

# Decoding Sewa Bhaav: Framework unpacking the spirit of service rooted in Indian traditions

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**Abstract:** *Introduction.* Sewa Bhaav brings together Sewa (selfless service) and Bhaav (emotional and ethical intent behind action). While Sewa shows itself in outward acts of helping, Bhaav reflects the inner motivation and feeling guiding these acts. Despite being rooted in Indian traditions, Sewa Bhaav had little attention in contemporary research. This study decodes and defines Sewa Bhaav by combining insights from people actively engaged in service with literature from moral psychology, leadership studies, and Indic philosophies.

*Methods.* The study used a multi-phase, qualitative sense-making approach, to conceptualize and validate Sewa Bhaav, its drivers, confounders and modifiers. Phase 1 involved a focus group discussion with individuals engaged in selfless service, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework approach. Phase 2 used narrative analyses of group discussions to embed constructs in real-life narratives. Phase 3 involved structured review of the literature to align emergent constructs with existing psycho-behavioral models. Phase 4 finalized the framework through expert consultation workshops, applying the Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive (MECE) principle and modelling interrelationships via Directed Acyclic Graphs (DAG).

*Results.* Analysis thematically established eight core components of Sewa Bhaav: Egolessness, Compassion, Empathy, Resilience, Respect, Non-Violent Communication, Active Listening, and Influence Without Authority. Seven drivers identified were: Clarity of Purpose, Agency, Vision, Behavioral Integrity, Openness, Equality and Competence. Propositions were developed to articulate the role of each. Age, gender, education, caste, religion, and socio-economic hierarchies also shaped the expression and recognition of Sewa Bhaav.

*Conclusion.* This study advances Sewa Bhaav as a culturally grounded framework for selfless service, extending on moral psychology and leadership. Its application in public institutions highlights the potential of service-oriented ethics to strengthen human capital, foster resilience, and transform organizational practices. By positioning Sewa Bhaav as both

a moral philosophy and actionable ethic, the framework offers valuable insights for cultivating compassion-driven governance, ethical leadership, and community well-being.

**Keywords:** Sewa Bhaav, selfless service, compassion, empathy, egolessness, resilience, non-violent communication, public institutions

## 1. Introduction

Sewa Bhaav is a multifaceted concept that combines Sewa—the act of selfless service, with Bhaav—the emotional and ethical spirit that underpins such service. While Sewa emphasizes the visible action of supporting or helping others, Bhaav refers to the inner orientation that drives those actions. This paper explores how Sewa Bhaav can be conceptualized and put into practice in public institutions, such as hospitals, schools, and other service-oriented institutions.

Rooted in Indian philosophical and spiritual traditions, Sewa Bhaav encompasses values such as humility, compassion, empathy, resilience, and purpose-driven action. It represents not just an external behavior but a moral and emotional orientation toward others—especially toward those who are vulnerable or marginalized. In these contexts, service goes beyond efficiency; it becomes a matter of presence, care, and solidarity (Mahadevan, 2013; Pio et al., 2024). In doing so, this perspective reflects the ethos of Maha Upanishad: “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*”, the idea that the world is one family (Kar, 2023; Khandekar, 2016), where individual identity dissolves into a sense of collective duty and shared interdependence (Khandekar, 2016; Ranganathan, 2015). This is similarly articulated by Mahatma Gandhi, “*the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.*”

The concept of Sewa has been embedded in multiple religious and philosophical traditions. Within Hinduism, Sewa is considered a spiritual act in which serving humanity is regarded as serving the divine (Bhangaokar, 2020; Mahadevan, 2013). It aligns with the concept of “*Nishkama Karma*”—selfless action without expectation of personal outcomes. The Bhagavad Gita defines Sewa as selfless service performed dutifully, without expectation of reward (Dhiman, 2018). The core principle underlying Sewa is the dissolution of ego through acts performed without attachment to personal gain or material outcomes (Bhangaokar, 2020; Bhattathiri, 2004). This approach elevates work to the level of worship, where individuals are dedicated, responsible, and spiritually aligned to their service (Bhattathiri, 2004; Pio et al., 2024). In this way, practitioners may find a sense of meaning and fulfilment.

This understanding resonates across faiths. In Islam, work is viewed as a form of worship (“*Ibadah*”) (Pio et al., 2024). In Sikhism, practices such as “*Guru ka Langar*” institutionalize collective service, while in Buddhism, the “*Bodhisattva*” ideal calls for compassion and alleviating suffering (Khalsa, 2017; Siderits, 2017; Sohi et al., 2018). These traditions highlight Sewa as a concept that ties together compassion, empathy, egolessness, respect, and resilience.

While similar notions of selfless service appear across cultures, faiths and individual roots of upbringing (Wijesekara et al., 2026), the present study focuses on interpreting Sewa Bhaav within its uniquely Indian philosophical and spiritual context. Despite growing interest in the moral and emotional dimensions of public service (Wang et al., 2020), the concept of Sewa Bhaav remains underexplored in academic literature. Existing concepts—such as empathy, altruism, compassion, microkindness (Lomas & VanderWeele, 2026) and prosocial behavior—offer valuable insights but often represent fragmented or partial aspects of what Sewa Bhaav fully represents (Pang et al., 2022; “*Seva: The Sacred Practice of Selfless Service in Hindu Philosophy*,” 2024; Stevens & Taber, 2021). For instance, well-known frameworks like the Empathy Quotient

(Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Preti et al., 2011) and the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003a) emphasize emotional and cognitive responses but tend to omit the ethical intent or spiritual grounding that lie at the core of Sewa Bhaav. Similarly, multidimensional models like Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (1983) include perspective-taking and empathic concern, but do not capture values like humility, egolessness, and non-violence (Davis, 1983; Rodrigues Sampaio et al., 2011).

Parallel ideas can be found in leadership literature, especially in the Servant Leadership Tradition (Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 1996), which highlights listening, empathy, and the growth of others. However, these models are usually embedded within western organizational contexts and are often framed in terms of institutional efficiency or performance rather than ethics or spiritual intentionality. Consequently, they may lack resonance with indigenous service traditions that view service as an inner transformation and moral obligation (Bhattathiri, 2004; Ranganathan, 2015).

Recent research in India has begun addressing this gap, emphasizing attributes such as egolessness, resilience, and behavioral integrity in public service (Marathe & Kakani, 2020; Prakash, 2017). These contributions are promising, but the field still lacks a comprehensive framework that brings together intent, emotion, relational conduct, and spiritual orientation into one coherent model of Sewa Bhaav.

