

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

Volume 9

Issue 1 Winter/Spring 2016

Article 8

January 2016

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Recommended Citation

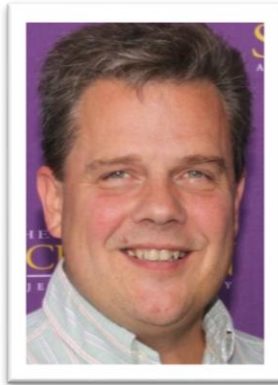
Tischler, Len; Giambatista, Robert; McKeage, Robert; and McCormick, David (2016) "Servant Leadership and its Relationships with Core Self-Evaluation and Job Satisfaction," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <http://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol9/iss1/8>

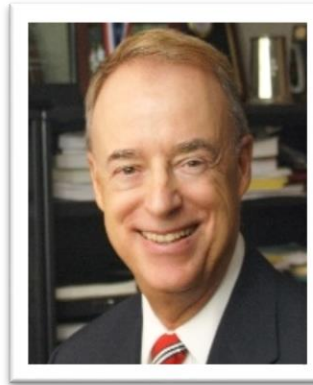
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Servant Leadership and its Relationships with Core Self-Evaluation and Job Satisfaction

Abstract

Servant leadership is a growing topic in the leadership literature. Our study considered servant leadership's relationship to two outcomes, core self-evaluation and job satisfaction. The former is particularly noteworthy because if servant leadership predicts core self-evaluation this would confirm that servant leadership affects important changes in employees as people, a central tenet of servant leadership. In addition, if servant leadership predicts core self-evaluation, this could add to the question of whether core self-evaluation is a non-changeable personality trait or is potentially malleable. We conducted a field study of three firms and found that servant leadership predicts both core self-evaluation and job satisfaction, and that core self-evaluation also predicts job satisfaction. This study contributes to servant leadership, and in general to values-based leadership, by observing a predictive relationship to core self-evaluation, which potentially adds new information about the impact servant leadership can have on individuals. This study confirms the findings of previous authors who found that servant leadership predicts job satisfaction.

Introduction

Servant leadership is not a new idea; it is a tenet of many religions and of Lau Tzu, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and many others (Valeri, 2007). In modern times, in the business world, it began with Robert Greenleaf's (1970) article, "The Servant as Leader," and his subsequent formation of a center to promote and teach this form of leadership (Spears, 1995). The underlying notion is that there is a continuum of leadership values ranging from those who are servants first versus leaders first. The difference is in the values held and related actions of the leaders.

Leaders-first leaders tend to look up toward larger roles and gains for themselves and their organizations. Transactional and authoritarian leaders are styles of leadership of this type (Bass, 1985). These leaders tend to distrust their employees' desires to perform their jobs well. They tend to lead through a clear chain of command, motivate using rewards and punishment, closely monitor their employees' behaviors and output, and expect employees to follow orders without much questioning. Agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) is consistent with this viewpoint because many of these types of leaders tend to blur the lines between personal and organizational success and to sometimes choose the former over the latter. This viewpoint also presumes that followers might focus more on personal than organizational gain, and without supervision and monitoring the followers will often do so. Leaders-first leadership styles (top-down, of a dominion-over-others nature) have been the most common style of organizational leadership over the centuries (Weber, 1964). The values of these leaders include that leaders are the main people who have ideas and that employees need supervision and extrinsic motivation.

Although servant-first leaders also work toward organizational success, they primarily emphasize the growth and well-being of their followers and communities. Spears (1995) and others consider the following to be characteristics of servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. Servant leaders tend to emphasize vision, integrity, honesty, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment (Russell & Stone, 2002). These attributes and behaviors "...grow out of the values and core beliefs of the individual leaders" (Russell & Stone, 2002).

Several styles of leadership share some of the traits and values of servant leaders. For example, *transformational* leaders give their followers individualized consideration (support, encouragement), motivate them by articulating a clear vision, and encourage their intellectual stimulation (challenge, creativity, learning) (Bass, 1985). *Authentic* leaders are self-aware, lead with their heart, and lead more for the long term, which allows for concern for the growth of followers (Kruse, 2013). *Ethical* leaders emphasize following core values, a vision that includes service to others, practicing virtuous behaviors, and animating and motivating others through these practices (Center for Ethical Leadership, 2014).

