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The Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Employees' Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: Basis for a Proposed Model for Higher Educational Institutions

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Research Article

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Employee satisfaction and commitment are essential to the stability and performance of higher education institutions. As leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping workplace morale and retention, there is a growing need to explore models that will help address these challenges and ensure a more engaged, satisfied, and committed workforce. This research was conducted to explore how servant leadership traits grounded in values such as empathy, accountability, humility, and empowerment influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees in higher education institutions.

Materials/methods. The study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationships between leadership traits and employee responses. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 296 non-managerial employees and 158 managerial staff across various higher education institutions. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 statistical software for Windows, with a focus on correlations between leadership traits and employee responses.

Results. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between servant leadership traits—specifically empathy, empowerment, accountability, and humility—and employee outcomes. Both managerial and non-managerial staff reported higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment when their leaders demonstrated the qualities of servant leadership.

Conclusion. The results suggest that servant leadership has a positive influence on employee morale and institutional loyalty. Higher education institutions may benefit from implementing leadership development programs focused on cultivating servant leadership traits to enhance leadership effectiveness and foster a more satisfied and committed workforce.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, effective leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering positive work environments, enhancing employee satisfaction, and strengthening organizational performance. Studies consistently demonstrate that leadership styles influence organizational culture, motivation, retention, and job satisfaction (Yang, 2014; Alonderine & Majauskaite, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2021). When effective leadership is present, organizations are better able to achieve their goals, inspire employees to exceed expectations, and improve retention rates (Dubey et al., 2023; Hanjunkar, 2019; Indeed, 2022).

Among various leadership models, servant leadership has gained prominence for its holistic and people-centered approach. Unlike traditional leaders who emphasize directives, servant leaders prioritize serving their teams, empowering employees, and fostering collaboration (Greenleaf, 1998; Peyton et al., 2022; Mariya et al., 2024). Core characteristics such as empathy, humility, empowerment, and stewardship make servant leadership particularly effective in promoting employee well-being and organizational commitment (Spears, 2010; Van Dierendonck & Nuitjen, 2011; Fernandes, 2022). Empirical studies further link servant leadership to higher levels of job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and improved performance (Newman, 2017; Achen et al., 2019; Eslamdoust & Mahmoudinazlou, 2023).

Despite this growing evidence, most servant leadership research has been conducted in corporate settings, with limited attention to educational institutions (Hassan, 2014). This creates a significant gap, as schools and colleges face unique organizational and leadership challenges that directly affect faculty and staff commitment. Understanding how servant leadership influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment in educational contexts is essential for developing effective leadership practices and policies.

To address this gap, the present study examines employees' perceptions of servant leadership qualities exhibited by their supervisors within educational institutions. By doing so, it aims to generate insights that can inform leadership development initiatives and contribute to improving organizational effectiveness in the education sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Servant Leadership: Concept and Characteristics

The concept of servant leadership was popularized by Robert Greenleaf (1904–1990) through his 1970 essay, "The Servant as a Leader," in which he emphasized the importance of prioritizing service over leadership in organizational settings. He asserted that a servant leader is "primus inter pares," or "first among equals," meaning that meeting the needs of others takes precedence over meeting one's own. He also believed that leadership is not a privilege, but rather something that should be earned (Greenleaf, 1991). A leader's use of power, authority, and influence is less significant than their actual participation as an ordinary member of the organization's work teams. It is a way of looking at leadership that is primarily focused on serving team members rather than dominating them (Greenleaf, 1998).

The hallmark of servant leadership is the sharing of leadership responsibilities and abilities throughout the organization through continuous empowerment initiatives ("Servant Leadership," 2019). Traditional leaders prefer giving instructions and directives, but servant leaders provide assistance, support collaboration, and share responsibilities (Greenleaf, 1998). Servant-leaders also empower their followers and help them realize their maximum potential (Peyton et al., 2022; Mariya et al., 2024).

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Spears (2010) identified the following key characteristics that define servant leadership, which include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to others' growth, and building commitment. Meanwhile, after a servant leadership survey that included a sample of 24 literature reviews, 21 different countries, five qualitative studies, 55 quantitative studies, and three combined studies, Frederick Cotezer et al. (2017) described servant leaders as having authenticity, compassion, responsibility, integrity, humility, courage, altruism, and willingness to listen. Fernandes (2022) further emphasized in their paper that servant leaders should possess broad knowledge and experience, as well as curiosity, optimism, ethical standards, risk-taking, and a focus on long-term growth, to enhance organizational performance effectively.

The key component of servant leadership is for leaders to view themselves as their team's assistants. Being genuinely interested in supporting others is what defines authentic leadership. The goal of a servant leader is to motivate people to reach their full potential, and any success the company enjoys is a byproduct of this commitment to service (Peyton et al., 2022; Mariya et al., 2024).

While several authors have interpreted Greenleaf's writings and identified the characteristics of servant leadership into various categories, authors like Spears, Dirk Van Dierendonck, and Nuitjen have developed a multidimensional servant leadership instrument. Spears developed the ten characteristics, while Van Dierendonck and Nuitjen, after analyzing the data from a study involving more than 1,500 European leaders, constructed the eight traits of servant leadership instrument called the Servant Leadership Survey, which measures the following eight dimensions of servant leadership: "standing back, humility, courage, empowerment, accountability, authenticity, forgiveness, and stewardship" (Van Dierendonck & Nuitjen, 2011).