The growing demand for more compassionate, ethical, and relational public systems calls for the development of conceptual frameworks that integrate both competence and character (Boyd et al., 2026). Despite recognition of compassion's societal value and drawing on the fields of contemplative science, neuroscience, childhood development and psychology, a limited understanding of its drivers and barriers highlights the need for integrative, culturally grounded frameworks like Sewa Bhaav (Ozawa-de Silva & Mascaro, 2026; Condon, 2026; Skwara, 2026; Kirby et al., 2026; Frazier & Buote, 2026). While existing models offer valuable insights—such as empathy, prosocial action, or ethical leadership—they do not fully capture the integrative, culturally embedded essence of Sewa Bhaav.

In public institutions and development sectors—particularly in health, education, and governance—there is increasing recognition of the need to humanize service delivery (Wodnik et al., 2026; Neilson & Syed, 2026). While technical competence and procedural compliance remain critical, they are often insufficient to ensure dignity, empathy, and trust in the interactions between citizens and public service providers. Sewa Bhaav, a Sanskrit term meaning the "*spirit of selfless service*," offers an alternative to bureaucratic detachment and transactional approaches (Mahadevan, 2013; Pio et al., 2024).

Globally, there is growing momentum toward embedding compassion and empathy within public systems. Scholars and practitioners emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence, moral sensitivity, and prosocial behavior in leadership and public service (Grant, 2007; Quinn, 2015). However, existing frameworks often lack cultural rootedness, spiritual depth, or contextual sensitivity—particularly in the Global South. Sewa Bhaav responds to this gap by offering a model that is both inwardly reflective and outwardly action oriented.

The objective of this study is to conceptualize and operationalize Sewa Bhaav and its antecedents, in a way that is both empirically grounded and theoretically robust. To achieve this, the study adopts a qualitative research design that combines literature review, group discussions, and workshops with practitioners, service recipients, and service providers. The focus of this study is not only to surface the tacit knowledge and lived experiences of people involved in service, but also to explore how this knowledge can shape institutional practices and enable transformative change. Accordingly, this study aims to inductively develop and validate a

holistic framework of Sewa Bhaav, identifying its core components, drivers, and contextual factors in public service settings.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Ethics approval

The study was conducted as part of the larger “Assessment of System Strengthening to Inform System Thinking (ASSIST)” project. The comprehensive protocol and procedures were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Patna (Ref. No. RD/AIIMS/Pat/2024/RAC/57). Each participant provided oral informed consent after the study details were explained in a language they could clearly understand. To develop a robust and culturally grounded framework for Sewa Bhaav in the Indian sociocultural context, the study adopted a multi-phase, qualitative sense-making design. The research combined qualitative inquiry, expert consultation, participatory sensemaking, and literature-based validation. This iterative approach allowed the framework to develop both conceptual depth and contextual relevance.

### 2.2 Phase 1: Inductive conceptualization through focus group discussion

The first phase involved a qualitative exploration through a focus group discussion (FGD). The aim was to inductively conceptualize Sewa Bhaav by capturing lived experiences, emotions, and narratives from individuals actively engaged in selfless service. The FGD was held on March 14, 2024. It included senior leaders from the Piramal Foundation and Anode Governance Lab, representing a diverse mix of 20 practitioners, academicians, and domain experts. They brought extensive professional experience, typically ranging from 15 to 25 years, with an age range of approximately 35 to 55 years. Collectively, the group possessed expertise across public health, education, organizational development, and leadership, providing a rich and multidisciplinary perspective to the discussion. Their extensive professional experience and strategic engagement in program design, implementation, and evaluation enabled them to articulate deeply reflective insights into how Sewa Bhaav manifests in practice. The discussion was guided by several core research questions: What is Sewa Bhaav? Why is it important to conceptualize and operationalize it? What emotions prevail while exercising or experiencing Sewa Bhaav? And what motivates people to engage in Sewa Bhaav? Moderated by trained facilitators, the session encouraged open and reflective dialogue.

The study employed thematic analysis following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying, reviewing, defining and naming themes. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were coded for recurring expressions, emotional patterns, behaviors and values associated with Sewa Bhaav (Table:1). For instance, phrases such as “*awareness of others’ pain*” and “*recognizing unspoken needs*” were grouped under the broader theme of Empathy. These initial themes were further refined into higher-order categories, including Egolessness, Compassion, Empathy, and Resilience. The emerging themes were cross-referenced against existing theoretical frameworks, such as Neff’s (2003a) Theory of Self-compassion and Feshbach’s (1976) Conceptualization of Empathy (Feshbach & Kuchenbecker, 1974; Neff, 2003a).

From this phase, two major thematic clusters emerged: the core components and the antecedents of Sewa Bhaav. The core components included constructs such as clarity of purpose, warmth and sensitivity, empathy, sensitivity to others’ needs, self-compassion, compassion for others, availability for others, egolessness, advocacy for others, and prioritizing others’ needs

alongside one's own. The antecedents encompassed motivations grounded in faith or conviction rather than fame or financial gain, rejection of positional power, domain-specific competence, commitment to a broader cause, proactive agency, responsiveness to both explicit and implicit needs, a desire to make a difference, connectedness with others, steadfastness in values, and willingness to exceed formal role expectations. The detailed definitions of each construct under core components and antecedents as well as their linkage to Sewa Bhaav are described in the results section along with tables presenting the thematic analysis of core components and drivers of Sewa Bhaav (Tables 1-2) and indicators reflecting the absence of Sewa Bhaav in practice (Table 3).

### *2.3 Phase 2: Grounding themes through narrative group discussions*

The second phase focused on narrative group discussions with participants. This second workshop (workshop #2) was a follow-up discussion with the same 20 participants who took part in the phase 1 FGD. These conversations helped ground abstract constructs in real-world practice. They revealed the emotional, motivational, and relational dynamics that shape Sewa Bhaav in everyday acts of service. Grounding themes through Narrative Group Discussions helped to identify drivers, components, potential influencers (hypothesized confounders and effect modifiers of the relationship between the components and their drivers) provisionally based on structured criteria for selection. This involved a multi-step approach. First the team reviewed theoretical models (Flanders et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2024) to establish a preliminary list of potential confounders based on established causal pathways. Then discussions with subject experts (research, monitoring and evaluation professionals) from the research team of Piramal Foundation and collaborators were conducted to refine these potential confounders and conceptualize hypothesized causal pathways. Similarly, effect modifiers were conceptualized based on theory and plausible interactions—essentially, factors that could alter the strength or direction of the relationship between drivers and components of Sewa Bhaav.