Servant leaders go further than the other styles of leaders in emphasizing the development and well-being of their followers as whole people, not just professionally (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Although not emphasized in existing servant leadership instruments, servant leaders are supposed to also attempt to be of benefit to society. For example, Greenleaf (1970) wrote:

The best test [of servant leadership], and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 6)

Existing servant leadership literature has established many positive outcomes, including employee job satisfaction and productivity (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008), but

our study focuses on an outcome variable that has not, to our knowledge, been directly tested in the field: core self-evaluation. We chose this outcome because we believe it is a key process that is both likely to be affected by servant leadership, and which in turn has been linked to many desirable individual and organizational outcomes.

In this study, we first summarize some of the ways that leader behavior and organizational culture/climate impact followers. We then discuss the servant leadership literature and existing findings from this literature. We move to discussing our dependent variables, core self-evaluation and job satisfaction. We hypothesize that servant leadership enhances both and that job satisfaction also varies with core self-evaluations. We present findings from a field study conducted at three firms that provides supporting evidence for these hypotheses, and close with a discussion of our findings and their implications for servant leadership and for practice.

Literature Review

Impact on Followers of Related Leader Behavior and Style

We could find no studies where leadership theories proximal to servant leadership directly predicted core self-evaluation (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997), so we expanded our review of the literature. Before progressing, it is worth noting that core self-evaluation is a self-concept measure that has four components: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. We will review core self-evaluation shortly but in this section we italicize outcomes proximal to these components. While it is beyond the scope of any one paper to summarize the leader behavior literature generally, leadership models proximal to servant leadership have been found to positively relate to outcomes proximal to core self-evaluation's outcomes. For example, transformational leadership has been found to be positively and significantly associated with employees' productivity (Qing, Newman & Lamb, 2012; Thamrin, 2012), career success and work engagement (Vincent-Harper, Muser, & Janneck, 2012), and getting "...followers to transcend their self-interest for the benefit of their company..." (Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014). Also, both servant leadership and transformational leadership are positively related to organizational commitment and work engagement; servant leadership through follower *need satisfaction* and transformational leadership through perceived leadership effectiveness (van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, 2014). In fact, some are now combining the two leadership approaches into "transformational servant leadership" (Peregrym & Wolff, 2013).

Positive findings have also been noted for leader-member exchange theory. For example, behaviors such as supporting, delegating and leading by example most impact the quality of leader-member relationships (O'Donnell, Yukl, & Taber, 2012), and that high quality leader-member exchange relationships increase productivity (Cogliser, Schriesheim, Scandura, & Gardner, 2009).

Other literature has found that emotionally perceptive leaders enhance employees' job performance (Vidhyarthi, Anand & Liden, 2014), that perceived behavioral integrity of managers influences employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with the leader (Davis & Rothstein, 2006), that ethical leadership increases employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Yates, 2014), and that

authentic leaders "...improve their followers' positive psychological capital; their *self-esteem* ... hope ... trust ... resiliency ... and optimism. Authentic leadership has been theorized to be related to *intrinsic motivation*..." (Cerne, Jaklic & Skerlavaj, 2014, p. 67).

There are various mechanisms, mediators, and moderators through which leader behavior and/or style can affect subordinates. For example, Liden, et.al. (2008) wrote:

Leadership research over the past few decades has suggested that the relationships employees develop with their leaders are critical for understanding the way in which employees can fulfill their potential and become self-motivated (Manz & Sims, 1987). When leaders nurture self-efficacy and self-motivation and stress community involvement, employees in turn become more committed to organizational values (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), are more willing to maintain high performance levels (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), and are more likely to model their leaders' concern for the community in which the organization operates (p. 162).

Liaw, Chi and Chuang (2010) found that employee-perceived supervisor support directly and indirectly enhanced employees' customer orientation. Ghadi, Fernando and Caputi (2013) found that meaning in work partially moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010) found that work engagement fully mediated the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Dvir, Eden, Avolio, and Shamir (2002) found that transformational leadership had positive impacts on follower development and particularly follower *empowerment and self-efficacy* as measured through taking a critical-independent approach. This logic and method is also consistent with an internalized *locus of control*.

Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumba (2005) theorized that authentic leaders, primarily through positive modeling, increase follower self-awareness such as values, identity, and motives, as well as increasing authentic follower behavior and follower workplace well-being. They also argued that an inclusive and ethical organizational climate facilitated such relationships.

House and Shamir (1993) argued that the linkage of a follower's *self-esteem* with a leader's goals are central to charismatic leadership. Similarly, Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) theorized that charismatic leadership benefits follower *self-esteem and self-efficacy*.

