



To serve the cause or to serve oneself: The role of passion and serving orientations in personal and organizational outcomes

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Abstract

This research introduced two new orientations describing how individuals engage in a cause: to serve the cause or to serve oneself through the cause. Study 1 ($N=435$) validated a new measure of the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself. Studies 2 ($N=343$) and 3 (prospective design, $N=178$) investigated the personal and organizational consequences of these orientations as well as the role of passion for a cause as their determinant. Harmonious passion mostly led to the orientation to Serve, whereas obsessive passion led to the orientation to Serve Oneself. In turn the orientation to Serve positively predicted adaptive personal (e.g., well-being) and organizational outcomes in both studies. Conversely, the orientation to Serve Oneself positively predicted counter productive organizational outcomes and limited adaptive personal outcome. In sum, the findings identify two novel orientations that characterize individuals' involvement in a cause, along with their determinants and consequences. Our results emphasize the personal and organisational implications of these orientations and stress the need to further investigate their impact.

Keywords Passion for a cause · Serving orientations · Work behaviors · Psychological well-being

We do not go into politics to serve ourselves, but to serve [the people].

— René Lévesque, former Premier of the Province of Québec, Canada.

This quote by Former Premier Lévesque reflects a profound distinction in how individuals engage in the promotion of a cause. It highlights two fundamentally different orientations: One where individuals are driven by a desire to serve a greater purpose, without expectation of external rewards, and another where personal gain (e.g., recognition, status, or tangible rewards) becomes the primary reason for involvement. Although some research has looked at the concept of “serving” (e.g., servant leadership; Greenleaf, 2003), no studies have yet measured individuals' orientations toward

serving a greater purpose (e.g., a cause) or serving themselves. It is important to better understand how individuals engage in a cause, as this may have beneficial or deleterious personal and organizational consequences. For instance, as a proxy for an orientation toward serving the cause, valuing others' welfare has been shown to facilitate organizational citizenship behaviors (Arthaud-Day et al., 2012) and is associated with fewer counterproductive behaviors (Hafidz, 2012), ultimately benefiting both the members of the organization and the cause. In contrast, similar to an orientation focused on serving one's own benefit, past research has shown that valuing power (e.g., social status, prestige, control, or dominance; Schwartz, 2012) and hedonism (i.e., pleasure or gratification for oneself; Schwartz, 2012) is positively related to counterproductive behaviors (e.g., theft, misuse of time, resources, and information; Hafidz, 2012), which are harmful for both the organization and the cause. These findings underscore the need to gain a deeper understanding of the components that shape these two serving orientations, such as the distinction between a desire to benefit the cause and advancing its growth versus seeking personal rewards and pursuing one's own goals and progress. It also stresses the importance to investigate the distinct implications of these two orientations. As such, it

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raises the question: Does an orientation toward serving the cause lead to adaptive outcomes both at the individual (e.g., well-being) and organizational (e.g., organizational citizenship behaviors) levels, while an orientation toward serving oneself result in personal benefits but in more limited, perhaps even detrimental, effects for the organization (e.g., counterproductive behaviors)? This is an issue addressed in the present research.

Beyond the nature and outcomes of the serving orientations, what factors drive individuals to serve the cause, or conversely, to serve their own interests through their involvement in the cause? We propose that an answer to this question lies in the Dualistic Model of Passion (Valle-rand, 2015). Research has consistently shown that individuals who promote a cause are typically passionate about it (between 82.4% and 96.4% of individuals in past samples; Gousse-Lessard et al., 2013; St-Louis et al., 2016), and that the type of passion they have, whether harmonious or obsessive, significantly influence *how* they engage in the cause (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2019). We suggest that harmonious and obsessive passions, due to their respective prosocial and ego-invested natures, could foster these two orientations.

Overall, the present research draws on two cross-sectional studies and one prospective study to (1) develop and validate a scale measuring the orientations to serve and to serve oneself, (2) examine the distinct personal (e.g., psychological well-being) and organizational (e.g., workplace behaviors) consequences of these two orientations, and (3) investigate the role of passion as a potential determinant of these orientations.

The orientations to serve and to serve oneself

The notion of serving others, as opposed to serving oneself, is deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian heritage with over 1,300 references to serve, servant, and service in the Bible (Greenleaf, 2003). However, despite the prevalence of these concepts, the search of terms such as “serve”, “servant”, “service”, and “servanthood” reveals a gap in the scientific literature: no research in psychology has specifically addressed individuals’ orientations toward serving a greater purpose, such as a cause, versus serving oneself through engagement in that cause. Considering the gaps in the scientific literature mentioned above, we propose a novel conceptualization on the way individuals engage in activities, such as promoting a cause. Specifically, we introduce two distinct orientations: to Serve and to Serve Oneself. With respect to the Serve orientation, the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines “to serve” as “to provide with something that is needed”. We propose that individuals with an orientation

“to serve” an activity, such as a cause, prioritize the needs of that activity over their own. They engage in tasks and responsibilities without expecting any personal rewards, focusing solely on the growth of the cause. This orientation is inherently altruistic, as it is directed toward the interests of others or the cause one is promoting (Batson & Shaw, 1991). While individuals with this orientation may experience personal benefits through their involvement, their primary focus remains on the development and functioning of the activity.

The second orientation is directed toward serving oneself and deriving personal benefits from the involvement in the cause. The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines “to serve oneself” as something that “is good or helpful for you”. Thus, this orientation is more instrumental and egoistic, as individuals engage in the activity, such as a cause, primarily to enhance their own welfare (Batson & Shaw, 1991). Individuals with this orientation will continue their involvement in the cause to the extent that it provides personal gains and rewards (e.g., recognition, respect, higher status) and/or leads to the achievement of their personal goals or progress within the activity or cause. It is important to note that the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself are not opposites. Rather, they are best conceptualized as orthogonal, existing along two distinct continua. As such, both orientations coexist within an individual, to varying degrees. For instance, one may be highly invested in the cause and act in ways that promote its growth, while also seeking praise and recognition (high levels of both orientations). In contrast, another individual might act selflessly while being reluctant to receive praise, driven solely by a desire to advance the cause (high level of the serve orientation, low level of the serve oneself orientation). Conversely, some may focus primarily on the recognition and personal benefits they can gain from their involvement, being willing to do whatever it takes to obtain those rewards, with little or limited concern for the cause itself (high level of the serve oneself orientation, low level of the serve orientation).

Serving orientations’ implications

By shaping how individuals engage in the promotion of a cause, the serving orientations may have a substantial impact on people’s functioning at the personal and interpersonal levels. At the personal level, these orientations may influence individuals’ psychological well-being. Research has shown that engaging in prosocial activities, such as volunteering, is associated with the satisfaction of psychological needs and a sense of being able to give, which in turn foster psychological well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2015). In contrast, studies have also shown that pursuing extrinsic aspirations is either negatively associated with or unrelated

to psychological well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 2001). Thus, the Serve orientation is expected to be more strongly associated with psychological well-being than the Serve Oneself orientation. As such, individuals with an orientation to Serve Oneself may experience some benefits from promoting a cause and satisfying psychological needs, but these psychological benefits may be tempered by the pursuit of external contingencies.