The next workshop (workshop #3) focussed on Framework Refinement via Expert Consultation to identify overlaps or redundancies across different thematic areas. The workshop strategically involved smaller groups of 12 participants, aged 35–55 years, each with over a decade of professional experience in research spanning public health, education, and behavioral sciences. Participants included members of the Research, Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (RMLE) unit of the Piramal Foundation and experts from the Anode Governance Lab, with some individuals having also participated in the earlier workshops. Their involvement in the second-phase workshops was intentional to bring scientific rigor, analytical depth, and conceptual clarity to insights that had emerged from the Phase 1 FGD and Phase 2 narrative group discussions. Drawing on their methodological expertise and evaluative orientation, the RMLE experts helped translate experiential reflections into a structured conceptual model, ensuring that the evolving framework of Sewa Bhaav was both empirically grounded and theoretically coherent.

In the fourth workshop, collaborative teams of Piramal Foundation and Anode Governance Lab, comprising of 12 participants who were also a part of the third workshop focussed on framework finalization.

### *2.4 Phase 3: Construct validation through literature review*

In the third phase, a structured literature review was conducted to validate and refine the emergent themes. The review had three aims: to align the themes with established constructs in psychology and behavioral science, to identify relevant theoretical models, and to check for overlaps or redundancies to ensure conceptual clarity. This step confirmed strong convergence

with existing frameworks. For instance, the construct of Resilience aligned with the theoretical work of Connor et al. (2003), while Compassion and Empathy were consistent with Neff (2003a) and Feshbach (1976), respectively (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Feshbach & Kuchenbecker, 1974). The review also helped sharpen distinctions between closely related constructs.

#### 2.5 Phase 4: Framework refinement via expert consultation workshop

The final phase involved a structured workshop (workshop #5) again with 12 experts drawn primarily from the Research, Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation (RMLE) unit of the Piramal Foundation and experts from the Anode Governance Lab who were a part of workshops 3 and 4, aimed at refining the framework using the MECE principle - Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive. Discussions helped consolidate overlapping themes, integrate subcomponents, and ensure the framework was both comprehensive and free of redundancy. Drawing on the workshop input, we distilled the model into 14 constructs: eight core components—egolessness, compassion, empathy, resilience, respect, non-violent communication, active listening, and influence without authority—plus seven drivers—clarity of purpose, agency, vision, behavioral integrity, openness, equality and competence. To represent the relationships among these constructs, a conceptual framework using principles of a provisional Directed Acyclic Graph (DAG) was developed with the aim of later quantitative validation (Flanders et al., 2011). The contextual influencing factors are conceptualized as the potential confounder/modifiers in the pathway of relationship between the core—components of Sewa Bhaav and its drivers.

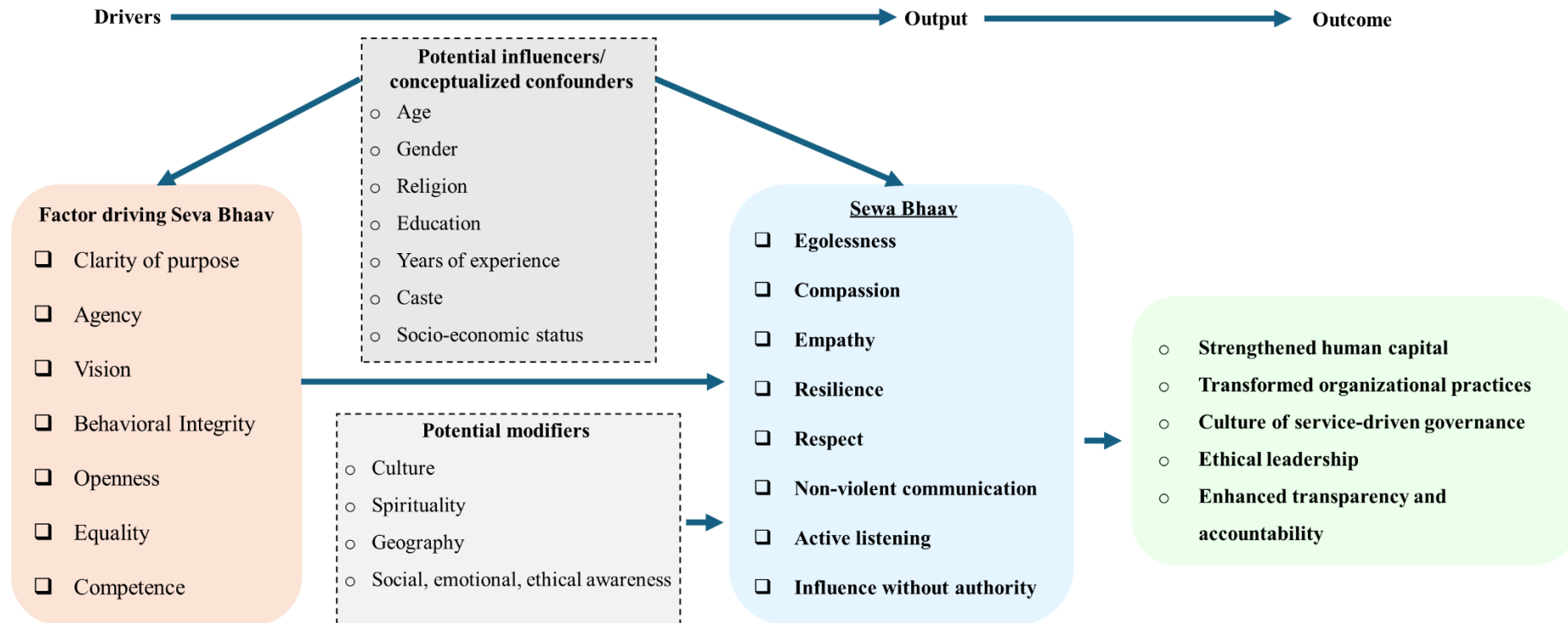
### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 Thematic findings: Components and drivers

The analysis identified a framework of eight core components and seven key drivers that constitute the Sewa Bhaav construct. The core components are: egolessness, compassion, empathy, resilience, respect, non-violent communication, active listening, and influence without authority. The key drivers are: clarity of purpose, agency, vision, behavioral integrity, openness, equality, and competence. The following sections elaborate on each of these themes with supporting participant quotes and literature.

Table 1 and Table 2 (below) provide a thematic synthesis of insights from the FDGs and narrative data, presenting the development of constructs related to the core components (Table 1) and key drivers (Table 2) of Sewa Bhaav. Following a systematic coding process, participants' direct expressions were first grouped into initial themes, which were then abstracted into broader second-order categories. The tables include participant quotes, thematic codes, and supporting references from the literature.