These studies are indicative of and consistent with the idea, expounded in the current study, that the dynamics of servant leadership should have positive effects on the four elements of core self-evaluation. While these studies are not directly measuring core self-evaluation, they are also consistent with the many scholars who believe concepts such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, empowerment and positive affect have malleable components, and that while they may also have personality-related elements, they can be developed through a follower-centric approach to leadership.

Organizational Culture/Climate Impact on Employees

Servant leadership is more than the values and actions of an individual leader; it can also characterize the culture or climate of a firm. To cite just a few examples:

Fang (2007) found in a meta analysis that a constructive organizational culture positively affects nurses' job satisfaction at the $p < .001$ level and the relationship is stable over time. Mahal (2009) reported that organizational culture affects employees' motivation. Harwicki (2013) found that servant leadership influenced both the organization's culture and employee performance, and that the organization's culture influenced employee performance. Pierce and Gardner (2004) developed the concept of organization-based self-esteem to describe feelings of self-esteem derived from an individual's workplace experience and context.

Taken together, diverse findings from leadership and culture suggest that the values and actions of servant leaders and firms that embed servant leadership into their culture might provide many desirable outcomes for employees. In fact, Liden, Wayne, Liao, and Meuser (2014) found exactly this: a serving culture positively influences individual and unit performance, employee creativity, and customer service behaviors, and negatively influences turnover intentions.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was only a theory and the subject of leadership training before 1999. In addition to Greenleaf (1970), noted above, the topic of servant leadership has been written about by a number of well-known authors in the business field, including Blanchard (2006), Covey (1994), and Senge (1997). In addition to the defining elements of servant leadership noted in the Introduction, "[t]he very concept of servant leadership is based on the values of humility and respect for others. The primary functional elements of servant leadership grow out of proper leadership values" (Russell, 2001).

More recently, empirical studies have found that servant leadership is positively and significantly related to many outcome variables at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Laub's (1999) dissertation created the first scale for measuring servant leadership. Using this scale in work organizations, servant leadership has been positively related to, e.g., job satisfaction, overall and intrinsic (Chu, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Svoboda, 2008), public secondary school performance (Herbst, 2003; Lambert, 2004), teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cerit, 2009; Cerit, 2010), school climate (Black, 2008), team effectiveness (Irving, 2005; Irving & Longbotham, 2007), LMX-7 (leader-member exchange in-group) (Freitas, 2003), organizational and leader trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005), organizational climate (Lambert, 2004), job safety (Krebs, 2005), lower absenteeism and attrition (Rauch, 2007), and individual spirituality (Beazley, 2002; Herman, 2010).

Several subsequent scales for servant leadership have been created since Laub's (1999) and have found similar outcomes. In addition, Liden, et.al. (2008) and Harwicki (2013) found servant leadership correlated with individual job performance. Sen & Pekerti (2010) found that servant leadership engenders trust in followers mainly through the behaviors of covenantal relationship (close bonds with followers), post-conventional morality, and personally transforming influence. Murari & Gupta (2012) found that the foresight,

persuading, awareness, and stewardship aspects of servant leadership increase employee empowerment. They also found that stewardship, persuading and conceptualizing aspects of servant leadership increase organizational commitment, work environment satisfaction, and job involvement. In addition to the consequences and actions typical of servant leaders, Washington, Sutton, & Feild (2006) empirically found that “[f]ollowers' ratings of leaders' servant leadership were positively related to followers' ratings of leaders' values of empathy, integrity, and competence” (p. 700). This would give us a model that a leader's values lead to a leader's actions, which lead to results for employees and their organizations.

Overall, findings for servant leadership are both promising and robust across many outcome variables and scales.

Core Self-evaluation

Core self-evaluation (CSE) purports to portray a person's fundamental self-concept (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). Judge, et.al. (1997) advanced core self-evaluation as a relatively stable cluster of four related personality traits: generalized self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, (internal) locus of control, and (low) neuroticism. These traits are measured separately in some studies and as a composite in other studies, for the latter often using the twelve-item Core Self-evaluation Scale (CSES) instrument (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003) used in this study. Although, theoretically, core self-evaluation can be looked at either as “...a broad, latent trait that is the common source of the four specific traits...” (Judge, Erez, et.al., 2003, p. 304) or as an aggregate score derived from the four traits (Johnson, Rosen, & Levy, 2008), core self-evaluation produces similar results regardless of which way it is conceived or measured.