2.1.1. Empowerment

Empowerment is one of the most important dimensions of servant leadership (Greasley & Bocârnea, 2014; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), characterized by giving team members authority, responsibility, and trust so that they can perform their jobs effectively while promoting their learning, growth, and progress (Fitriyana et al., 2023; Van Winkle et al., 2014). When leaders demonstrate empowering behavior, they provide team members with all the necessary support, resources, and power to excel in their tasks. This approach shows the leader's commitment to helping team members achieve their full potential and contribute to the organization's success. According to Zhi (2024), empowerment creates a team environment where each member is treated with respect, valued, and driven toward success.

Zhi further explains that empowerment is essential in servant leadership as it creates a culture of trust. When leaders empower their team members, they demonstrate confidence in their abilities, thus enhancing relationships and accountability. Additionally, empowerment promotes innovation and creativity. The team members tend to take risks and develop innovative ideas when they feel empowered. This is supported by Van Winkle et al. (2014), who emphasize that the power of servant leaders lies in their ability to unleash the potential of their team members and consequently harness their collective power.

Studies demonstrated that empowerment in servant leadership in educational environments positively correlates with teachers' empowerment in terms of their talents, trust, and performance. Additionally, it fosters a culture of shared power and development inside educational institutions (Aneeqa, 2020). Van der Hoven (2014) and Van Winkle et al. (2014) also found a favorable correlation between supervisors' servant leadership actions and followers' perceptions of empowerment.

Standing Back

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The concept of standing back is based on the idea that effective leadership does not need leaders to be at the forefront of everything. Instead, they provide their team members the opportunity and freedom to take the lead on specific projects and find solutions. By stepping back, they show trust in their team, which may enhance their level of motivation or engagement.

Van Dierendonck (2011) emphasized that leaders who practice a servant leadership style, including the standing back dimension, develop an environment where employees feel appreciated and empowered to make significant contributions, which can lead to greater job satisfaction and a sense of ownership over one's work (Eslamdoust & Mahmoudinazlou, 2023). Standing back also helps leaders to build trust and collaboration with their team members. Research by Achen et al. (2019) supported this theory, emphasizing that servant leaders who adopt the "standing-back" style are more likely to build strong bonds with their staff, thereby raising commitment and engagement levels.

While many benefits are associated with the characteristic of standing back in servant leadership, there are some drawbacks to consider. Leaders need to strike a balance between involvement and disengagement, as excessive disengagement can make team members feel unsupported or uncertain about their roles (Majd, 2024; Masaki, 2020; Hector, 2018), which may potentially lead to increased professional isolation and burnout among employees (Eun et al., 2022). Effective servant leaders must be attuned to their team's needs and provide the right level of support while still encouraging independence and autonomy.

2.1.2. Accountability

Accountability in servant leadership extends not only to taking responsibility for one's actions but also to creating an atmosphere where everyone is held responsible for their contributions, rather than just following the rules and penalizing wrongdoing (Zhi, 2024). Zhi asserted that leaders who take responsibility for their actions set a good example for team members and encourage them to commit to the same goals. With such actions, team members will respect each other and have more trust, knowing they have someone they can count on to keep their promises.

Furthermore, accountability will help set high standards within the organization. When leaders and their team members are held accountable for their actions and performances, it becomes easier to identify the performance flaws that need to be addressed (Gadirajurrett, 2018; Williams, 2023; Jena, 2023). This continuous process of timely feedback may promote an environment of growth and development.

Trust within the organization can also be established and maintained if the servant leaders are genuinely committed to accountability. An accountable leader fosters an environment characterized by transparency and reliability, thereby paving the way for building trust among team members (Eslamdoust & Mahmoudinazlou, 2023). According to van Dierendonck (2011), accountability in servant leadership not only enhances the credibility of the leader but also increases employee ownership of their responsibilities, thereby strengthening the circle of trust within the organization. Hylenski (2023) also posits that a leader's strong commitment to accountability is crucial for establishing a culture where team members are valued and empowered, leading to increased collaboration and engagement. He further states that to implement accountability effectively in a servant leadership framework, leaders must define the goals, roles, and responsibilities of each team member, enabling them to understand how they can contribute to the attainment of the organization's goals.

2.1.3. Forgiveness

To establish solid connections, one must understand the concept of forgiveness. Forgiveness has the potential ability to repair and rebuild relationships, whether we offer or seek it (Fuller, 2022). It

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is an essential aspect of mending relationships and a crucial attribute for servant leaders to possess in order to connect with and support their employees genuinely. Not only should servant leaders be able to forgive, but perhaps even more crucially, they should be able to beg for forgiveness. Healing and creating a sense of community among followers depend on a servant leader's capacity and desire to forgive.

In addition, Tiwari et al. (2022) found that forgiveness is crucial to the effectiveness of how people perform and work together in organizations. It is connected to various aspects like company culture, team dynamics, and decision-making. According to their study, forgiveness enhances performance, improves communication, and boosts overall well-being. By helping to resolve conflicts and foster a positive work environment, forgiveness plays a crucial role in enabling both organizations and their people to thrive.

It is supported by a study conducted by Toussaint et al. (2016), wherein shows that forgiveness is linked to better work outcomes. Forgiving each other at work helps reduce stress from conflicts, which in turn improves health and productivity. Conflicts at work can harm both people's health and the organization's performance. While it is best to avoid conflicts, encouraging forgiveness is very helpful. It improves relationships, boosts well-being, and increases productivity. Moreover, it can save money and boost company profits.

Furthermore, an environment that facilitates forgiveness may promote experimentation, risk-taking, learning, and creativity, thereby fostering radical innovation and improving organizational performance (Domínguez-Escrig et al., 2018).