Among the components, egolessness emerged as foundational theme. Participants described this concept in terms of humility and self-effacement, with one characterizing it as “*removing the 'I' from service.*” This suggests that from the participants' perspective, authentic service requires the dissolution of ego-centric motives. This finding aligns with established literature on the concept. In the literature, egolessness is described as moving beyond rigid self-boundaries and self-centeredness, allowing the individual to experience self as part of something larger and deeply connected across time, people and experiences (Epstein, 1988; Luyten, 1985). In summary, participants viewed egolessness as the humility necessary for selfless service, which resonates with theoretical understandings of the ego as a barrier to transcendent connectedness.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model presenting the core components of Sewa Bhaav, its drivers and contextual factors (potential influencers/conceptualized confounders and modifiers)

This conceptual model illustrates the pathways from drivers to components, highlights mediating and moderating relationships, and accounts for contextual factors (Figure 1) (Hardt et al., 2011; Schipf et al., 2011; Stang, 2011). It provided a coherent theoretical structure that supported the plan during the analytical phase, offering a foundation for future empirical testing of Sewa Bhaav.

Compassion was identified as another core component, closely related to egolessness. The participants saw compassion not just as feeling, but as a motivator for purposeful action to alleviate suffering. This participant-derived understanding of compassion finds strong support in multiple scholarly domains. Compassion, according to Mahatma Gandhi, guides us to distinguish a person's actions from the person themselves (i.e., "*hate the sin, not the sinner*"). More broadly, compassion goes beyond simply recognizing someone's suffering; it involves empathic concern and culminates in purposeful action directed toward alleviating that suffering (Dutton et al., 2006; Goetz et al., 2010; Neff, 2003a).

Empathy also emerged strongly, reflecting the ability to notice, understand, and respond to others' feelings. Other attributes included resilience in the face of adversity, respect for diverse lived experiences, non-violent communication, active listening, and the ability to influence without authority. Taken together, these dimensions capture the ethical, emotional, and relational spirit of Sewa Bhaav and align well with established constructs in psychology and behavioral science.

The drivers of Sewa Bhaav, as detailed in Table 2, reflected internal dispositions and contextual enablers that sustain its practice. These included clarity of purpose, a sense of agency or belief in one's capacity to make change, a vision that extends beyond self-interest and behavioral integrity—living in alignment with one's stated values—which emerged as especially critical. Other drivers included openness to diverse perspectives, equality in relationships, and competence within specific service domains. These drivers are grounded in the literature on altruism, ethical leadership, and prosocial behavior.

### 3.2 Indicators reflecting the absence of Sewa Bhaav

The thematic analysis also revealed a framework of patterns where Sewa Bhaav might be either diminished or absent. These patterns—conceptualised as barriers—capture both behavioral deficits and systemic misalignments that obstruct the practice of selfless service. Each barrier was mapped to the corresponding missing component or driver. For example, emotional detachment, lack of active listening, and impersonal interactions reflected deficits in empathy, compassion, and egolessness. Actions motivated by self-interest or rigid assertions of hierarchy pointed to weakened egolessness and an absence of influence without authority. Similarly, emotional unavailability, failure to acknowledge others' pain, and limited contextual awareness emerged as barriers to empathy and compassion. Such behaviors not only erode relational trust but also signify institutional cultures where performance is privileged over presence, and procedure over empathy. Table 3 synthesizes these findings, providing a framework for assessing contexts in which Sewa Bhaav is compromised and for guiding targeted organizational interventions.

### 3.3 Conceptual framework

These refined constructs were organized into two domains: Components of Sewa Bhaav (such as egolessness, compassion, and empathy) and drivers of Sewa Bhaav (clarity of purpose, agency, vision, behavioral integrity, openness, equality and competence) (Figure 1). The relationships between these domains were then integrated into a conceptual framework linking antecedents (drivers), core attributes (components), and modifiers (contextual or confounding factors).

Drivers like clarity of purpose, agency, vision, behavioral integrity, openness, equality and competence emerged as enablers of Sewa Bhaav. They represent personal and institutional capacities that allow individuals to act with conviction, coherence, and inclusivity. Meanwhile, openness and vision function as relational and future-oriented drivers, encouraging emotional engagement, commitment, and service beyond self-interest.

**Table 1.** Thematic analysis of core components of Sewa Bhaav

Illustrative participant statements	1st-order themes	2nd-order themes	Link to Sewa Bhaav	Construct definition (with reference)	Construct
<p>"The very thought of me as a doer is ego at play. We need to remove 'I' from the equation as we demonstrate Sewa Bhaav."</p> <p>"One has to unconditionally be present for the other as one engages in Sewa Bhaav"</p> <p>"While doing Sewa, I remind myself to set my ego aside. It is not about getting credit or proving myself, it is about being fully present for the other person."</p> <p>"People who demonstrate Sewa Bhaav do not do it to satisfy their ego needs. What they do is in alignment with their convictions."</p>	"Ego" and "selflessness"	Egolessness	Actions free from ego-driven motives	Egolessness refers to a quiet ego, which is a self-identity that goes beyond excessive self-centeredness and egoism. A quiet ego maintains a balance where the self is neither overshadowed nor overbearing, allowing for a more compassionate and less defensive outlook towards oneself and others. The concept of egolessness is embodied in Mahatma Gandhi's description of a deep sense of humility, non-attachment, and connection to spirituality.	<i>Egolessness</i>
<p>"I need to be first accepting of myself before I can demonstrate acceptance of the other. I can demonstrate Sewa Bhaav only if I demonstrate self-compassion."</p> <p>"While it is important to prioritize others' needs, one needs to be able to express clearly and accurately one's own needs"</p> <p>"It is not just enough to have empathy, one must be compassionate in one's behavior to others. Sewa Bhaav cannot happen in the absence of compassion for others."</p> <p>"It is not enough to be sensitive for others. One must take a stand for others and advocate for their needs. That is Sewa Bhaav"</p>	"Self-acceptance" and "Advocacy and standing for others"	Compassion including both self and compassion for others	Care and kindness to self and others	<p>Mahatma Gandhi mentioned compassion as: actively working to alleviate the suffering of others, towards a society where everyone's needs were met (Gandhi, 1958; Gandhi, 1968)</p> <p>Neff (2003a, 2003b) defines self-compassion as the ability to hold one's feelings of suffering with a sense of warmth, connection and concern. It includes three major components of self-compassion: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness</p>	<i>Compassion</i>
<p>"Unless I know the pain/need of the other individual(s), how can my Sewa be relevant? I need to step into the shoes of the other individual."</p> <p>"I need to be cognizant of the needs of the other at all times. Only then can I manifest Sewa Bhaav"</p>	"Understanding others' pain" and "Awareness of others' needs"	Empathy	Stepping into others' shoes	<p>Mahatma Gandhi defined empathy as understanding the pain, struggles and perspectives of others (Gandhi, 1958; Gandhi, 1968)</p> <p>Empathy is defined as a human trait, an innate identification or affective response and reaction to another's emotional state (Feshbach &amp; Kuchenbecker, 1974; Mehrabian &amp; Epstein, 1972). Empathy is a complex concept with three components. The cognitive dimension involves interpersonal sensitivity and perspective-taking. The affective component refers to caring and congruence."</p>	<i>Empathy</i>