At the interpersonal level, these orientations may also influence how individuals interact and behave with others. As previously mentioned, studies have shown that valuing others' welfare is positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB; Arthaud-Day et al., 2012), which are extra-role behaviors that facilitate the effective functioning of an organization and help its members (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Therefore, the orientation to Serve is expected to fuel prosocial and altruistic motivations and to foster engagement in prosocial behaviors (e.g., helping colleagues) aimed at advancing the cause, whereas the orientation to Serve Oneself is expected to be less strongly related (or even unrelated) to these motivations and behaviors. Additionally, research has found that valuing others' welfare is associated with fewer counterproductive behaviors (Hafidz, 2012), defined as deviant actions that harm the organization and its members (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). In contrast, findings have shown that valuing power and hedonism is positively related to these negative behaviors (Hafidz, 2012). Thus, the orientation to Serve is expected to prevent counterproductive behaviors, while the orientation to Serve Oneself is likely to promote such maladaptive behaviors in the pursuit of personal gains. Overall, no research has investigated the consequences of serving orientations, limiting our understanding of their impact on individuals' functioning both personally and interpersonally (e.g., within organizations).

Comparisons with other constructs

The construct of serving orientations is conceptually related to some other constructs. One of the most closely related is servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2003). Servant leaders are individuals who *consciously aspire* and *choose* to lead others, but they do so in an altruistic manner, with the primary goal of serving their followers and helping them grow (Greenleaf, 2003). These individuals possess leadership traits such as persuasion, which is the ability to convince others and build consensus, and conceptualization, which refers to providing a clear vision to their subordinates (Spears, 2010). These leaders also exhibit prosocial qualities such as high levels of empathy and active listening skills, which enable them to understand their subordinates' needs and empower them accordingly. Research has shown

that while servant leadership characteristics are typically displayed by individuals in formal leadership roles, they can also be observed in those holding informal leadership positions. For instance, Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2016) found that these characteristics are present at the team level by aggregating mean scores of servant leadership across groups of peers. Although the concept of servant leadership is valuable and insightful, it differs from the serving orientations in two major aspects. First, servant leadership focuses on *leading* others. In contrast, the two serving orientations focus on an individual's tendency to serve (others or oneself) regardless of hierarchical positions or leadership traits. Second, the concept of servant leadership addresses only the orientation to serve others, without accounting for the more ego-invested inclination to serve oneself (i.e., to seek personal benefit). In this sense, serving orientations are broader in scope, as they encompass both the tendencies to serve others and to serve oneself, irrespective of leadership tendencies.

The serving orientations also share similarities with four social value orientations, namely cooperation, equality, competition, and individualism (e.g., Messick & McClintock, 1968; Van Lange et al., 2007). These orientations shape social interactions and represent stable preferences for certain patterns of outcomes for oneself and others (Messick & McClintock, 1968). Mostly examined in the context of experimental games, they differ significantly from the serving orientations. The cooperative orientation focuses on working with others toward common goals and maximizing joint outcomes (Argyle, 2013; Messick & McClintock, 1968), while the equality orientation is defined as a focus on reducing unfairness by minimizing the absolute differences between one's own and others' outcomes (Van Lange et al., 2007). In contrast, the competitive orientation focuses on maximizing one's own gains and minimizing those of others, while the individualistic orientation refers to a focus on maximizing one's own outcomes with little concern for others' welfare (Gill & Deeter, 1988; Messick & McClintock, 1968). The serving orientations differ from these four orientations in several ways. First, the serving orientations are oriented towards *supporting* others, or oneself, in achieving desired objectives. In contrast, the social value orientations focus on how individuals weigh their own and others' outcomes in interdependent situations (e.g., maximizing or minimizing the difference in outcomes; Messick & McClintock, 1968). The inclination to serve or support is not reflected in the social value orientations. Second, the Serve orientation is detached of one's personal outcomes and associated with a sense of *selflessness*. This is not the case with the cooperative and equality orientations which are concerned about optimizing collective benefits or achieving a fairer balance of resources. Finally, a key aspect of the serving orientations

is the idea of contributing to the *growth* or the *development* of the activity, ideology, or cause one is serving. This is not the case with the social value orientations, which are uniquely focused on the balance between oneself and others with respect to finite sets of outcomes. Overall, serving orientations conceptually differ from these other constructs, thereby highlighting their unique value.

Passion for a cause as a determinant of the “Serving Orientations”

Passion is defined as a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity (e.g., a cause), that one loves, finds important and meaningful, and to which one dedicates significant time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003). The Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand, 2015) posits that there are two types of passion: harmonious and obsessive. Harmonious passion (HP) results from an autonomous internalization of the beloved activity into one’s identity. With HP, individuals engage in the activity freely, without external or internal contingencies (Vallerand, 2015), driven solely by their love for the activity. Moreover, engagement in the activity is well-balanced in people’s lives. For instance, individuals invest time in the cause without neglecting themselves and other aspects of their lives (St-Louis et al., 2016). Conversely, obsessive passion (OP) emerges from a controlled internalization of the beloved activity into the self (Vallerand, 2015). OP is characterized by an uncontrollable and all-consuming urge to engage in the passionate activity, which leads to conflicts with other areas of life. Individuals with an OP experience internal and/or external pressures to engage in the activity due to contingencies attached to it (e.g., self-esteem, social acceptance), which results in a defensive engagement in the activity. Previous research has shown that HP is associated with positive outcomes, such as subjective well-being, positive affect, and flow, whereas OP is related to some adaptive outcomes (e.g., performance), but mostly maladaptive outcomes, such as negative affect and rumination (Vallerand, 2015).

As previously mentioned, passion influences the nature of one’s engagement in a cause (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2019; St-Louis et al., 2016). Therefore, we propose that passion should be one of the key determinants of the serving orientations. Research has shown that HP is more prosocially oriented, being positively associated with the quality of the relationships between team members (Philippe et al., 2010), team cohesion (Philippe et al., 2014), helping behaviors (Ho et al., 2018), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Qadeer et al., 2016). Conversely, studies have demonstrated the more ego-invested character of OP (Vallerand, 2015). As such, OP has been positively associated with

self-enhancement and hubristic pride (i.e., self-aggrandized self-views; Bureau et al., 2013), incivility when one’s ego is threatened (Birkeland & Nerstad, 2016), and immoral behaviors that benefit oneself (e.g., cheating; Bureau et al., 2013). In light of these findings, HP should foster an orientation to Serve due to its altruistic nature. Conversely, because of its more defensive and ego-invested nature, OP should foster the orientation to Serve Oneself.

The present research

This research aimed to achieve three objectives. The first objective was to validate a two-factor scale measuring both orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself. This was done in Study 1. The second objective was to investigate the personal and organizational consequences of both serving orientations. The personal outcome examined was psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, happiness, and meaning in life), while the organizational outcomes included organizational citizenship behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors. Finally, the third objective was to explore the role of passion, harmonious and obsessive passions, as a determinant of the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself. These last two objectives were addressed in Studies 2 and 3, the latter which used a prospective design. Overall, it was hypothesized that HP would be mostly positively related to the orientation to Serve, while OP would be positively associated with the Serve Oneself orientation. In turn, the orientation to Serve would be positively related to adaptive personal (psychological well-being) and organizational outcomes (i.e., citizenship behaviors), and negatively related to maladaptive organizational outcomes (counterproductive work behaviors). Conversely, the orientation to Serve Oneself would be positively associated with limited personal outcomes (psychological well-being) and maladaptive organizational outcomes (counterproductive work behaviors).