The study by Ruggiero (2020) also showed that encouraging people to seek and offer forgiveness helps maintain a positive workplace environment. Employees feel more supported and appreciated when they feel and see that their organization values forgiveness. Leaders should actively promote forgiveness by establishing clear procedures for handling conflicts and mistakes. Leaders can build a supportive and cooperative work environment by modeling forgiveness and creating guidelines for resolving issues,

Moreover, organizations can help by teaching leaders how to handle forgiveness wisely, hiring people with strong ethics, and creating a culture of integrity. For servant leaders, creating a forgiving environment is crucial to resolving conflicts, building trust, and maintaining a positive and productive workplace. (Cao, 2021).

However, forgiveness should not be given easily. If they are too quick to overlook issues, they may miss serious problems, such as unethical behavior, as stated by Lu et al. (2021). Thus, leaders must strike a balance in supporting forgiveness while upholding strong ethical standards.

2.1.4. Courage

Courage in leadership, as defined by Chapman (2020), is the ability to admit weaknesses, actively seek input from team members, and know when to step back from decision-making. It also refers to the leader's ability to confront fear, uncertainty, and challenges with confidence. According to Warren (2024), leaders who possess courage are not afraid to make mistakes, are transparent, and are committed to fostering an environment where team members feel safe voicing their ideas and concerns. This kind of leadership creates a culture of trust and accountability.

Courage plays a vital role in servant leadership by enabling leaders to choose vulnerability, prioritize others' needs, and demonstrate authenticity and trust, fostering effective leadership (Lopez, 2018; Jones & Davis, 2020; Schneider, 2014). This is supported by Nuckchady's (2016) narrative study, emphasizing that courage is essential for leaders to navigate challenges and inspire trust among their followers. Moreover, courageous leadership means empowering others. Warren

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(2024) emphasized that courageous leaders foster trust and courage, which entails relinquishing control and empowering team members to take ownership of their work. This helps team members build confidence and promotes a sense of shared responsibility for the outcomes. Leaders who encourage their team to take the initiative can cultivate an environment that recognizes and appreciates innovation and creativity.

2.1.5. Authenticity

When leaders are genuine and open, it has a significant, positive effect on how employees feel and function. Leaders who are trustworthy and honest create a work environment where people feel supported and valued, which in turn makes them happier, more fulfilled, and healthier. This kind of leadership also helps employees find a better balance between their work and personal lives, making it easier to manage both effectively.

When leaders are genuine and authentic, employees feel a stronger emotional connection to their workplace. This bond makes employees more committed to their jobs and encourages them to be more creative. Because they feel more engaged and valued, they perform better and contribute more effectively to the team. In simple terms, when leaders are real and honest, it makes the workplace feel more supportive and positive. Employees who feel genuinely valued and understood are more engaged and inspired, which in turn leads to enhanced creativity and performance (Duarte et al., 2021).

The findings of Samkari and David (2019) support the notion that when school leaders are genuine and true to themselves, it significantly boosts staff engagement and improves their performance. To make this happen, the study suggests that schools should focus on supporting and developing their leaders through proper motivation, training, and feedback. In other words, to get the best from their staff, schools need to foster and support authentic leadership.

Meanwhile, when leaders are open and sincere, it helps their team feel more at ease being themselves. When leaders are genuine and honest, it creates a welcoming and supportive atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable showing their true selves. This underscores the importance of leaders practicing authenticity, as it fosters a workplace where everyone can feel comfortable and genuine (Algarni, 2018).

2.1.6. Humility

Humility is essential for effective leadership and can manifest differently for each person. It helps leaders really connect with their teams. For some, it means listening well; for others, it means being open to learning or admitting mistakes. Regardless of how it appears, humility fosters a supportive and positive work environment. It fosters trust and strong relationships, making a difference regardless of how each leader demonstrates it (Lowrance, 2020).

Moreover, Sousa and Dierendonck (2017) found that humble leaders excel at connecting with their teams, regardless of their level. Leaders lower down can still be effective if they are action-driven, but for those higher up, being humble really enhances their strong, decisive approach. Humility, combined with a proactive approach, makes leaders more inspiring and practical.

It is supported by a study conducted by Ou et al. (2018), who also discovered that CEOs who were kind and supportive made their teams feel appreciated and included. This positive approach led to mid-level managers feeling more engaged and performing their jobs more effectively. Essentially, when leaders are humble, it benefits everyone at work, resulting in improved morale and enhanced performance.

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Furthermore, humble leaders help their followers feel more empowered and confident in their work. This effect is even more substantial when followers really connect with the leader's values and see a clear structure in their roles. Therefore, humility is not just a desirable quality in a leader; it is essential for enhancing team confidence and effectiveness (Jeung & Yoon, 2016).

Liu et al. (2021) supported this finding by demonstrating that humble leaders make a significant difference in the workplace. Their kindness and support help individual team members feel valued and perform better. Additionally, they enhance overall team confidence, resulting in improved team performance. This positive effect is even more substantial in teams with diverse viewpoints, where humble leaders can more easily recognize and appreciate each person's unique strengths. In such teams, humble leaders are better at recognizing and appreciating each member's unique strengths, which enables everyone to perform more effectively.

The study found that when leaders are humble, employees become more enthusiastic about their work, which in turn makes them more creative. It's like job engagement acts as a bridge: the more involved employees feel, the more their creativity is inspired by their humble leaders. Additionally, employees with strong psychological resources (like confidence and optimism) benefit even more from humble leadership, as their psychological capital strengthens the positive link between leader humility and creativity (Hafeez & Siddiqui, 2024).

2.1.7. Stewardship

Stewardship, a characteristic of a servant leader, is defined as the responsible and ethical management of resources to pass them on in better condition (Eva et al., 2019; Ong & Goyder, 2019). It begins with the leaders' willingness and determination to achieve the organization's goal by effectively utilizing and managing its human, financial, or environmental assets (Setliff, 2015). It emphasizes a sense of purpose toward the common good by sharing power, resources, and information to address complex issues (Boom et al., 2020). Moreover, it embodies the relational aspect where leaders demonstrate accountability and concern for their team members and the organization.