Illustrative participant statements	1st-order themes	2nd-order themes	Link to Sewa Bhaav	Construct definition (with reference)	Construct
"Coping with adversities and odds helps me to provide Sewa under all circumstances." "When obstacles, does the individual falter in the intent? If yes, that cannot be Sewa Bhaav"	"Coping with adversity"	Resilience	Serving despite challenges	Resilience is viewed as a measure of stress-coping ability, important for emotional well-being and stress reactions. (Connor & Davidson, 2003) Mahatma Gandhi defined this as: a steadfast adherence to truth, self-sufficiency, adaptability, inner strength and faith. (Gandhi, 1958; Gandhi, 1968)	<i>Resilience</i>
"One cannot look at life purely from the prism of one's own lived experiences. The individual has to respect the experiences of others to be able to show Sewa Bhaav." "Sewa Bhaav is best seen in a collaborative environment. When one is willing to work with the other with respect" "The skill to listen to and observe facts as they are, without polluting them with one's own judgment is critical to demonstrating Sewa Bhaav"	"Respecting others' perspectives and experiences"	Respect	Honoring others' perspectives and dignity	Respect is the recognition of diversity and the acceptance of different views, fostering trust and mutual understanding. It involves exhibiting respectful behavior, such as honouring personal space and valuing the dignity of others (Gallagher, 2004) aligned with Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts. (Gandhi, 1958; Gandhi, 1968)	<i>Respect</i>
"Sewa Bhaav is best seen when one can accurately articulate one's observations, identify feelings, call out the need, and express requests, with great compassion."	"Non-Violent Communication"	Non-Violent Communication	Communicating with compassion and clarity	Non-violent communication (NVC) emphasizes compassionate dialogue. In this context, "non-violence refers to the absence of verbal and psychological harm rather than physical conflict. The core components of NVC are: Observation, Feelings, Needs, and Requests. It is non-judgmental and non-defensive (Adriani et al., 2024). Mahatma Gandhi described this as: communicating honestly and authentically, cultivating self-awareness and controlling impulses. (Gandhi, 1958; Gandhi, 1968)	<i>Non-violent communication</i>
"Listening to words and feelings as they are, is critical for the individual to demonstrate Sewa Bhaav." "It is important to understand what is said. It is even more important to understand what has not been said" "One needs to understand the context before one engages in any form of Sewa Bhaav"	"Active listening" and "engagement"	Active listening	Deep listening to connect and engage	Active listening establishes rapport, with the listener demonstrating interest both verbally and nonverbally, resulting in better understanding (Judi, 2012). Mahatma Gandhi described this as: truly listening to people's concerns and feelings, being present in the moment, avoiding distractions, being non-judgmental and open to different viewpoints.	<i>Active listening</i>

Illustrative participant statements	1st-order themes	2nd-order themes	Link to Sewa Bhaav	Construct definition (with reference)	Construct
"When Sewa Bhaav is on display, one will see influence without authority in action." "People who demonstrate Sewa Bhaav have little interest in hierarchy or positional power"	"Inspiring without authority" and "Disinterest in hierarchy and power"	Influence without authority	Leading through respect and trust	Influence without authority was to possess moral authority, open communication towards dialogue and persuasion, uniting people around a common cause as described by Mahatma Gandhi. (Gandhi, 1958; Gandhi, 1968) It is the ability to motivate and guide others without formal positional power. This requires cultivating trust, rapport, and a shared vision (Van Auken, 1997)	<i>Influence without authority</i>

**Table 2.** Thematic analysis of key drivers of Sewa Bhaav

Illustrative participant statements	First-order themes	Second-order themes	Link to Sewa Bhaav	Construct definition (with reference)	Construct
Why am I doing what I am doing? I need to have the right purpose or intent for Sewa Bhaav to manifest.	"Purpose with action alignment"	Clarity of purpose	Actions aligned with meaningful purpose	A sense of purpose is an internal asset that drives individuals toward meaningful goals. It is associated with resilience and success (Benard, 1995; Benson, 2006)	<i>Clarity of Purpose</i>
The agency or conviction that the individual can make a difference is critical to demonstrate Sewa Bhaav."	"Sense of agency"	Agency	Belief in making a difference through responsibility	Agency refers to one's sense of control over their actions and their belief in their ability to effect change. It reflects both responsibility and ownership of one's actions. (Haggard & Chambon, 2012)	<i>Agency</i>
"People who demonstrate Sewa Bhaav are those who have a view of a larger cause; larger than their own needs at least."	"Alignment with larger cause" and Beyond Ego and Personal Gain	Vision	Focus on broader collective good	Vision is the mental model or cognitive image of a desired future state that directs decisions and actions (Mumford & Strange, 2013)	<i>Vision</i>

Illustrative participant statements	First-order themes	Second-order themes	Link to Sewa Bhaav	Construct definition (with reference)	Construct
<p>"The person who demonstrates Sewa Bhaav must be one who chooses action over inaction."</p> <p>"For me, if you say you will do something, people should be able to trust that you will follow through."</p>	<p>"Consistency between words and actions" and</p> <p>"Proactive action and decisiveness"</p>	Behavioral Integrity	Authentic alignment of actions with values	Behavioral integrity is the degree to which actions and words align. It reflects a person's ability to live up to their promises and commitments (Simons et al., 2012)	<i>Behavioral Integrity</i>
<p>"One has to be open to the views of others and to new possibilities that will affect the cognitive existence and connectedness of the one engaging in Sewa Bhaav."</p>	<p>"Openness to others' views and ideas"</p>	Openness	Embracing diverse perspectives	Openness refers to the commitment to sharing knowledge, ideas, and results, fostering growth and connection (Park et al., 2014)	<i>Openness</i>
<p>"One should have values of equality so as to create an environment where individuals feel empowered and content enough to serve others."</p> <p>"Sewa Bhaav cannot happen in a situation where there is a sense of inequality. The sense of being equal is critical for Sewa Bhaav"</p>	<p>"Values of equality and empowerment"</p>	Equality	Ensuring fairness and inclusion	Equality involves providing equal opportunities to all individuals regardless of their background (Kim, 2018)	<i>Equality</i>
<p>"Only the intent is insufficient; one needs to be competent to be able to demonstrate any Sewa Bhaav"</p>	<p>"Competence and ability to serve"</p>	Competence	Serving with skill and capability	Competence refers to the ability to perform tasks effectively and with expertise, which ensures that service is delivered with the necessary quality (Davidson et al., 2012)	<i>Competence</i>