Study 1

The aim of Study 1 was to test the validity of the new Serving Orientation Scale, developed to measure both the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself. The psychometric properties of this scale were evaluated in four different ways. First, the descriptive characteristics (means and standard deviations) of the items were examined to assess their variability. Second, both an exploratory factor analysis and a confirmatory factor analysis were conducted to examine the scale’s structure. Third, Cronbach’s alphas for each subscale were computed to assess their internal consistency.

Fourth, a correlational analysis was conducted to establish the convergent and divergent validity of each subscale. We hypothesized that we would obtain overall empirical support for a two-factor scale assessing both orientations.

Method

Participants and procedures

Participants included 435 individuals promoting a cause (51.95% women, *M*_{age}=36.26 years, *SD*=11.45), recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in February 2020. The majority were from the United States (96.32%; 3.68% from Canada or the United Kingdom). The percentages of participants engaged in each type of cause across all three studies are displayed in Table S1 of the supplementary materials. On average, participants were involved in their cause for 7.57 h per week (*SD*=10.94) and had been promoting their cause for 8.19 years (*SD*=8.28). Participants provided informed consent and completed the 15-minute survey in exchange for monetary compensation (US\$1.50), in line with Chandler and Shapiro’s (2016) recommendations of US\$0.10 per estimated minute. Participants in Studies 2 and 3 (at both Time 1 and Time 2) received the same compensation, as the estimated completion time for all surveys was 15 min. Participants first answered demographic questions and items related to their cause. Then, they completed the Serving Orientation Scale, and the scales used for the validation, including measures of social value orientations toward individualism, competition, cooperation, and equality, as well as a measure of individuals’ desire to contribute to society. In all three studies, we addressed potential bias related to homogeneity of MTurk participants by using approved MTurk participants. Studies have shown that these participants reliably replicate classic psychological effects (Hauser et al., 2022). We also used one mandatory open-ended item asking participants to identify the cause they were promoting, to ensure they were indeed promoting a cause. Participants in all three studies also completed three attention-check items (e.g., “For this item, please select ‘Slightly disagree’”) to verify they were attentive while completing the survey. Items were all presented in a fixed order. Finally, since there is no straightforward method for conducting power analyses for factor and path analyses, we followed researchers’ recommendations to use a minimum sample size of 150 participants (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Measures

For all scales presented in this article (unless otherwise noted), participants indicated their degree of agreement with

each item using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *do not agree at all* to 7 = *very strongly agree*). Furthermore, a mean score was calculated for each subscale of each scale, with higher mean scores indicating higher levels of the assessed variables.

Orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself Nine items were initially created for each subscale. These items were then reviewed by an expert (the second author), who helped refine them by eliminating redundancy and ensuring that each item measured only the intended construct. From this initial pool, five items were selected for each subscale to assess the two orientations: to Serve (e.g., “I generally serve the cause willingly with no expectation of rewards”) and to Serve Oneself (e.g., “The cause is a way for me to attain my own personal goals”). All items are presented in Table 1. The validation of the scale is provided below in the Results section.

Social Value Orientations The correlations between both serving orientation subscales and the four social value orientation subscales (individualism, competition, cooperation, and equality) were examined to establish the convergent and divergent validity of the Serving Orientation Scale. The Social Value Orientations (SVO) Scale consists of four 6-item subscales assessing individualism (e.g., “I am generally only concerned about my own costs and benefits when I make a decision”; $\alpha = 0.95$), competition (e.g., “In

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and factor loadings from the EFA of the serving orientation scale (Study 1)

Items	M (SD)	Factor	
		1	2
4. I am willing to serve the cause even though I may not get any benefits from it. (S3)	5.73 (1.32)	0.86	-0.09
1. I express genuine enjoyment in serving the cause. (S1)	5.67 (1.16)	0.83	-0.01
2. I generally serve the cause willingly with no expectation of rewards. (S2)	5.68 (1.32)	0.84	-0.06
6. It is important to me to help the cause grow. (S4)	5.72 (1.26)	0.82	0.11
9. I am willing to invest time and energy in the cause, regardless of what I could personally get out of it. (S5)	5.51 (1.47)	0.74	-0.02
8. I’m willing to get involved in activities related to my cause as long as I get benefits from it. (SO4)	3.77 (2.00)	-0.10	0.88
7. I’m using the cause to get as many personal gains as possible. (SO3)	3.65 (2.08)	-0.04	0.79
10. I’m willing to put time and energy in my cause as long as it benefits me. (SO5)	3.88 (2.06)	-0.09	0.76
5. Through the cause, I get what I want for me. (SO2)	4.62 (1.75)	0.32	0.58
3. The cause is a way for me to attain my own personal goals. (SO1)	4.71 (1.73)	0.35	0.56

general, I am concerned with maximizing my own payoff relative to that of others”; $\alpha = 0.93$), cooperation (“I believe that one should always try to cooperate whenever possible”; $\alpha = 0.83$), and equality (“I always try to create situations where people are treated fairly”; $\alpha = 0.90$). All items are presented in Paquette (2023). They are based on previous literature and scales on SVO (Argyle, 2013; Gill & Deeter, 1988; Messick & McClintock, 1968; Van Lange et al., 2007).

Contribution to Society The correlations between both serving orientation subscales and the Contribution to Society subscale (Chénard-Poirier et al., 2023) were also examined to establish convergent and divergent validity. Three items from the Contribution to Society subscale were adapted to assess participants’ desire to positively contribute to the community through their cause (e.g., “I have a positive impact on my community or society through my work on my cause”; $\alpha = 0.85$).

Results and discussion

In all three studies, we handle missing data with full information maximum likelihood (FIML). By allowing missing responses to be conditioned on all variables included in the model, FIML produces unbiased parameter estimates, making it especially well-suited for addressing attrition in longitudinal studies.

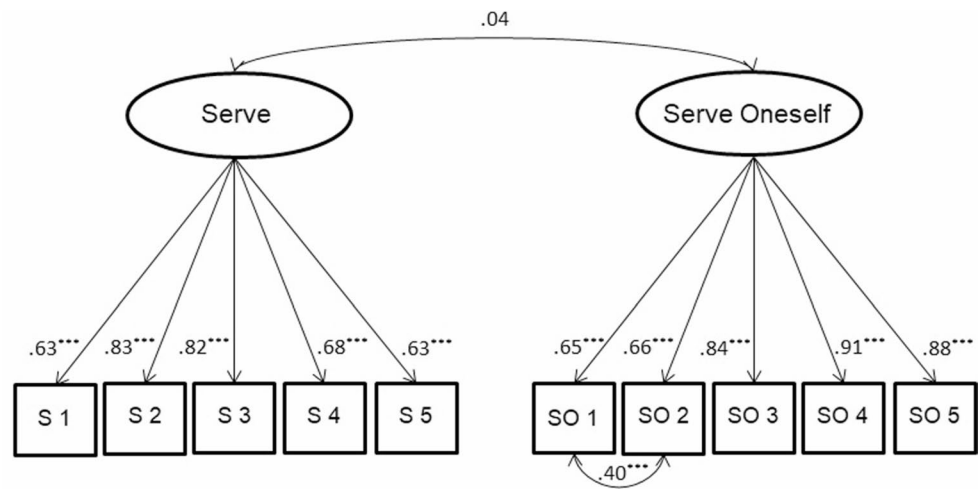
To validate the Serving Orientation Scale, we first examined the descriptive characteristics of each item. Inspection of the means and standard deviations revealed that there were no floor effects (items with means that were too low), no ceiling effects (items with means that were too high), and that the item values were neither too clustered around the mean nor too spread out. For the descriptive characteristics of all items, see Table 1.