This perspective aligns with Greenleaf's (1970) foundational work on servant leadership, which emphasizes the leader's role in serving their followers and fostering a supportive environment. Leaders who embody stewardship accept responsibility for their actions and decisions while ensuring the best interests of their team and organization. This notion is supported by Okpala & Caldwell (2019), who emphasize that stewardship requires leaders to be accountable for the results of their leadership, thereby fostering trust and transparency within the organization.

Research indicates that effective stewardship in leadership has a positive impact on organizational effectiveness. Eslamdoust and Mahmoudinazlou (2023) found that steward-led organizations have higher rates of employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. This is because leaders who are stewards offer a conducive environment where their needs and those of the people are considered.

2.2. Impact of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction

Numerous studies have shown that job satisfaction is significantly influenced by various leadership styles. Wong (2019) found that servant leadership, which focuses on helping and supporting employees, significantly increases employee job satisfaction. In organizations that adopt servant leadership, a notable sense of purpose, community, selfless love, and genuine concern for the welfare of its members is established. Likewise, servant leaders create an enabling and caring work environment that fosters the well-being and growth of their team members (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2014). This supportive approach not only enhances employee satisfaction but also

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contributes significantly to the overall success of the organization (Eslamdoust & Mahmoudinazlou, 2023).

In the context of educational institutions, servant leaders utilize their influence to support all members of the school community, including students, teachers, and staff. By focusing on meeting the school's essential needs, servant leaders help the whole institution reach its goals and ensure that everyone feels valued and satisfied. When school leaders genuinely care for their teachers and attend to their needs, teachers are more likely to excel in their roles. This supportive and empathetic approach not only enhances teachers' job satisfaction but also ensures they feel both physically and emotionally fulfilled. Thus, the study found a strong and positive link between perceived servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction (Ahmad et al., 2023; Georgolopoulos et al., 2018).

When leaders genuinely care about their team's development, it leads to satisfied employees who perform better and feel more motivated (Sudiarti & Saepudin, 2024; El-Bayaa & Elsaman, 2022; Uktutias et al., 2022; Tischler et al., 2016). Employees who perceive themselves as having greater control over their work, feeling valued and empowered, experience not only increased job satisfaction but also an overall improvement in their well-being (Barmanpek, 2022). For organizations to keep their employees motivated and satisfied, it is crucial for leaders to lead with genuine warmth and understanding.

Previous studies have further revealed that servant leadership positively influences employees' job satisfaction, decreasing their intentions to leave the organization (Achen et al., 2019), and is more likely to establish a higher level of trust among employees (Liden et al., 2014).

2.3. Servant Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Servant leadership plays a crucial role in fostering employee commitment, motivation, and overall job satisfaction. Studies by Uktutias et al. (2022), Deno (2017), and Artha et al. (2023) underscore that servant leadership encourages a stronger emotional bond between employees and their organizations by promoting motivation, loyalty, and trust. This style of leadership does not directly impact performance, but rather enhances it indirectly by motivating employees and strengthening their organizational commitment. Furthermore, fostering a culture of recognition, autonomy, and trust — key components of servant leadership — can lead to a deeper sense of pride and responsibility among employees, which can significantly enhance both commitment and performance.

Additionally, research by Goh and Low (2013), Alfayad and Arif (2017), and Ariputra and Putra (2023) supports the idea that the collaborative and people-centered nature of servant leadership fosters higher job satisfaction and work commitment. When servant leaders demonstrate genuine care, prioritize their team's well-being, and create a more inclusive and empowering work environment, it increases employees' emotional investment in the organization. Vrcelj et al. (2022) further affirm that while servant leadership significantly influences organizational commitment (accounting for 69% of its variance), it has an even greater effect on job satisfaction, as it directly meets employees' emotional and interpersonal needs. Thus, adopting servant leadership can serve as a powerful strategy to cultivate a satisfied, loyal, and high-performing workforce.

Based on theoretical studies, a positive correlation exists between servant leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Hence, the following hypotheses are indicated:

1. Servant leadership has a positive, statistically significant effect on job satisfaction.

2. Servant leadership has a positive, statistically significant impact on organizational commitment.

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It is along the foregoing premise that this study was conducted to determine the impact of servant leadership on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees in private higher education institutions. Figure 1 presents the framework for this study. The servant leadership trait factors relevant to predicting job satisfaction and organizational commitment could have significant implications for higher education institutions in developing strategies to cultivate effective leaders within the organization.

Figure 1. Servant Leadership Framework

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design to describe respondents' perceptions of the impact of servant leadership traits on employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. According to Bhandari (2021), correlational research is a non-experimental method that seeks to determine the degree of association between two or more variables without manipulating them. It is helpful in examining relationships among naturally occurring variables to provide insights into patterns and predictive associations (Privitera, 2020). Since the study focused on examining how servant leadership traits relate to employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment, this method was deemed appropriate to establish and analyze such a relationship.