**Table 3.** Indicators reflecting the absence of Sewa Bhaav in practice

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description / example</b>	<b>Associated value missing</b>
Unclear or self-serving intent	Acting without understanding or reflecting on the purpose, driven by ego or self-interest	Clarity of Purpose
Absence of warmth	Cold, indifferent, or emotionally disengaged behavior.	Empathy, Compassion, Egolessness
Absence of listening and connection	Lack of deep listening; failure to recognize spoken or unspoken needs	Active Listening, Sensitivity
Absence of Empathy	Unwillingness or inability to relate to others' pain or perspectives	Empathy
Lack of self-acceptance	Harsh self-judgment, inner criticism	Self-Compassion
Lack of compassion for others	Emotional detachment; failure to translate empathy into action	Compassion for others, Empathy
Unavailability for others	Selective responsiveness; being emotionally or physically inaccessible	Availability, Compassion
Presence of ego	Seeking control or recognition; self-centred mindset	Egolessness
Prioritizing personal needs	Consistently placing one's own interests above others	Prioritizing Others' Needs
Judgmental or angry behavior	Inability to suspend judgment or regulate emotional response	Non-violent Communication, Self-regulation
Hierarchy and power usage	Exercising positional power rather than value-based influence	Egolessness, Influence without authority
Service done for fame or personal gain	Acts driven by recognition or external validation rather than inner conviction	Conviction, Egolessness, Selflessness
Failure to do job role	Refusing to assist job description or formal boundaries	Behavioral integrity
Disregard for context or lived experiences	Ignoring individuals' backgrounds, realities, or social positioning	Contextual Understanding, Respect
Emotional unavailability	Not showing up emotionally in moments of need	Presence, Availability, Compassion
No advocacy for the underserved	Passive acceptance of injustice or exclusion	Advocacy, Responsibility
Lack of equality and respect	Demonstrating bias or superiority based on caste, class, or institutional privilege	Equality, Respect

**Table 4.** Theoretical validation of the Sewa Bhaav framework: core components and key drivers

Construct	Description	Literature support
<i>Core components</i>		
Egolessness	Acting without self-centeredness, avoiding credit-seeking or dominance	(Epstein, 1988; Luyten, 1985)
Compassion	Sensitivity to others' suffering with a desire to alleviate it	(Dutton et al., 2006; Goetz et al., 2010; Neff, 2003b)
Empathy	Understanding others' perspectives and emotions	(Batson, 2009; Davis, 1983; Lepron, Causse, & Farrer, 2015)
Resilience	Capacity to persevere and act constructively amid adversity	(Luthans et al., 2006; Manyena, 2006; Wu et al., 2013)
Respect	Valuing others' dignity, autonomy, and lived experience	(Dillon, 2007; Lysaught, 2004)
Non-violent Communication	Speaking and acting with compassion and emotional regulation	(Rosenberg & Eisler, 2003; Wacker & Dziobek, 2018)
Active Listening	Deep presence and receptivity to both verbal and emotional cues of others	(Brownell, 2012; Rogers, 1957; Sims, 2017; Topornycky & Golparian, 2016)
Influence Without Authority	Inspiring others through example, moral authority, or relational trust rather than positional power	(Cohen & Bradford, 2017; Heifetz, 2011; Sinek, 2009)
<i>Key drivers</i>		
Clarity of Purpose	Strong internal compass rooted in meaning-making and moral conviction	(Hollis, 2013; Schroeder, 2002; Sugarbaker, 2014; Yuliawati et al., 2024)
Agency	Belief in one's capacity to effect change or take initiative	(Bandura, 2001; Lepron et al., 2015; Zimmerman et al., 2015)
Vision	Forward-looking orientation that integrates ethical imagination with spiritual purpose	(Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Leah, 2024; Quinn, 2015; Senge, 2006)
Openness	Willingness to listen to diverse views and experiences	(Abu Raya et al., 2023; Gong et al., 2023)
Equality	Commitment to treating all individuals fairly, regardless of identity or social status	(A, 1979; Alkire S, 2009; Burchardt, 2006)
Behavioral Integrity	Alignment between professed values and observed actions	(Palanski & Yammarino, 2007; Simons et al., 2022)

**Table 5.** Propositions linking drivers and core components of Sewa Bhaav

Proposition	Key Driver	Core Component(s) Involved	Hypothesized Relationship
P1	Agency	Empathy, Egolessness, Non-violent Communication, Active Listening	A strong sense of agency enhances empathic engagement and provides the volition to translate compassion into deliberate, selfless action.
P2	Openness	Egolessness, Active Listening, Non-violent Communication, Influence Without Authority	Openness supports a non-defensive mindset, strengthening relational practices essential for sustaining selfless service.
P3	Vision	Compassion, Resilience	A forward-looking, ethically grounded vision sustains Sewa Bhaav by directing service actions toward collective goals and providing purpose during adversity.
P4	Behavioral Integrity	Empathy, Compassion, Respect	Behavioral integrity strengthens Sewa Bhaav by ensuring internal values are consistently expressed through trustworthy and ethical actions, building moral credibility.
P5	Clarity of Purpose	Resilience	Clarity of purpose enhances Sewa Bhaav by promoting resilience, emotional regulation, and sustained commitment to service by framing challenges as meaningful.
P6	Equality	Respect, Non-violent Communication, Influence Without Authority	A commitment to equality drives Sewa Bhaav by encouraging inclusivity, mutual respect, and forms of influence that are not based on hierarchical power.
P7	Competence	Active Listening, Non-violent Communication, Respect	Competence facilitates Sewa Bhaav by ensuring service is effective, thoughtful, and responsive through emotionally intelligent and skilled action.
P8	Cultural, Spiritual, & Social-Ethical-Emotional Awareness	All components (as a foundational driver)	Culturally and spiritually embedded awareness shapes the motivation and expression of Sewa Bhaav, framing it as a relational duty rather than a transactional act.

Hypothesized effect modifiers—such as cultural norms, spirituality, and geographical context—shape how Sewa Bhaav is expressed in specific settings, while confounding factors like: age, gender, religion, caste, education, years of experience, socio-economic status can influence how it is perceived and practiced owing to the confounding of the pathway between drivers and Sewa Bhaav. Together, this framework presents Sewa Bhaav as a dynamic interplay among personal disposition, institutional ethos, and socio-cultural context, offering a holistic perspective on selfless service in practice.

### 3.4 Theoretical validation of Sewa Bhaav framework

This section validates the emergent Sewa Bhaav framework by anchoring each construct—components and drivers—in established literature from moral psychology, leadership theory, and Indic traditions (Table 4). The review affirms both the internal coherence and the relational structure of the constructs, allowing us to build propositions that can guide future empirical testing (Table 5).