Second, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with maximum likelihood (ML) extraction and oblimin rotation was performed using Mplus version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) on half of the sample ($N = 217$), randomly selected, to examine the structure of the Serving Orientation Scale. An oblimin rotation was chosen because it allows for correlations between factors without any drawback if the factors are uncorrelated (as was the case here, $r = 0.04$, $p < .584$). Four models, ranging from one to four factors, were tested. A parallel analysis, the scree plot, and the Kaiser’s criterion (eigenvalues greater than 1; see Field, 2009) all supported a two-factor solution as the best fit for the data. Additionally, a comparison of the Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) values across the four models indicated that the two-factor solution had the lowest BIC, making it the most probable model. The BIC was used instead of the Akaike Information Criterion because it is considered more

conservative (Dziak et al., 2020). The two factors identified accounted for 62.53% of the variance (Factor 1 = 33.92%; Factor 2 = 28.61%) and represent the “Serve” and “Serve Oneself” subscales, respectively. The factor loadings from the EFA with the two-factor solution are presented in Table 1. Fit indices of the four tested models are presented in Table S2 of the supplementary materials. The two-factor model was replicated using a CFA conducted on the other half of the sample ($N = 218$). A maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (MLR) was used due to slight skewness in one item. Additionally, correlations between the uniquenesses of items with similar wording were included (i.e., between items 1 and 2 from the Serve Oneself subscale). Goodness-of-fit of the models was assessed using the following fit indices: the chi-square test, where a non-significant p -value suggests an acceptable fit, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), with values equal to or greater than 0.90 indicating of a good fit, as well as the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), with values equal to or below 0.08 suggesting an adequate fit. The two-factor model indicated an adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 42.705$, $df = 33$, $p = .120$; RMSEA = 0.037 [0.000, 0.065]; CFI = 0.987; TLI = 0.983; SRMR = 0.062. The standardized results are presented in Fig. 1. Importantly, the structure of the scale was also tested, and replicated, through CFAs in Studies 2 and 3, further confirming the two-factor structure.

Third, Cronbach’s alphas were calculated for the overall sample ($N = 435$). The results indicated excellent internal consistency for both the Serve subscale ($\alpha = 0.88$) and the Serve Oneself subscale ($\alpha = 0.88$). Finally, a correlational analysis was conducted to establish the convergent and divergent validity of the Serve and Serve Oneself subscales (see Table 2 for the correlations between all variables). The results showed that the two subscales were unrelated to each other. In addition, the Serve subscale was positively correlated with the Cooperation SVO, Equality SVO, and Contribution to Society, with correlations ranging from 0.46 to 0.62. Although a correlation of 0.62 may appear high, it indicates that only 38% of the variance is shared between the Serve and Equality orientations ($R^2 = 0.38$). The Serve subscale was also slightly negatively related to the Individualism SVO ($r = -0.18$, $p < .001$), and unrelated to the Competition SVO ($r = -0.01$, $p = .885$). In contrast, the Serve Oneself subscale was positively correlated with both the Individualism SVO ($r = 0.65$, $p < .001$) and the Competition SVO ($r = 0.66$, $p < .001$), meaning it shared between 42% and 44% of variance with these variables. The Serve Oneself subscale was also slightly positively correlated with the Cooperation SVO ($r = 0.20$, $p = .002$). This latter correlation is theoretically consistent, as individuals pursuing personal

Fig. 1 Standardized Results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Study 1



Notes. S = Serve orientation items. SO = Serve Oneself orientation items.
 *** $p < .001$.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations for study variables (Study 1)

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Serve	5.66 (1.08)	—					
2. Serve Oneself	4.12 (1.58)	0.06	—				
3. Individualism SVO	3.17 (1.80)	-0.18***	0.65***	—			
4. Competition SVO	4.41 (1.63)	-0.01	0.66***	0.71***	—		
5. Cooperation SVO	5.57 (0.94)	0.56***	0.20**	0.02	0.19*	—	
6. Equality SVO	5.91 (1.00)	0.62***	0.02	-0.24***	-0.03	0.43***	—
7. Contribution to Society	5.36 (1.23)	0.46***	-0.07	-0.26***	-0.11	0.44***	0.25***

N=435. SVO=Social value orientations.
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

goals may also collaborate with others to achieve them. The Serve Oneself subscale was also unrelated to the Equality SVO and Contribution to Society ($r_s=0.02$ and -0.07 , $p > .05$, respectively).

In sum, the results of Study 1 supported the validity of the Serving Orientation Scale. We examined the items' descriptive characteristics (means and standard deviations) and assessed the scale's structure through an EFA and a CFA. The factor analyses revealed and confirmed that the scale consists of two distinct dimensions. Furthermore, Cronbach's alphas for the two subscales indicated excellent internal consistency. Finally, a correlational analysis showed that the two subscales were appropriately related to relevant variables and unrelated to irrelevant constructs, thus establishing the convergent and divergent validity of each subscale.

Study 2

Study 1 provided support for the validity of the Serving Orientation Scale. The purpose of Study 2 was to investigate the personal (psychological well-being) and organizational

(citizenship and counterproductive work behaviors) implications of the serving orientation, as well as the role of the two types of passion as their determinants. It was hypothesized that HP would be positively related to the orientation to Serve, whereas OP would be positively related to the orientation to Serve Oneself. In turn, the orientation to Serve would be positively related to psychological well-being and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and negatively related to counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Conversely, the orientation to Serve Oneself would be positively associated with CWB, and to a lesser degree, to psychological well-being, while being unrelated to OCB.

Method

Participants and procedures

Participants included 343 American workers from non-profit organizations promoting a cause (51.60% women; *M* age=39.35 years, *SD*=12.30) recruited via MTurk in March 2022. On average, they spent 18.14 h per week (*SD*=15.29) working for their cause and had been involved for 5.44 years (*SD*=5.43). Overall, 90.09% of

participants were deemed passionate, as indicated by mean scores at or above the midpoint (4) on the 7-point Passion Criteria subscale (assessing the love and importance of the activity, the time spent doing it, and whether it is considered a passion and a part of oneself; Vallerand, 2015). Participants first completed demographic questions and items related to their involvement in the cause. Next, they completed the Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003), the Serving Orientation Scale, and additional scales assessing well-being (life satisfaction; Diener et al., 1985), OCB (Podsakoff et al., 1990), and CWB (Bennett & Robinson, 2000).

Measures

Serving Orientations The Serve (5 items, $\alpha=0.84$) and Serve Oneself (5 items, $\alpha=0.86$) subscales demonstrated good internal consistency. A CFA confirmed the two-dimensional structure of the Serving Orientation Scale, $\chi^2=64.202$, $df=30$, $p<.001$; RMSEA=0.058 [0.038, 0.077]; CFI=0.967; TLI=0.950; SRMR=0.067.

Passion for a Cause Participants completed the Passion Scale adapted for a passion for a cause (St-Louis et al., 2016). This scale includes three subscales assessing HP (6-item subscale; e.g., “My cause is in harmony with the other activities in my life”; $\alpha=0.89$), OP (6-item subscale; e.g., “My cause is the only thing that really turns me on”; $\alpha=0.91$), and the Passion Criteria (5-item subscale; e.g., “My cause is important for me”; $\alpha=0.87$).

