident in various aspects of his leadership [21].

(iv). Relational Transparency

Gandhi's leadership was marked by his profound openness, honesty, and transparency, which cultivated trust and strengthened his relationships with followers and collaborators. An example of his relational transparency occurred during the 1930 Salt March, where he openly shared his intentions, personal sacrifices, and the moral rationale behind resisting the British salt tax. This transparency galvanized collective action and fostered a unified sense of purpose, significantly contributing to the movement's success. Similarly, during the 1947 partition of India, Gandhi's transparent engagement with both Indian and Pakistani leaders, along with his public calls for calm and reconciliation, bolstered his credibility and deepened trust. His commitment to open communication was also evident during the 1942 Cripps Mission discussions, where he

encouraged open debates and collaborative decision-making within the Indian National Congress. Gandhi's personal lifestyle mirrored his transparency; he lived simply among the poor, openly sharing his vulnerabilities and sacrifices, which rendered him a relatable and authentic leader [21].

3. Findings

The findings of this study revealed that Mahatma Gandhi successfully integrated the principles of both servant and authentic leadership models, creating a uniquely impactful model of leadership. His commitment to servant leadership was evident in his unwavering focus on the needs of the marginalized, particularly India's oppressed and disadvantaged communities. By prioritizing the welfare of others and dedicating himself to justice and equality, Gandhi embodied the essence of a servant leader. His willingness to endure personal hardship, whether through imprisonment or self-imposed austerity, demonstrated his dedication to a cause greater than himself. This selfless approach helped him earn deep trust and admiration, making him a guiding force for collective action. At the same time, Gandhi's approach exemplified authentic leadership principles, as he maintained a profound alignment between his personal values and his public actions. His moral compass, grounded in nonviolence and truth, guided his decisions and interactions, reinforcing his transparency and integrity. Gandhi's relational transparency and self-awareness allowed him to openly share his beliefs and even his personal doubts, making his leadership more relatable and trustworthy. His reflective and balanced decision-making, coupled with his unwavering commitment to truth, established a consistent moral framework that resonated with followers and reinforced his authenticity.

Together, these elements fostered a powerful integration of servant leadership with authentic integrity. Gandhi's servant-first approach naturally aligned with his authentic character, as he consistently prioritized the well-being of others over any personal ambition or gain. This seamless fusion enabled him to maintain a genuine connection with those he led, fostering trust and encouraging moral courage across his followers. By embodying both service and authenticity, Gandhi provided a living example of how these leadership qualities could transform not only individuals but entire movements. His leadership approach showed that lasting social change can be achieved through a combination of servant leadership's selflessness and authentic leadership's moral consistency.

On the other hand, and beyond the integrated servant-authentic model, Gandhi's leadership also exhibited transformational and responsible leadership traits. His transformational leadership reshaped the Indian mindset, instilling a revolutionary spirit through concepts like *satyagraha* (mass civil disobedience) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). He inspired followers to prioritize India's

independence, even at personal risk, which left a lasting impact on global movements for civil rights and social justice. As a responsible leader, Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence and social justice was evident in his leadership during the Salt March and Quit India movements. He promoted *swadeshi* and self-reliance, empowering Indians to reclaim their economic independence and fostering collective responsibility. His inclusive decision-making within the Indian National Congress ensured that his leadership was collaborative and accountable too.

4. Conclusion

This study examined Gandhi's leadership through the perspectives of servant and authentic leadership, hypothesizing that he integrated both approaches. Employing a qualitative approach and using a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources, the research analyzed Gandhi's leadership in key historical events. Descriptive-content analysis revealed that Gandhi embodied servant leadership principles while maintaining authentic integrity, creating a timeless model of effective leadership. Additionally, the study found that Gandhi's leadership extended beyond these two frameworks, incorporating elements of transformational and responsible leadership. The fusion of these styles emerged as the defining characteristic of his leadership.

Contemporary leaders can draw valuable lessons from Gandhi's integrated model. His selflessness, empathy, and focus on serving others emphasize the need to foster a service-oriented culture. By practicing empathy, leaders can build trust and loyalty, creating cohesive and motivated teams. Gandhi's unwavering commitment to authenticity and moral integrity serves as a powerful example of ethical leadership in today's world, where aligning actions with core values inspires respect. His perseverance and long-term vision demonstrate that meaningful change requires resilience and courage. Gandhi's leadership offers a timeless framework for building ethical, inclusive, and sustainable organizations, showing that true leadership lies in serving a higher purpose and remaining true to one's values.

While Gandhi's model offers important lessons, the study's limitations suggest caution in directly applying his principles to contemporary contexts. His leadership was shaped by the unique socio-political climate of colonial India, and his concept of integrity was deeply personal, making universal application challenging. Additionally, translating Gandhi's abstract principles into specific, actionable behaviors may be complex given today's ethical and practical constraints. Future research could explore how Gandhi's principles adapt across different cultural and organizational settings, and investigate the role of personal values in shaping leadership styles to understand the impact of morality in leadership more deeply.

Future research could examine how Gandhi's leadership

principles apply to modern organizations across diverse cultural contexts, providing insights into their adaptability in different sectors. Further studies could also investigate the role of personal values and ethics in shaping leadership styles, deepening the understanding of how morality influences professional leadership.

Abbreviations

AAUP Arab American University of Palestine
LMX Leader-Member Exchange

Author Contributions

Maria Yousef Mohammed AlAqra is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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