### 3.5 Agency and Sewa Bhaav

Our analysis positioned agency as a critical driver of Sewa Bhaav. Participants described a need to not only see a problem but to feel equipped and responsible for addressing it. This suggests that the belief in one's own capacity to act is a prerequisite for sustained service. This emergent theme is supported by the literature on moral psychology. Agency, understood as the belief in one's capacity to initiate action and influence outcomes, is a critical driver of *Sewa Bhaav*. Bandura (Bandura, 2001) describes agency as the foundational capacity to exercise control over one's actions and environment—a prerequisite for moral engagement and ethical behavior. We argue that in the context of Sewa Bhaav, this agency enables individuals not only to recognize the needs of others but also to take responsibility and act upon them with conviction. (Detert et al., 2008). Furthermore, we interpret this finding to mean that a sense of agency enhances empathic engagement, as individuals who perceive themselves as effective agents are more likely to attune to and respond meaningfully to the emotions of others.

*Empathy*, encompassing both cognitive (perspective-taking) and affective (emotional resonance) dimensions, allows individuals to perceive, feel, and respond sensitively to the emotional states of others. Agency supports empathy by providing the motivational and volitional capacity to translate awareness into deliberate action. Through this connection, agency reinforces core components of Sewa Bhaav—such as empathy, egolessness (Decety & Lamm, 2006), non-violent communication (Billikopf, 2012), and active listening (Judi, 2012), grounding selfless service in both feeling and doing. Personal transformation builds around self-awareness, moral responsibility and empathetic orientation which are important precursors to recognize oneself as an agent of change and not just passive observers. This recognition, in turn, motivates them to translate empathy (feeling) into compassionate action (doing).

*Proposition 1 (P1).* A strong sense of agency enhances empathic engagement, thereby facilitating the practice of Sewa Bhaav.

### 3.6 Openness and Sewa Bhaav

Building on agency's connection to empathy, openness emerges as another foundational driver that promotes deeper emotional engagement and reflexivity. Participants mentioned the value of a non-defensive mindset, a willingness to listen to diverse views, and the importance of being receptive to new experiences as essential for Sewa Bhaav. As one of the Big Five personality traits,

openness is associated with cognitive flexibility, curiosity, and tolerance. It fosters a non-defensive mindset, which strengthens several relational practices essential to Sewa Bhaav—such as active listening, egolessness, non-violent communication, and influencing without authority. Individuals high in openness tend to be more attuned to the emotions, values, and experiences of others (Yang et al., 2023).

*Proposition 2 (P2).* Openness supports intrapersonal and interpersonal practices such as egolessness, active listening, and non-violent communication, collectively sustaining Sewa Bhaav.

### 3.7 Vision and Sewa Bhaav

Vision serves as a forward-looking guide for Sewa Bhaav, helping individuals move beyond ego-centered goals. It is more than an aspirational idea—it provides clarity of direction and aligns action with ethical purpose. Quinn (2015) and Phillips (2018) note that a vision grounded in moral intent promotes self-transcendence and supports communal well-being. When shared across an organization or system, such a vision strengthens collective accountability, nurtures compassion, and encourages commitment (Phillips, 2018; Quinn, 2015).

*Proposition 3 (P3).* Vision sustains Sewa Bhaav by directing service actions toward collective, future-focused goals.

### 3.8 Behavioral integrity and Sewa Bhaav

Behavioral integrity reflects the alignment between a person's inner values and their outward actions. When values, words, and deeds are consistent, it enhances trustworthiness and moral credibility (Simons et al., 2012). Further, behavioral integrity helps individuals navigate ethical dilemmas while maintaining relational warmth and trust especially in public services (Sinclair et al., 2017). Moreover, it reinforces core components of Sewa Bhaav, including empathy, compassion, and respect.

*Proposition 4 (P4).* Behavioral integrity strengthens Sewa Bhaav by ensuring that internal values are consistently expressed through trustworthy and ethical actions.

### 3.9 Clarity of purpose and Sewa Bhaav

The finding indicates that clarity of purpose provides a steady source of motivation and coherence, strengthening resilience in service contexts. Individuals with a clear sense of purpose tend to interpret challenges as meaningful, which helps them maintain emotional balance and stay aligned with their service goals (Schaefer et al., 2013). Purpose also anchors prosocial motivation, as highlighted by Grant and Campbell (Grant, 2007), enabling sustained engagement even in emotionally demanding or stressful situations.

*Proposition 5 (P5).* Clarity of purpose enhances Sewa Bhaav by promoting resilience, emotional regulation, and commitment to service.

### 3.10 Equality and Sewa Bhaav

Participants identified equality, framed as fairness, inclusion, and empowerment, creates the conditions for Sewa Bhaav to thrive in organizational settings. When individuals experience systems as fair and inclusive, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors (Kim, 2018). Valuing equality challenges rigid hierarchies and promotes mutual respect, reinforcing practices such as non-violent communication and influence without authority.

*Proposition 6 (P6).* Equality drives Sewa Bhaav by encouraging inclusivity, mutual respect, and influence without authority.

### 3.11 Competence and Sewa Bhaav

The thematic analysis revealed that while intent is valued, participants consistently emphasized that competence is what makes Sewa Bhaav truly impactful and responsive. Intent, although essential, is alone not enough—*competence* ensures that service is effective, thoughtful, and responsive. This finding resonates with Davidson et al., who position competence across emotional, cognitive, and functional domains as central to ethical leadership (Davidson et al., 2012). We argue that by supporting skills such as active listening, non-violent communication, and respect, competence strengthens multiple components of Sewa Bhaav, enabling service that is both meaningful and impactful.

*Proposition 7 (P7).* Competence drives Sewa Bhaav by facilitating emotionally intelligent and contextually responsive service.

### 3.12 Cultural, spiritual, and social-ethical-emotional foundations of Sewa Bhaav

Indic traditions conceptualize *Sewa* not as a voluntary or optional act, but as an ontological imperative grounded in Dharma—a moral order that governs right action. Within this worldview, service is understood as a deeply emotional and spiritual disposition (*bhaav*), cultivated through embodied practices, communal rituals, and value-based socialization. This culturally embedded understanding of Sewa Bhaav distinguishes it from instrumental or transactional notions of service found in many contemporary frameworks. Instead, Sewa Bhaav emerges as a spiritually inspired form of awareness, grounded in cultural rootedness, spiritual intentionality, and social, ethical, and emotional attunement, relationally enacted through humility, compassion, and a sense of interconnected duty (Beckerlegge, 2006; Erlich & Levi, 2025; Lucia, 2014)

*Proposition 8 (P8).* Cultural, spiritual, and social-ethical-emotional awareness significantly shape the motivation and expression of Sewa Bhaav.