3.2. Participants

The study respondents were 454 employees, consisting of 158 managerial staff and 296 non-managerial employees from selected CHED-recognized private higher education institutions in Nueva Ecija, such as Wesleyan University-Philippines, College of the Immaculate Conception, General de Jesus College, Holy Cross Colleges Foundation, Inc., Good Samaritan Colleges, Divina Pastora College, MV Gallege Foundation Colleges, Inc., and Core Gateway College, Inc. To assess the perceptions of both administrative and regular employees regarding the servant leadership qualities exhibited by their leaders and the influence of servant leadership on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among different employee groups, this study involved two sets of respondents. First are the employees holding administrative or managerial positions for at least one year, and second are regular or non-managerial employees within selected accredited higher education institutions in Nueva Ecija that have been existing or operating for at least five years. Employees in temporary or contractual positions may be excluded from focusing on those with more stable employment status, as their perspectives may differ significantly from those of regular employees. Also, employees with less than six months of employment in their current role may be excluded to ensure that respondents have sufficient experience to provide informed opinions on leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

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3.3. Data Collection Tools

Servant Leadership Survey (SLS)

This study assessed the perceptions of employees regarding the servant leadership qualities exhibited by their leaders. The Servant Leadership Survey was used as the main instrument consisting of 30 items that cover eight key dimensions of servant leadership, which include empowerment (7 items), accountability (3 items), standing back (3 items), humility (5 items), authenticity (4 items), courage (2 items), forgiveness (3 items), and stewardship (3 items). Each item in the questionnaire is typically rated on a 7-point Likert scale. However, for this study, the instrument was adapted to a 4-point scale to align with the research context.

Previous studies that have employed the Servant Leadership Survey have often reported satisfactory internal consistency for the overall scale and its individual dimensions. For instance, studies may find Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.75 to 0.90, indicating good reliability.

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)

The employees' job satisfaction was assessed using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Paul Spector (1985). This survey measured job satisfaction across nine facets, including pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work, and communication. In this study, the items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Research has shown that the JSS exhibits strong internal consistency across its various dimensions. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the JSS is often reported to be above 0.90, indicating excellent reliability.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)

The organizational commitment of employees was measured using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Meyer et al. (1997). This instrument evaluates three components: the affective commitment (typically $\alpha > 0.80$), continuance commitment (generally $\alpha = 0.70–0.85$), and normative commitment ($\alpha \approx 0.70$). These values reflect satisfactory internal consistency across various studies.

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents to ensure the clarity, validity, and reliability of the instruments. The pilot focused particularly on the adapted Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) since the scale was modified from 7 points to 4 points. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine the questionnaire items and confirm their reliability before administration to the larger sample.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data gathered were sorted, tallied, and tabulated to render their congruence with the given specific problems. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, calculating measures such as means, medians, and standard deviations for the various dimensions of servant leadership and job satisfaction. Additionally, frequency distributions are generated to provide an overview of the trends in responses, allowing for the identification of patterns and areas of interest.

Moreover, correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between organizational commitment, job satisfaction results, and servant leadership, evaluating the direction and strength of the links between organizational commitment and job satisfaction metrics, as well as various servant leadership qualities, including stewardship, humility, empowerment, and authenticity. The degree of correlation between these variables was ascertained using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

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4. Results

Difference Between the Descriptions of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees in Terms of Servant Leadership Traits

To determine the difference, mean scores and variances were calculated based on the perceived servant leadership traits of the managers as assessed by the managers themselves (self-assessment) and by their subordinates. Table 1 presents these results.

Table 1. Descriptions of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees on Servant Leadership Traits

Servant Leadership	Managerial	Non-managerial
Mean	3.38	3.26
Variance	0.28	0.16
t-test	2.0017 Ns	
p-value	0.3436	

Ns = No significant difference

The table shows the means and variances of the administrators (3.38; 0.28) and employees (3.26; 0.16) in terms of their rating on the servant leadership traits in their institutions. Administrators have a higher mean rating. However, when subjected to a t-test, the difference is not significant, and therefore, there is no significant difference in their views of their servant leadership traits, which accepts the null hypothesis. This suggests that both the managers and employees share similar perceptions of servant leadership traits within their institutions. The presence of a shared view among both groups of respondents may indicate that the principles of servant leadership are being communicated and practiced effectively across different organizational levels, and therefore, can create a common understanding between administrators and employees.

Difference Between the Descriptions of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees in Terms of Their Job Satisfaction

Table 2 presents the descriptions of managerial and non-managerial employees regarding their levels of satisfaction.

Table 2. Descriptions of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees on Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	Managerial	Non-managerial
Mean	2.99	2.98
Variance	0.22	0.14
t-test	0.0985 Ns	
p-value	0.9220	

Ns = No significant difference

Table 2 presents the means and variances of the administrators (2.99; 0.22) and employees (2.98; 0.14) in terms of their rating of their job satisfaction. Although administrators have slightly higher mean ratings, the t-test results show that the difference is not significant, and therefore, we accept the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant difference in their views of job

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satisfaction. This implies that administrators and employees have similar levels of job satisfaction in the workplace.

Difference Between the Descriptions of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees in Terms of Organizational Commitment

Table 3 presents the descriptions of managerial and non-managerial employees regarding their organizational commitment.

Table 3. Descriptions of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees on Organizational Commitment

Organizational Commitment	Managerial	Non-managerial
Mean	2.70	2.71
Variance	0.22	0.14
t-test	2.0322 Ns	
p-value	0.9149	

Ns = No significant difference

Table 3 presents the mean scores and variances of the administrators (2.70; 0.22) and employees (2.71; 0.14) in terms of their ratings of organizational commitment. While employees reported a slightly higher mean score, the difference was not statistically significant based on the t-test results. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating no significant difference in organizational commitment between administrators and employees.