While Judge et al. (1997) and others have argued that core self-evaluation is a stable personality trait (Dormann, Fay, Zapf, & Frese, 2006), others contend that core self-evaluation is malleable and can change slowly over time or with immediate experiences. For example, Styvaert (2011) found that core self-evaluation gradually changes over time. Kernis and Goldman (2002, p. 106) reviewed the literature on the variability of generalized self-esteem and found that “Self-concept and self-esteem are ... influenced by contextual factors such as feedback, the presence of others, and role salience.” Variability can be long-term (gradual changes over years) or short-term: “...influenced by potentially self-relevant events that are externally provided (e.g., a compliment or insult) or self-generated (reflecting on one's appearance) ...” (p. 114).

Bandura (1982) named four sources of generalized self-efficacy: enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional or psychological arousal. All four of these sources can be influenced by an immediate boss and an organization's culture. For example, on-the-job training and coaching can increase enactive mastery; seeing others in the workplace being effective in general, and seeing that the culture rewards that (vicarious experience), can influence an employee's self-efficacy; bosses and co-workers giving positive feedback and coaching (verbal persuasion) can also influence an employee's self-efficacy; as can pride in the company or unit in which one works (psychological arousal). These actions of leaders and co-workers are what we would expect from a servant leader. Although short-term changes in the workplace will rarely

affect generalized self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) notes that continued mastery of specific tasks over time will lead to an increase in generalized self-efficacy.

Deci and Ryan (1987) found that operating in a highly controlled environment can lead a person to increasingly depend on interpersonal feedback related to the standards and expectations of that environment. That is, they create a contingent self-evaluation. Transactional leaders tend to lead controlled environments much more than transformational and servant leaders. Liden, Panaccio, Meuser, Hu, and Wayne (2012, p. 370) contend that, "...servant leadership behaviors are most likely to positively influence self-esteem and self-efficacy."

We concur with the above scholars, and believe organizational variables such as servant leadership can influence core self-evaluation. We would not argue that core self-evaluation is as malleable as attitudes or moods, but rather that core self-evaluation can, over time, be enhanced somewhat through the transformative experience of working for a servant leader and/or in an organization with a climate of servant leadership, and negatively modified in a more hierarchically controlled (leader-first) work environment. The previously cited articles theorizing leadership's relationships to constructs such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and empowerment suggest that many mainstream leadership scholars hold similar views.

When measured separately, a meta-analysis determined that core self-evaluation traits are positively and significantly related to job performance, ranging from .19 to .26, and job satisfaction, ranging from .24 - .45 (Judge & Bono, 2001). The former is approximately equal to the correlations of conscientiousness, which, until core self-evaluation, was "...suggested as the primary dispositional predictor of job performance" (Judge & Bono, 2001). Further, the CSES composite score, "...demonstrate[s] incremental predictive validity..." compared with "...several well-established measures of individual differences..." (Rode, Judge, & Sun, 2012). This includes the Big Five instrument (Costa & McCrae, 1992) as well as "...three self-focused individual difference constructs ... on a broad range of job performance facets ... and job attitude measures..." in the US and China. (Rode, Judge, & Sun, 2012).

Core self-evaluation has been found related to in-role and extra-role job performance or employee productivity (Chang, Ferris, Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012; Erez & Judge, 2001; Joo, Jeung, & Yoon, 2010; Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge et.al., 2003; Judge, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2004; Kacmar, Collins, Harris, & Judge, 2009;), job satisfaction (Bono & Judge, 2003; Chang, et al., 2012; Dormann, et al., 2006; Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998; Judge, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2004), employee engagement and job involvement (Shorbagi, Messarra, & Karkoulia, 2011; Yan & Su, 2013), and reduced effects of individuals' stress at work (Brunborg, 2008; Harris, Harvey, & Kacmar, 2009). In addition, a leader's core self-evaluation is apparently related to transformational leadership (Quigley, 2003), another values-based style of leadership which shares many traits and behaviors with servant leadership.

Finally, several scholars have explored the mechanisms through which core self-evaluation affects job performance. Erez & Judge (2001), Joo, Jeung, & Yoon (2010), and Judge, Van Vianen, & De Pater (2004) found that motivation mediates the relationship between core self-evaluation and performance, accounting for up to half of

the impact of core self-evaluation on performance. In addition, Erez & Judge (2001) found that goal-setting motivation, which leads to higher activity level at work, moderates and increases the core self-evaluation - performance relationship. Kacmar, et.al. (2009) similarly found positive relationships such that for those with high core self-evaluation, high perceived leader effectiveness and low perceived organizational politics moderate the core self-evaluation -performance relationship. Grant & Wrzesniewski (2010) found that other-oriented persons (high pro-social behaviors, agreeableness and duty) moderate and intensify the core self-evaluation -performance relationship.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been studied extensively and in many contexts. The four sections above demonstrate that leader values, behaviors, and attitudes, organizational climate, servant leadership, and core self-evaluation can each significantly affect job satisfaction. We are measuring job satisfaction mainly as a control variable to be sure that (a) we are measuring our primary variables correctly (their positive influence on job satisfaction matches the literature), and (b) the relationship between servant leadership and CSE is in addition to the influence of job satisfaction on both variables.