### 3.13 Contextual influencers of the pathway between drivers and Sewa Bhaav

Social status and demographic factors—such as age, gender, religion, caste, education, experience and socio-economic background—as potential common correlates of both drivers and core components of Sewa Bhaav as evidenced in literature and findings of our qualitative immersion, are potentially likely to influence both the practice and perception. These factors are very much capable of influencing the way individuals interpret opportunities for service and affect how their actions are received by others—as revealed in the conversations. Importantly, such dynamics can enable, inhibit, or distort the enactment of Sewa Bhaav by introducing asymmetries in power, visibility, and legitimacy.

## 4. Conclusion and implications

This study aimed to explore and define the constructs of Sewa Bhaav by drawing on insights from practitioners and validating emerging themes through established literature. The findings suggest that Sewa Bhaav is not merely an emotional or behavioral tendency, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing intrapersonal maturity, interpersonal sensitivity, cultural-spiritual embeddedness, and socio-structural awareness.

Through focus group discussions and iterative thematic analysis, the study developed a robust conceptual framework comprising fourteen validated constructs (Table 1) and identified key indicators of the absence of Sewa Bhaav in professional contexts (Table 2). These constructs offer a grounded understanding of how Sewa Bhaav is experienced, enacted, and sometimes impeded across various service settings.

The analysis highlights that Sewa Bhaav is driven by seven key constructs—clarity of purpose, a strong sense of agency, alignment with larger vision, behavioral integrity, openness to perspectives, equality and competence. These drivers are not merely motivational but serve as structural enablers, creating environments in which emotional commitment and ethical intention can be consistently expressed. Behavioral integrity—where one's actions align with professed values - and the ability to influence without formal authority emerge as particularly salient in institutional environments, strengthening a culture of humility, trust, and shared responsibility.

Conversely, the absence or weakening of Sewa Bhaav is often evident in ego-centered behavior, emotional disengagement, transactional interactions, and reduced empathy. These patterns echo long-standing critiques of bureaucratic rationality and the erosion of relational ethics in public and institutional life (Nussbaum, 2011). The contrast between the presence and absence of Sewa Bhaav highlights its importance not only as a moral disposition but as a critical lens through which service delivery and leadership may be reimagined.

This study further highlights empathy, compassion, resilience, respect, egolessness, active listening, influence without authority, and non-violent communication as essential components of Sewa Bhaav.

Through this multi-phase analysis, the study presents a comprehensive understanding of how the core components and drivers of Sewa Bhaav interact to form a cohesive framework of selfless service. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the framework offers significant practical implications for wellbeing. We posit that the practice of Sewa Bhaav can enhance personal wellbeing by providing a deep sense of purpose, resilience, and self-compassion. At the organizational level, embedding these principles, such as respect, non-violent communication, and influence without authority, can improve morale, reduce burnout, and enhance psychological wellbeing. Finally, at the societal level, institutions guided by Sewa Bhaav can deliver more empathetic and responsive public services, thereby strengthening community trust and societal wellbeing. Thus conceptualizing compassion as a relational flow shaping individual wellbeing, organizational dynamics, and population health, adopting a systems-level approach to cultivating Sewa Bhaav (Kirby et. al., 2026).

Furthermore, this framework proactively addresses a key concern in wellbeing literature: the risk of compassion fatigue. Unlike models of selfless service that may lead to exhaustion, Sewa Bhaav, as defined by our components, inherently incorporates balancing mechanisms. The drivers of clarity of purpose and agency, coupled with the core component of self-compassion, provide a sustainable foundation for service. This aligns with wellbeing research emphasizing that caring for oneself is not antithetical to, but essential for, sustaining the capacity to care for others effectively. The Sewa Bhaav framework also offers implications for policymakers. To translate this into practice, we suggest integrating Sewa Bhaav into service training curricula across education and health sectors as an initial step. Following this, behavioral indicators to assess and reward practices like empathy and compassion can be developed. For instance, a hospital could train staff in non-violent communication and recognize egolessness in patient care. Similarly, in education, school leaders can incorporate Sewa Bhaav by fostering collaborative decision-making (a form of influence without authority) and by modeling empathy and active listening in interactions with teachers and students. The Compassionate Leadership and Personal

Transformation Training (CL-PTT) undertaken by the Piramal Foundation for building compassionate leadership skills among middle managers of public health facilities of Bihar exemplifies the practical application of Sewa Bhaav at both the individual and organizational levels (Jha et al., 2026). Rooted in the spirit of selfless service, the intervention nurtures inner capacities such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, active listening, and non-violent communication—translating Sewa Bhaav into measurable leadership competencies. At the individual level, it enables healthcare professionals to cultivate empathy, resilience, and purpose, aligning personal growth with the intent to serve others. At the organizational level, CL-PTT embeds compassion within systems, leadership practices, and team dynamics, fostering a culture of shared purpose, collaboration and collective responsibility. By integrating compassion-based ethics into healthcare leadership, the program operationalizes Sewa Bhaav as both a personal discipline and an institutional ethos—transforming service delivery from transactional to deeply humane and purpose-driven. Evidence from elsewhere, further also suggests that alignment of such interventions with public health system allows compassion to become a system parameter that can be evaluated and designed through policy interventions (Wapaño, 2026).

We acknowledge implementation challenges such as high caseloads and bureaucratic inertia in such initiatives. Therefore, cultivating Sewa Bhaav requires creating enabling environments, which include leadership commitment to humility and HR policies that reward empathetic engagement. Grounded in the Indian cultural context, this framework contributes to moral psychology, non-western leadership studies, and culturally rooted organizational paradigms. At the same time, it offers actionable insights for institutional leaders and human development initiatives.

#### *4.1 Limitations and future research*

This study presents several opportunities for future research. First, while the framework's grounding in the Indian cultural context is a core contribution, its generalizability requires further investigation. Future work should explore cross-cultural analogues (e.g., Ubuntu) and test the model in diverse settings. Second, the purposive sampling of service-oriented individuals may present an idealized vision; including a broader range of participants, such as beneficiaries and frontline workers, would help refine the framework. Finally, the proposed relationships are theoretical. A clear agenda for future research involves developing and validating quantitative scales to measure the constructs; empirically testing the propositions and designing and evaluating Sewa Bhaav training programs to assess their impact on wellbeing and service outcomes.

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Authors declare no competing interests with the following exception. We note that as researchers affiliated with organizations embodying Sewa Bhaav ideals, our interpretation might carry some implicit bias; however, the multi-phase design, involvement of multiple analysts, and external expert feedback were intended to minimize subjective influence.

### **AI statement**

AI was not used in the drafting of this manuscript.

### **Data availability statement**

The data used for the manuscript is freely available upon emailed request with justification to the corresponding author.

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