Correlation Analysis Between the Servant Leadership Traits and Employees' Job Satisfaction

To determine the relationship between the perceived servant leadership traits of managers and employee job satisfaction, Pearson correlation was computed as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Between Servant Leadership Traits and Employees' Job Satisfaction

CORRELATION	EMPLOYEES' JOB SATISFACTION								
SERVANT LEADERSHIP TRAITS	Pay	Promotion	Supervision	Fringe Benefit	Contingent Reward	Operating Conditions	Co-worker	Nature of Work	Communication
Empowerment (r- value)	.091	.098	.117	.101	.162*	.002	.170*	.276**	.235**
p-value	.254	.219	.145	.207	.042	.984	.033	.000	.003
Standing Back (r- value)	.076	.162*	.153	.091	-.004	.008	.146	.240**	.251**
p-value	.343	.041	.054	.255	.961	.923	.067	.002	.001
Accountability (r -value)	.249**	.252**	.192*	.118	.025	-.022	.130	.384**	.337**
p-value	.002	.001	.016	.140	.759	.780	.103	.000	.000
Forgiveness (r- value)	.074	.042	.074	.025	.292**	.177*	.135	-.309**	-.180*
p-value	.354	.600	.356	.753	.000	.026	.090	.000	.023
Courage (r- value)	-.056	.033	.097	-.017	.274**	.188*	.045	-.034	-.096
p-value	.486	.684	.227	.830	.001	.018	.574	.673	.232
Authenticity (r- value)	.291**	.310**	.183*	.319**	.415**	.267**	.224**	.174*	.170*

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p-value	.000	.000	.021	.000	.000	.001	.005	.029	.032
Humility (r- value)	.227**	.193*	.235**	.239**	.105	.054	.099	.333**	.229**
p-value	.004	.015	.003	.003	.191	.499	.214	.000	.004
Stewardship (r- value)	.166*	.189*	.216**	.195*	.130	.103	.179*	.323**	.156
p-value	.037	.017	.007	.014	.103	.197	.024	.000	.050

**Correlation is significant @ 0.05 level; **correlation is significant @ 0.01 level*

The correlation table shows the significant relationship that exists between servant leadership traits and employees' job satisfaction. Empowerment, as one of the servant leadership traits, is significantly related to employees' job satisfaction as to contingent reward (r=.162*), co-worker (r=.170*), nature of work (r=.276**), and communication. Meanwhile, standing back is significantly related to employees' job satisfaction in terms of promotion (r=.162*), nature of work (r=.240**), and communication (r=.251**). This means that this trait of servant leadership is linked with the promotion, nature of work, and communication of employees.

Further, accountability of servant leaders is significantly related to the employees' pay (r=.249**), promotion (r=.252**), supervision (r=.192*), nature of work (r=.384**), and communication (r=.337**). Meanwhile, forgiveness is significantly related to the employees' job satisfaction as to their contingent rewards (r=.292**), operating conditions (r=.177*), nature of work (r=-.309**), and communication (r=-.180*). This implies that the forgiveness of a leader is significantly linked with their employees' rewards, operating conditions, nature of work, and communication.

Correlation Analysis Between the Servant Leadership Traits and Employees' Organization Commitment

Table 5 presents the results of the Pearson correlation between servant leadership traits and employees' organizational commitment.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Between Servant Leadership Traits and Employees' Organizational Commitment

CORRELATION	ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT		
SERVANT LEADERSHIP TRAITS	Affective	Continuance	Normative
Empowerment (r- value)	.150	.057	.129
p-value	.061	.481	.106
Standing Back (r- value)	.141	.073	.132
p-value	.078	.365	.100
Accountability (r -value)	-.014	.117	.149
p-value	.865	.144	.061
Forgiveness (r- value)	.135	.132	-.022
p-value	.090	.098	.784
Courage (r- value)	-.002	-.036	.017
p-value	.981	.656	.835
Authenticity (r- value)	.194*	.061	.189*

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p-value	.015	.448	.018
Humility (r- value)	-.023	.088	.190*
p-value	.773	.270	.017
Stewardship (r- value)	.050	.017	.151
p-value	.535	.828	.058

**Correlation is significant @ 0.05 level*

Among the eight traits of servant leaders, authenticity and humility are significantly related to employees' organizational commitment, particularly their normative commitment (r=.189*; r=.190*). This means that the more authentic and humble a servant leader is, the higher the employees' normative commitment to their organization. Moreover, authenticity is also related to affective commitment (r=.194*). This means that authentic leaders are more likely to develop affective commitment among their employees.

5. Discussion

Difference in Perceptions of Servant Leadership Traits Between Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees

The results showed that the respondents generally perceived their supervisors as exhibiting strong servant leadership qualities. The combined weighted mean for the overall assessment of servant leadership traits was high, indicating a strong agreement that supervisors effectively embody servant leadership. Empowerment emerged as a particularly salient strength, with an overall weighted mean of 3.60, (strongly agree). Employees indicated that supervisors provide necessary information, encourage the use of talents, invite new ideas, and support personal and professional development. These align with Pham (2023), who emphasizes that effective leaders foster environments conducive to growth and talent utilization, which in turn enhance employee satisfaction and strengthen organizational commitment (Eslamdoust & Mahmoudinazlou, 2023; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2015).

Similarly, accountability scored well with a combined WM of 3.63, indicating that both administrators and employees view it as a critical trait for effective leadership and for cultivating a climate of responsibility and trust. In contrast, forgiveness and courage received comparatively lower ratings. This pattern suggests that while leaders in the institution emphasize performance and responsibility, there is less focus on refraining mistakes as learning opportunities or on encouraging risk-taking and principled dissent. This imbalance reflects a potential gap in leadership development, and though accountability and responsibility are valued, the underemphasis on courage may limit openness, innovation, and ethical resilience within the organization.