Psychological Well-Being Psychological well-being was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). This scale consists of five items (e.g., “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life”; $\alpha=0.93$).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors The scale developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990) was used to measure participants’ overall OCB. This scale consists of 23 items, such as “I

obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching” ($\alpha=0.90$). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement about their behaviors at work over the past year.

Counterproductive Work Behaviors The 19-item scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000) was used to assess participants’ overall CWB. An example item is “I have taken property from work without permission” ($\alpha=0.97$). Participants indicated how often they engaged in these behaviors at work over the past year using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 7 = *daily*).

Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations between all variables are displayed in Table 3. The model was tested using path analysis with MLR conducted in Mplus software (version 8.6; Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017).

Paths were drawn based on the hypotheses presented above, and consistent with past research (Birkeland & Nerstad, 2016; Ho et al., 2018; Qadeer et al., 2016), we included direct paths from passion (HP and OP) to workplace behaviors (OCB and CWB). Covariances among HP and OP, among the serving orientations, and among the outcome variables were estimated. Results indicated that this model had a good fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 5.598$ $df=4$, $p=.231$; RMSEA=0.034 [0.000, 0.094]; CFI=0.997; TLI=0.986; SRMR=0.023. The standardized solutions are presented in Fig. 2. The results indicated that HP was positively associated with the orientation to Serve and, to a lesser extent, with the orientation to Serve Oneself, whereas OP was positively related to the orientation to Serve Oneself. In turn, the orientation to Serve was positively related to well-being and OCB, and negatively associated with CWB. On the other hand, the orientation to Serve Oneself was positively related to well-being and to CWB, and unrelated to OCB. Additionally, HP was directly and positively related to OCB and negatively related to CWB, while the opposite pattern of relations was observed with OP.

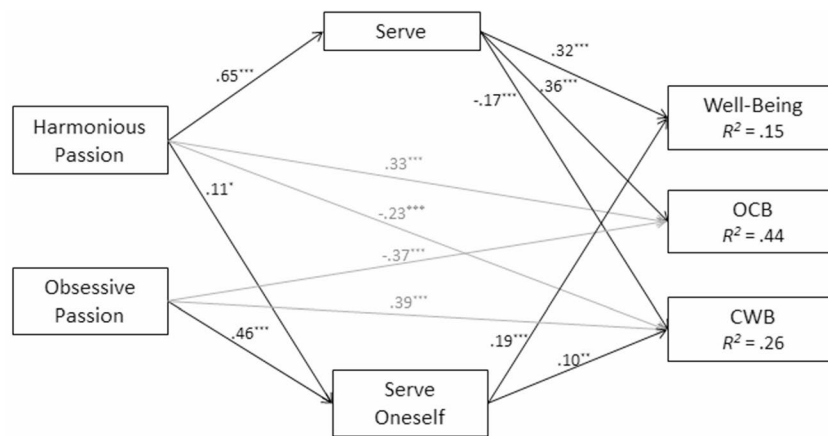
Table 3 Descriptive statistics and correlations for study variables (Study 2)

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. HP	5.46 (1.05)	—					
2. OP	3.22 (1.61)	0.21**	—				
3. Serve	5.45 (1.10)	0.65***	0.21***	—			
4. Serve Oneself	4.00 (1.54)	0.21***	0.48***	0.11*	—		
5. OCB	5.41 (0.79)	0.50***	-0.22***	0.50***	-0.06	—	
6. CWB	1.76 (1.16)	-0.24***	0.35***	-0.23***	0.22***	-0.47***	—
7. Well-Being	4.98 (1.44)	0.30***	0.18**	0.34***	0.23***	0.33***	-0.07

HP=harmonious passion for a cause; OP=obsessive passion for a cause; OCB=organizational citizenship behaviors; CWB=counterproductive work behaviors.

* $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.001$.

Fig. 2 Results of the Path Analysis of Study 2



Notes. Standardized path coefficients are presented. For clarity concerns, non-significant paths and covariance between error terms are not shown. OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors. CWB = counterproductive work behaviors.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Using bootstrapping (10,000 samples, with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals [CIs]), indirect effects were examined to test the mediating role of the serving orientations in the relations between passion and the outcomes. Unstandardized results indicated that the orientation to Serve mediated the relations between HP and well-being ($b=0.29$, 95% CI=0.19 to 0.40, $p<.001$), between HP and OCB ($b=0.18$, 95% CI=0.12 to 0.25, $p<.001$), and between HP and CWB ($b=-0.13$, 95% CI=-0.20 to -0.06, $p=.001$). On the other hand, the orientation to Serve Oneself mediated the relations between OP and well-being ($b=0.08$, 95% CI=0.04 to 0.12, $p=.001$) and between OP and CWB ($b=0.03$, 95% CI=0.01 to 0.06, $p=.028$). It also marginally mediated the relations between HP and well-being ($b=0.03$, 95% CI=0.00 to 0.07, $p=.087$). However, the orientation to Serve Oneself did not mediate the relation between HP and CWB ($b=0.012$, 95% CI=0.00 to 0.04, $p=.136$).

In sum, the results of Study 2 showed that HP was positively related to the orientation to Serve and, to a lesser extent, to the orientation to Serve Oneself, whereas OP was only positively related to the orientation to Serve Oneself. In turn, the orientation to Serve was positively related to psychological well-being and OCB, and negatively related to CWB. Conversely, the orientation to Serve Oneself was positively associated with well-being and marginally with CWB. These results suggest two pathways to well-being: one through serving the cause and the other through serving oneself. Although both pathways were significant, the former was stronger. Furthermore, despite the egoistic nature of the orientation to Serve Oneself, it was only marginally related to CWB.

Study 3

There were three main objectives to Study 3. First, we aimed to replicate the results of Study 2 over time using a prospective design. Second, we sought to test whether an additional mediator could explain part of the unexplained variance in the relations between passion and work behaviors (e.g., between OP and CWB). A potential mediator is moral disengagement, defined as a set of psychological mechanisms that deactivate moral self-regulatory processes (Bandura et al., 1996). Past research has shown that OP facilitates moral disengagement, while HP prevents it (Bélanger et al., 2019). Moreover, prior findings have shown that moral disengagement is positively related to CWB (Seriki et al., 2020) and negatively to OCB (Ogunfowora et al., 2022). Therefore, moral disengagement appears to be a potential and distinct mediator of these relations. Finally, we also included additional personal outcomes by examining personal gains that one might derive from engagement in the cause. To measure these personal benefits, we focused on extrinsic rewards, defined as positive outcomes that are separable from the activity itself (e.g., social recognition, respect, financial rewards, and higher status; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

It was hypothesized that T1 HP would positively predict T2 orientation to Serve, whereas T1 OP would positively predict T2 orientation to Serve Oneself. In line with prior research (Bélanger et al., 2019), it was also expected that T1 OP would positively predict T2 moral disengagement, while the opposite relation would be observed with T1 HP. Over time, T2 orientation to Serve was expected to predict increases in psychological well-being and OCB, as well as decreases in CWB, while being unrelated to the

attainment of extrinsic rewards. In contrast, T2 orientation to Serve Oneself was expected to predict increases in extrinsic rewards and, to a lesser extent, in well-being and CWB, while being unrelated to OCB. Finally, moral disengagement was expected to predict increases in CWB and the attainment in extrinsic rewards, and, consistent with previous research (Aftab & Malik, 2021; Ogunfowora et al., 2022), it would also predict decreases in psychological well-being and OCB.