Recent studies underscore the consequences of this pattern and imbalance. Brown and Treviño (2022) argue that courageous leaders inspire followers to view things differently and question norms, thereby fostering an environment where innovation and ethical voice thrive. Their findings also reveal that when leaders portray a sense of courage, they not only proclaim a readiness for risk but also embolden employees to share their ideas and concerns without fear of reprisal or backlash. Houghton and Yoho (2021) further emphasize that courage in leadership can help institutions navigate the complex and uncertain environments they face, as leaders can make tougher, more difficult decisions and inspire their teams to be positive about change. However, when courage is lacking, organizations may become risk-adverse, overly rigid and less adaptive to changing environments. These findings suggest that that the institution's leadership culture, while strong in

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accountability, may risk overlooking the transformative role of courage in sustaining organizational learning, trust, and adaptability.

Stewardship was likewise found to be not fully internalized. Although leaders may act in the best interests of the team in terms of recognition and rewards, the findings suggest that their own need for recognition sometimes influences their actions and decisions. This aligns with Tyukhtenko and Garafonova (2022), who emphasize that effective leaders must balance personal desire for recognition with promoting team achievements. Such duality underscores that leaders may not explicitly seek personal rewards, yet they remain influenced by underlying motivations that affect how they respond to their team's accomplishments. Previous studies affirm that organizational culture plays a significant role in shaping this dynamic. According to Paredes-Saavedra et al. (2022) and Achen et al. (2019), servant leadership fosters a culture that prioritizes collective success over individual recognition, improving collaboration and team performance, and increasing employee satisfaction and motivation. The present study shows that establishing an organizational culture that intentionally cultivates stewardship within the organizations can create an environment where leaders' actions are guided less by recognition-driven motives and more by a genuine commitment to collective success.

Job Satisfaction of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees

The findings reveal that both administrators and employees reported similar levels of job satisfaction in the workplace, with little difference in ratings due to several interrelated factors. Research suggests that a strong organizational culture that prioritizes equal working conditions and support systems may lead to a shared view of job satisfaction among employees. For instance, Bostancı et al. (2024) emphasized that administrative support directly improves job satisfaction for both teachers and administrators, noting that equality and fairness help establish an effective work environment where all employees feel valued and satisfied. Similarly, Eva et al. (2019) highlighted that open channels of communication within the organization cultivate a sense of belongingness among employees, thereby increasing their level of satisfaction.

The organization's prevailing leadership style also emerged as an important determinant of employee satisfaction. Empirical studies have consistently shown that the quality of principals' leadership has a positive impact on teachers' and administrators' job satisfaction (Suazo and Villocino, 2023). Likewise, supportive leadership behaviors, through the utilization of the servant leadership approach, were found to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Erturk, 2022; Kazimi et al., 2023; Von Fischer & De Jong, 2017). These findings confirm the pivotal role of servant leadership in fostering a supportive and fulfilling work environment.

Coversely, the study also underscores factors that lessen job satisfaction. Employees who feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities but do not receive adequate support from the organization often experience frustration, burnout, and disengagement. The lack of adequate recognition and reward systems further contributes to dissatisfaction and lower motivation (Jalal Hanaysha, 2016). Role ambiguity is another factor that influences low job satisfaction. Kahah et al. (2019) emphasize that when people are unclear about the expectations surrounding their work and even the role they are supposed to perform, employees develop feelings of inadequacy, frustration and disengagement ultimately diminishing their sense of purpose and satisfaction toward their work. Unlike previous studies that often focused on a single group, this study demonstrates how both administrators and employees perceived job satisfaction across leadership roles can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence fulfillment in the workplace. These findings highlight that workplace satisfaction is shaped by a balance between supportive organizational practices and the alleviation of demotivating factors. The present study further adds to the field by emphasizing the need for a more holistic approach to addressing this and must always consider the diverse needs of

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both administrators and employees in order to create an environment that will promote fulfillment and satisfaction for all.

Organizational Commitment of Managerial and Non-Managerial Employees

The study's findings both confirm and extend prior research on organizational commitment. Consistent with Goh and Low (2014) who emphasized that organizational commitment is central to achieving long-term institutional objectives since committed employees are more likely to give their best, go above and beyond their job description, and remain loyal to the organization. The reported comparable levels of organizational commitment of the administrators and employees suggest a shared sense of responsibility and attachment to the institution. However, prior studies reported discrepancies in the levels of organizational commitment of both the administrators and employees. Akram et al. (2016) reported that secondary school principals in Punjab, Pakistan, demonstrated significantly higher levels of servant leadership and organizational commitment than their subordinates. Principals view themselves as servants who empower staff, support subordinates, and prioritize their opinions. Özgenel (2020) likewise found that teachers generally exhibit lower organizational commitment than school administrators because they value work-life quality more critically or experienced higher dissatisfaction in the institution. Yasin and Khalid, (2015); Gunawan and Amalia (2015) further stressed that the quality of work life significantly influences organizational commitment, helping to counteract negative feelings and improve employee performance.

The present study contributes a new perspective to the field by showing that organizational commitment is achieved through the development of a supportive and inclusive work culture that fosters belonginess, shared values and collective goals. This extends existing knowledge by emphasizing that strategies that cultivate servant leadership and creating a sense of inclusion and engagement can equalize levels of organizational commitment among employees which in turn promotes institutional sustainability and collective success.

Relationship Between Servant Leadership Traits and Employees' Job Satisfaction

The study revealed a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership traits and job satisfaction. Among these traits, empowerment, standing back, accountability, and forgiveness demonstrated the strongest associations with increased levels of job satisfaction. These findings suggest that when leaders empower their subordinates, allow them to take initiative (standing back), hold themselves and others accountable, and demonstrate a willingness to forgive mistakes, employees are more likely to feel valued, supported, and satisfied in their roles.

The findings align with those of Tuhumury et al. (2023) and Puni et al. (2018), who found that employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment from their leaders report greater satisfaction with their work, stronger relationships with coworkers, and improved communication within the organization. Similarly, studies in the education sector have revealed that psychological empowerment, based on the needs for autonomy, competence, and influence in decision-making processes, has a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction (Sule, 2023; Tuhumury et al., 2023; Miao et al., 2020). The present study confirms these findings by highlighting that empowerment fosters workplace satisfaction and deeper engagement within the organization.

Standing back also emerged as an important predictor of job satisfaction. Leaders who step back and allow their team members to take ownership of their work enhance their motivation, career aspirations, and satisfaction (Yulia & Safa'atillah, 2023; Deng, 2022). Maxwell (2022) noted that servant leaders who adopt a supportive, hands-off approach and step back to allow team members to be acknowledged for their contributions have a positive effect on team's satisfaction and intentions for career growth and development. Similarly, Aggarwal et al. (2020) found that employees become more engaged and satisfied with a leader who never seeks attention for himself but rather

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gives prominence to others' contributions. This is reinforced by Langhof and Güldenberg's (2020) systematic review, which indicates that servant leadership behaviors, such as standing back, are consistently linked with job satisfaction. Chan and Mak (2014) further noted that standing back enhances trust and communication, which are two relational dimensions that increase job satisfaction. The present study extends these findings by highlighting that stepping back is an essential leadership behavior that fosters recognition, trust, and growth among employees.

Accountability was likewise demonstrated to have a strong association with job satisfaction. Chan and Mak (2014) found that employees who perceive their leaders accountable develop strong relationships with them, which in turn fosters a high level of motivation to pursue career advancement opportunities within the organization. This strong relationship fosters trust and enhances communication, both of which are crucial for improving employee satisfaction and performance. The present study reinforces this view showing that accountability in servant leadership involves building transparent and supportive relationships that drive motivation and satisfaction.

Overall, the findings suggest that servant leadership traits, including empowerment, standing back, accountability, and forgiveness, play a significant role in enhancing job satisfaction. The study contributes to the field by emphasizing the combined impact of servant leadership traits, rather than focusing on a single dimension, and understanding how these servant leadership traits strengthen both individual fulfillment and organizational outcomes.

Relationship Between Servant Leadership Traits and Employees' Organizational Commitment

The study found that among the eight servant leadership traits, authenticity and humility were significantly associated with employees' normative commitment. This suggests that the more authentic and humble a servant leader is, the higher the employees' sense of obligation and loyalty to their organization becomes. Additionally, authenticity was found to be positively associated with affective commitment, suggesting that authentic leaders can foster stronger emotional bonds between employees and the organization. When employees perceive their leaders as genuine and transparent, they are more likely to feel connected, valued, and emotionally invested in their work environment.

The result aligns with and supports the findings of previous research, which have consistently shown the positive influence of authenticity and humility on organizational commitment. Studies by Azmy and Mauludi (2024), Vrcelj et al. (2022), Duarte et al. (2021), Levesque-Côté et al. (2021), Hadian Nasab and Afshari (2019), and Ausar et al. (2016) all confirmed that humble and authentic leadership strengthens organizational commitment. Park, Kim, & Lee (2024) likewise emphasized that humility and authenticity, as traits of servant leadership foster a strong sense of obligation and loyalty to the organization, thereby enhancing their normative commitment. This is further supported by Ribeiro et al. (2018), who demonstrated that such commitment can enhance performance outcomes and organizational profitability. Additionally, Aggarwal et al. (2020) noted that high normative commitment can reduce turnover rates even when employees encounter workplace problems or better job opportunities outside the organization.

Additionally, the study emphasizes that leaders who model humility and authenticity can cultivate an environment of trust through their transparent and ethical behavior. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to internalize the organization's values and culture, resulting in increased normative and affective commitment (Gonzales et al., 2024).

The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that authenticity and humility, when embedded within the framework of servant leadership, simultaneously enhance both normative and affective commitment. While previous studies confirmed their independent effects, the present

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study shows that these traits work synergistically to enhance a sense of duty and an emotional attachment to the organization. To promote stronger and more sustainable employee commitment, it is critical to cultivate authenticity and humility in the institution's leadership development programs.

6. Conclusion

There are varying levels of satisfaction across several dimensions, including promotion, supervision, co-workers, and nature of work. While employees expressed a high level of satisfaction with their coworkers and immediate supervisors, they also indicated that opportunities for advancement are limited and that they experience excessive workloads. Additionally, employees exhibited a moderate to high degree of commitment to their organizations. In terms of affective commitment, they exhibit a strong emotional attachment and a sense of belonging in their workplace, which contributes to their high level of commitment and engagement. However, they reported a moderate level of continuance commitment, indicating that employees recognize a sense of obligation and the potential costs of leaving the organization, which strengthens their resolve to stay with the organization.

There is also a strong and multifaceted relationship between various traits of servant leadership, such as empowerment, standing back, accountability, forgiveness, courage, and employee job satisfaction. The servant leadership traits, particularly authenticity and humility, have a significant effect on employees' organizational commitment, specifically their normative assessment and affective commitment.

7. Suggestion

In light of the findings, the study recommends strengthening employee support through recognition, fair compensation, transparent promotion processes, and open communication, while advancing leadership effectiveness through targeted training and mentorship. Taken as an integrated approach, these strategies foster empowerment, authenticity, and ethical leadership, strengthen employee commitment, and improve organizational effectiveness across contexts. Policy makers and educational institutions are encouraged to devise programs that institutionalize these practices, thereby promoting sustainable, people-centered organizations. Moreover, future longitudinal studies are recommended to capture better the long-term effects of servant leadership on employee outcomes.

Declarations

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