Method

Participants and procedures

Participants were American workers from non-profit organizations promoting a cause, who were invited to complete baseline and follow-up online questionnaires over a 6-month period via MTurk (May and October 2022). Participants' responses to both surveys were paired using their MTurk IDs, which were stored in a protected and separate file to preserve anonymity. Of the 351 workers who participate at Time 1, 178 completed the follow-up survey at Time 2 (51% response rate). Participants (53.93% women) had a mean age of 40.02 years ($SD=12.59$). On average, they were involved in their cause for 20.85 h per week ($SD=15.76$) and had been promoting their cause for 6.80 years ($SD=6.37$). Overall, 91.01% of participants were deemed passionate. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated no significant differences between participants who completed only the baseline questionnaire and those who took part in both phases of the study, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.970$, $F(9, 340) = 1.178$, $p = .308$.

Measures

The questionnaire at Time 1 included the same demographic and cause-related questions as in Studies 1 and 2, along with the following scales: the Passion Scale (HP $\alpha = 0.88$, OP $\alpha = 0.87$; Vallerand et al., 2003), the OCB scale (T1: $\alpha = 0.81$, T2: $\alpha = 0.84$; Podsakoff et al., 1990), the CWB scale (T1: $\alpha = 0.94$, T2: $\alpha = 0.95$; Bennett & Robinson, 2000), as well as scales assessing extrinsic rewards in the workplace and psychological well-being (see the description below for both scales). To reduce the length of the questionnaire, we used shortened versions of the behavioral measures (OCB and CWB scales). For each scale, the five most relevant items with the highest loadings in Study 2 were retained. The questionnaire at Time 2 included the Serving Orientation Scale (Serve subscale $\alpha = 0.83$, Serve Oneself subscale $\alpha = 0.90$), the Moral Disengagement Scale (see the description below), and the outcome measures. The results from the CFA confirmed that the Serving Orientation Scale had

two dimensions corresponding to the Serve and Serve Oneself subscales: $\chi^2 = 57.211$, $df = 30$, $p = .002$; RMSEA = 0.073 [0.044, 0.102]; CFI = 0.958; TLI = 0.937; SRMR = 0.077.

Moral Disengagement The Moral Disengagement Scale, developed by Bandura et al. (1996), consists of eight subscales, each corresponding to a psychological mechanism that leads to moral disengagement (e.g., advantageous comparison, diffusion of responsibility). This scale was adapted to our research context, as it was originally developed to measure moral disengagement in elementary school students. To minimize the length of the questionnaire, one item from each subscale was selected based on its appropriateness and relevance, as evaluated by two experts. Examples of items are "It is alright to lie to keep your friends out of trouble" and "Teasing someone does not really hurt them" (T2: $\alpha = 0.91$).

Extrinsic Rewards To measure the extrinsic rewards derived from participants' workplace, we elaborated five items based on extrinsic outcomes identified in scales assessing extrinsic motivation at work (e.g., Gagné et al., 2015). All items began with the prompt "Working for my organization and promoting my cause allow me" and included the following items: "to get others' approval (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients)", "to get respect from others (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients)", "to get financial rewards", "to climb the corporate ladder", and "to get a higher professional status" (T1 and T2: $\alpha = 0.88$).

Psychological Well-Being The psychological well-being score was derived from two items of the Presence subscale of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006) and two modified items from the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The latter two items were adapted to ensure that all four items used the same rating scale. The four items include "I understand my life's meaning", "My life has a clear sense of purpose", "Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself happier", and "I am generally happy" (T1: $\alpha = 0.92$; T2: $\alpha = 0.91$).

Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations among all variables are presented in Table 4. A path analysis using MLR was conducted in Mplus to test the proposed model, with paths drawn according to the hypotheses outlined above. To assess changes in the outcome variables, residual scores were computed by regressing the T2 dependent variables onto their corresponding T1 scores. Covariances among T1 variables, among the mediators, and among T2 outcome variables were also estimated.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics and correlations for study variables (Study 3)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>M (SD)</i>												
Time 1												
1. HP	5.41 (1.01)	—										
2. OP	3.03 (1.47)	.18*	—									
3. OCB	5.50 (.93)	.49***	-.16*	—								
4. CWB	1.56 (1.09)	-.09	.43***	-.31***	—							
5. Well-Being	5.11 (1.33)	.17*	.04	.25***	-.01	—						
6. Extrinsic Rewards	3.74 (1.55)	.08	.33	.22**	-.01	—						
Time 2												
7. Serve	5.26 (1.15)	.41***	.02	.44***	.24***	.20**	—					
8. Serve Oneself	3.87 (1.55)	.07	.35***	-.12	-.01	.44***	-.07	—				
9. Moral Disengagement	2.17 (1.23)	-.18*	.48***	-.40***	.01	.16*	-.21**	.24***	—			
10. OCB	5.51 (.94)	.34***	-.14	.63***	.19*	-.06	.59***	-.11	-.38***	—		
11. CWB	1.87 (1.43)	-.06	.43***	-.27***	.03	.26**	-.09	.32***	.72***	-.30***	—	
12. Well-Being	5.10 (1.32)	.24***	.05	.25***	.49***	-.02	.37***	.11	-.05	.30	-.02	—
13. Extrinsic Rewards	3.78 (1.52)	.04	.32	.21**	.06	.47***	-.19*	.56***	.33	-.08	-.36***	.14

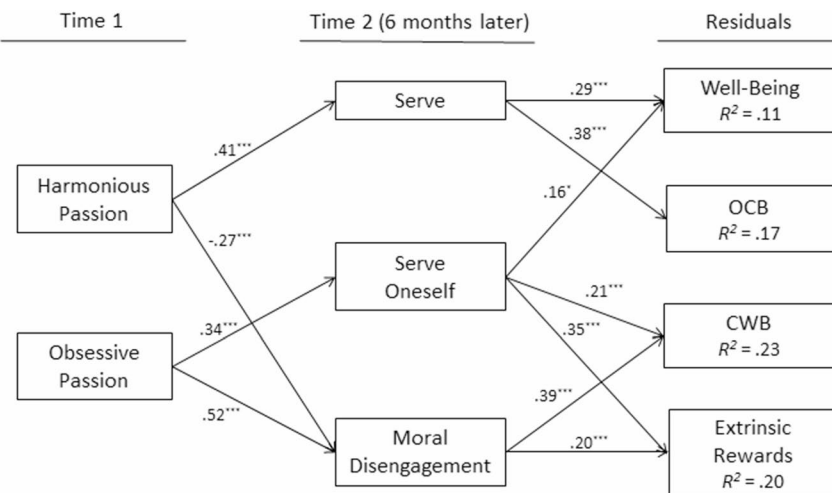
Note. HP = harmonious passion for a cause; OP = obsessive passion for a cause; OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors; CWB = counterproductive work behaviors.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results showed that the model had good fit indices, $\chi^2=6.641$, $df=9$, $p=.674$; RMSEA=0.000 [0.000, 0.067]; CFI=1.000; TLI=1.000; SRMR=0.024. The standardized solutions are presented in Fig. 3. The results showed that T1 HP positively predicted T2 orientation to Serve and negatively predicted T2 moral disengagement. Conversely, T1 OP positively predicted T2 orientation to Serve Oneself and T2 moral disengagement. Over time, T2 orientation to Serve predicted increases in well-being and OCB, and was unrelated to changes in CWB and extrinsic rewards. In contrast, T2 orientation to Serve Oneself predicted increases in extrinsic rewards, CWB, and well-being, but was unrelated to changes in OCB. Finally, T2 moral disengagement predicted increases in CWB and extrinsic rewards, and was unrelated to changes in OCB and well-being.

The mediating role of both serving orientations and moral disengagement was explored using bootstrapping (10,000 samples, with 95% bias-corrected CIs). The unstandardized results revealed that engaging in the cause with the orientation to Serve (at Time 2) positively mediated the relations between T1 HP and the residual scores of well-being ($b=0.12$, 95% CI=0.06 to 0.20, $p=.001$), and OCB ($b=0.15$, 95% CI=0.09 to 0.24, $p<.001$). Furthermore, being involved in the cause with the orientation to Serve Oneself (at Time 2) positively mediated the relations between T1 OP and the residual scores of CWB ($b=0.05$, 95% CI=0.02 to 0.11, $p=.029$), and extrinsic rewards ($b=0.08$, 95% CI=0.04 to 0.13, $p<.001$). The orientation to Serve Oneself also marginally mediated the relation between T1 OP and the residual score of well-being ($b=0.04$, 95% CI=0.00 to 0.08, $p=.070$). Finally, T2 moral disengagement mediated the relations between T1 HP and the residual scores of CWB ($b=-0.11$, 95% CI=-0.20 to -0.04, $p=.007$), and extrinsic rewards ($b=-0.05$, 95% CI=-0.11 to -0.02, $p=.012$). T2 moral disengagement also mediated the relations between T1 OP and the residual scores of CWB ($b=0.14$, 95% CI=0.07 to 0.22, $p<.001$), and extrinsic rewards ($b=0.07$, 95% CI=0.03 to 0.12, $p=.002$).

In sum, the results of Study 3 generally replicated the findings of Study 2 using a prospective design. As in Study 2, HP positively predicted the Serve orientation, whereas OP positively predicted the Serve Oneself orientation. The orientation to Serve also predicted more adaptive personal and organizational outcomes than the orientation to Serve Oneself. However, contrary to Study 2, HP was not related to the orientation to Server Oneself. Also, the orientation to Serve Oneself significantly mediated the relation between OP and CWB. New to Study 3, moral disengagement was an important mediator in the relation between OP and CWB. Furthermore, obsessively passionate individuals also used their engagement in the cause to derive extrinsic rewards through the Serve Oneself orientation.

Fig. 3 Results of the Path Analysis of Study 3

Notes. Standardized path coefficients are presented. For clarity concerns, non-significant paths and covariance between error terms are not shown. OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors; CWB = counterproductive work behaviors.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

General discussion

The overall goal of this research was to introduce two new orientations reflecting how individuals engage in a cause: to serve the cause or to serve oneself through the cause. The first objective of this research was to develop and validate the Serving Orientation Scale. Factor analysis results from Studies 1 to 3, confirmed that the scale comprised two distinct factors corresponding to the Serve and Serve Oneself orientations. The scale also demonstrated excellent internal consistency and strong evidence of both convergent and divergent validity. The second and third objectives were to examine the personal and organizational outcomes associated with the serving orientations, as well as to investigate the role of harmonious and obsessive passions as their determinants. Results of Studies 2 and 3 revealed that HP was positively related to the orientation to Serve, whereas OP was positively associated with the orientation to Serve Oneself. Additionally, HP was also weakly related to the orientation to Serve Oneself (in Study 2 only). In turn, the orientation to Serve was positively associated with adaptive personal (psychological well-being) and organizational outcomes (OCB), and with increases in both outcomes over time. This orientation was also negatively associated with a maladaptive organizational outcome (CWB, only in Study 2). In contrast, the orientation to Serve Oneself was positively associated with increases in CWB and attainment of extrinsic rewards, and unrelated to OCB. It was also positively weakly associated with well-being and increases in this outcome over time. Additionally, the results of Study 3 uncovered that the effects of the Serve Oneself orientation are not due to moral disengagement and are, at least in part, extrinsically motivated. Overall, these findings have several important implications.

Two ways to engage in a cause: to serve the cause and to serve oneself

A first implication of the present research is the introduction of a new conceptualization of how people engage in a cause: the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself. The results of Study 1 showed that the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself are valid and distinct constructs for describing these two distinct types of engagement. The Serve orientation reflects a focus (a) on prioritizing the benefit of the cause itself, without expecting any personal rewards, and (b) on advancing the cause's growth. In contrast, the Serve Oneself orientation portrays a more instrumental approach, where individuals engage in the cause primarily to (a) gain personal benefits (e.g., recognition, respect, higher status), and (b) achieve their own goals and progress. These orientations are relevant constructs that require further attention, as they represent valid portrayals of different styles of engaging in a number of causes such as politics, the environment, education, health, humanitarian aid, and many others. Furthermore, these orientations also have different personal and organizational consequences and are related to different determinants. We turn to these issues next.

Consequences of the orientations to serve and to serve oneself

A second implication of the present research is that the two serving orientations are distinctly associated with personal and organizational outcomes, with the orientation to Serve being more adaptive than the orientation to Serve Oneself. At the personal level, the results of Studies 2 and 3

revealed that the orientation to Serve was positively related to psychological well-being, including increases in well-being over time. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that the sense of being able to give to others promotes psychological well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2015). In addition, the orientation to Serve was unrelated to increases in extrinsic rewards, confirming its altruistic nature and indicating that it is not primarily oriented toward attaining personal gains.

In contrast, the orientation to Serve Oneself was most strongly related to increases in extrinsic rewards (e.g., higher status, financial rewards) over time. This is consistent with its definition, which posits that individuals with this orientation are primarily involved in the cause to gain personal benefits. The orientation to Serve Oneself was also positively associated with limited levels of psychological well-being, including modest increases in well-being over time. Individuals with this orientation may experience some well-being from the personal benefits (e.g., recognition) they derive from their involvement in the cause. However, because these personal benefits may be contingent on individuals' self-esteem, their well-being may be compromised if these rewards are not attained. Moreover, these external rewards may prompt individuals to engage in upward social comparison, leading them to feel that they will never attain the same level of extrinsic achievement as others (Niemiec et al., 2009), which could undermine their well-being. Therefore, the present research reveals that psychological well-being can stem from two pathways when individuals are involved in a cause: through serving the cause and through serving oneself via involvement in the cause. However, the pathway of serving the cause is significantly stronger than the pathway of serving oneself. Future research is needed to examine whether these two orientations are differentially related to different forms of well-being (e.g., hedonistic and eudemonic well-being).

At the organizational level, individuals with an orientation to Serve were more willing to engage in OCB, such as assisting their colleagues and contributing to the effective functioning of the organization. Moreover, these behaviors increased over time. These results are in line with the altruistic nature of the orientation to Serve, its focus on the cause's growth, and findings showing that valuing others' welfare is positively related to OCB (Arthaud-Day et al., 2012). Additionally, as shown in Study 2, the orientation to Serve is also associated with fewer instances of counterproductive behaviors that could harm their colleagues and their organization. These findings align with the results of Hafidz (2012), which demonstrated that valuing others' welfare reduces such behaviors.

In contrast, the orientation to Serve Oneself was unrelated to OCB. However, it was marginally related

to CWB in Study 2, and it was associated with increases in CWB over time in Study 3. These results align with previous research showing that valuing power and hedonism is positively associated with CWB (Hafidz, 2012). Individuals with an orientation to Serve Oneself may engage in CWB to secure personal gain and/or further their goal attainment. It is important to underscore that the effects of the orientation to Serve Oneself on CWB does not appear to be due to a lack of morality. As seen in Study 3, the relation between the Serve Oneself orientation and CWB took place while controlling for moral disengagement. In fact, both the orientation to Serve Oneself and moral disengagement were associated with CWB and extrinsic rewards. However, CWB were more strongly fuelled by moral disengagement, whereas extrinsic rewards were more strongly fuelled by the orientation to Serve Oneself. These findings are important because they show that, although the orientation to Serve Oneself may at times lead to immoral acts, it is fundamentally ego-invested in nature.

The orientations to Serve and Serve Oneself are novel constructs that warrant further investigations. Future studies could examine how these orientations affect people's health, job performance, turnover intentions, and interpersonal relationships. For example, would individuals with a strong Serve orientation risk their health in order to serve the cause? Similarly, would those with a high Serve Oneself orientation reduce their job performance, or even leave their job, if they do not quickly perceived personal gains? Finally, might individuals with a high Serve Oneself orientation engage in negative interpersonal behaviors, such as bullying a colleague, if that colleague were receiving more attention and promotions than them? These are all important questions that require further examination. Future research could also investigate the contextual factors that might moderate the effects of the serving orientations. Organizational context, such as culture (e.g., cooperative vs. competitive environments), climate (e.g., ethical vs. unethical), and leadership styles (e.g., transformational vs. transactional), may influence how these orientations manifest themselves (for relations between these variables and proxies of the serving orientations, see Serenko & Choo, 2020; Taylor & Curtis, 2018; Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). For instance, could a competitive culture, an unethical climate, or a transactional leadership style exacerbate the relation between the orientation to Serve Oneself and immoral behaviors, whereas a cooperative culture, an ethical climate, or a transformational leadership style might mitigate it? Overall, these research directions highlight the need for a deeper understanding of the orientations to Serve and Serve Oneself and their potential implications.

Passion as a determinant of the orientations to serve and serve oneself

A third implication pertains to the role of passion as an antecedent of both the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself. Our findings revealed that HP positively predicted the orientation to Serve. This result is consistent with previous studies highlighting the prosocial nature of HP (e.g., Ho et al., 2018; Philippe et al., 2010; Philippe et al., 2014). Individuals with predominant HP may find it more natural to serve the cause without expecting extrinsic rewards, as external and internal contingencies are not associated with their engagement in the cause. However, aligning with the more balanced nature of HP, individuals do not completely forget themselves when promoting the cause, as HP was also slightly positively related to the Serve Oneself orientation in Study 2 only. This suggests that, at times, their involvement in the cause may be balanced between serving the cause and pursuing personal benefits. Although HP primarily predicts the orientation to Serve, future research should nevertheless focus on determining when HP may orient people toward the Serve Oneself orientation.

Conversely, OP only positively predicted the orientation to Serve Oneself. This result is consistent with previous studies that underscore the more ego-involved nature of OP (Birkeland & Nerstad, 2016; Bureau et al., 2013;), as well as findings showing that individuals with predominant OP engage in activities for the contingencies attached to them (Vallerand, 2015). Thus, these individuals are primarily involved to gain personal benefits, such as social recognition and higher status, rather than to support the cause's growth. They are willing to promote the cause as long as they perceive personal gain and progress from their involvement. In addition, as revealed by Study 3, individuals with an OP are prone to moral disengagement, which facilitates engagement in dubious behaviors, thereby reproducing past findings (see Bélanger et al., 2019). Overall, our results uncovered that the orientations to Serve and Serve Oneself are distinctly rooted in passion and devoid of moral implications.

Limitations

This research presents some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the conclusions regarding directionality and causality are limited by the prospective design used in Study 3. Future studies measuring all variables at three or more time points could provide a clearer understanding of the temporal relations between our model variables. Second, all variables were self-reported, which could introduce common method bias and social desirability effects, as participants may have attempted to present themselves in a more

favorable light. As such, some of the assessed variables (e.g., serving orientations, OCB, and CWB) may have been particularly susceptible to social desirability bias. Future research aiming to replicate the present findings should consider using objective and informant measures to diversify the sources of information and enhance the accuracy of the data. A third limitation pertains to the generalizability of our results. These findings were obtained with workers from non-profit organizations, and participants were recruited via the MTurk platform. While MTurk users may differ from the general U.S. population on some demographic variables (e.g., age, education, incomes; Hargittai & Shaw, 2020), research shows that using approved MTurk participants, as we did, can counter these biases (Hauser et al., 2022). Furthermore, we conducted data screening, utilizing open-ended questions and attention check items, to ensure data quality. Future research could attempt to replicate these findings using different samples to enhance external validity. For example, studies could include participants from various organizational contexts, such as political or corporate organizations, and recruit participants directly in these organizations.

Practical implications and conclusion

Our results highlight the importance for organizations to consider their employees' orientation (to Serve or to Serve Oneself) when they work for a cause. Based on our findings, organizations are advised to create work environment promoting a HP as the latter fosters an orientation to Serve which leads to benefits at both the employee (e.g., well-being) and organizational (e.g., OCB) levels. Research has shown that work environments supporting employees' need for autonomy (i.e., to feel at the origin of one's decisions, Ryan & Deci, 2017) facilitate the development of a HP (Vallerand, 2015). Thus, organizations who wish to encourage a HP, and in turn the orientation to Serve, could provide their employees with opportunities to make decisions and to exercise control over the tasks to be done. Furthermore, with some of their psychological needs satisfied, workers may also be less tempted to use their involvement at work to their own benefit and develop a Serve Oneself orientation.

In conclusion, the present research has identified two distinct orientations for engaging in a cause: the orientation to Serve, which focuses on promoting the cause, and the orientation to Serve Oneself through the cause, which seeks mostly personal gains. These orientations are differentially rooted in harmonious and obsessive passions, with the orientation to Serve leading to more adaptive personal and organizational outcomes. Future research is needed to deepen our understanding of the orientations to Serve and to Serve Oneself, as well as their short-term and long-term implications.

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-08760-5>.

Data availability Since we are not authorized to share the data in a public repository due to ethical constraints, the data are available from the authors upon request. However, our analysis scripts are available in an open science repository (https://osf.io/fhg3v/?view_only=fa3ad790a02946a395a9a98cb157b9ca).

Declarations

Robert J. Vallerand has received research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (no. 435-2015-1237), the Fonds de Recherche Québécois - Société et Cultures (no. 2021-SE3-283171), and the Canada Research Chairs program (no. 950-230793). The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose. This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. It has received the ethic approval from the Comité institutionnel d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (no. 2020-2601). Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Data supporting the findings of this research are available from the corresponding author upon request. All authors contributed to the study conceptualization and methodology, project administration, and writing (review and editing). Data curation, investigation, formal analysis, visualization, and writing (original draft) were performed by Virginie Paquette. Resources, supervision, and funding acquisition were performed by Robert J. Vallerand. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Virginie Paquette (ORCID 0000-0001-8416-7606), Department of Human Resources Management, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, 3351 Bd des Forges, Trois-Rivières, QC, Canada, G8Z 4M3. E-mail: virg.paquette@hotmail.com.

Ethical approval Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethics board of the second author's institution (details will be provided following the evaluation process).

Conflicts of interest The authors declare no conflicts of interest and confirm that the study complies with ethical standards.

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