Hypotheses

Various traditions in the leadership literature suggest that values and behaviors of and proximal to servant leadership should be associated with increased productivity and satisfaction. For example, we showed above that transformational, emotionally perceptive, and authentic leaders, and leaders with perceived behavioral integrity and good leader-member relationships, tend to have higher performing and more satisfied employees. We also showed above that core self-evaluation as a whole and as four separate components have significant positive relationships with employee performance and job satisfaction. In addition, we showed that the CSES instrument has incremental predictive validity for job performance and satisfaction over several well-established measures of individual differences, including the Big Five personality traits. Finally, basing their contention on others' studies, Liden, Panaccio, et al. (2014, p. 370) contends that, "...servant leadership behaviors are most likely to positively influence self-esteem and self-efficacy."

The unique aspect of this study is its examination of how servant leadership is associated with core self-evaluation, which has not been studied to our knowledge. As we described above, higher core self-evaluation is associated with greater productivity and job satisfaction, thus if servant leadership predicts core self-evaluation we can infer its efficacy for enhancing job satisfaction and productivity. Thus, we argue:

Hypothesis 1:

Servant leadership will be positively associated with individual core self-evaluation.

Hypothesis 2:

Servant leadership will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3:

Individual core self-evaluation will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

We surveyed 512 working adults mostly in white collar jobs in three U.S. companies. The three organizations were chosen based on our business contacts. One is a large financial institution and the other two are small technical consulting firms. In return for having their organization participate we offered each company a formal report about their level of servant leadership. We made sure that the survey was sent out by a non-manager (to reduce perceived pressure to bias responses), the survey was done completely anonymously, online, and sent to the holder of the database for the servant leadership instrument we used, not the participants' companies. The survey instrument was sent three times over about three weeks to all employees (including executives) of each firm or to the part of the firm that participated. The response rate was 70%.

Our initial sample contained 427 workers, 69 managers/supervisors, and 14 executives. Our final sample, retaining only non-management employees and dropping two individuals who did not report gender, left us with 425 usable observations. Of those who reported gender, 62% were female. Fifty-eight percent of respondents had at least six years of job tenure, and 62% of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 49.

Instruments

The survey included two instruments: The Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) (Laub, 1999) and the Core Self-evaluation Scale (CSES) (Judge, et al., 2003).

The OLA was the first servant leadership instrument and has been validated in several studies, even by those who created other servant leadership instruments to find its components (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011; van Dierendonck, 2011). Parris and Peachy (2013) reported that no other servant leadership instrument has been cited in more published empirical studies than the OLA. It is a self-report instrument; each member of an organization rates the leadership of the organization and the organization as a whole. That is, it measures the *perception* of servant leadership.

The OLA consists of sixty questions to measure servant leadership and another six questions to measure job satisfaction. Each item is on a five-point Likert type of scale. Thirty-eight servant leadership questions ask about the leader's style and 22 about the organization's climate. Given the literature review above demonstrating that both leader style and behavior and organizational climate can affect individual job satisfaction and performance, and that in each case servant leadership at both levels operate in the same manner, we felt it important to use an instrument that combined both levels of servant leadership.

The OLA is given online through Laub's OLAgrouop organization (see OLAgrouop.com). All responses are returned to the OLAgrouop and the raw data are sent to the researcher. The OLAgrouop also produces a formal report about the level of servant leadership for any organization taking the instrument that has 70% or higher participation.

The OLA has been studied and found reliable by several researchers. Laub (1999) found the instrument reliable with $\alpha = .98$. Horsman (2001), Ledbetter (2003), Miears (2004) and

Thompson (2002) found similarly high alphas. The OLA can be considered to have face validity and concurrent validity given that its results are essentially similar to the results of the other servant leadership instruments (see literature review above) and are closely related to Greenleaf's (1970) theory. Finally, the OLA's face validity combined with its reliability is suggestive of the measure's construct validity.

Although the OLA's six job satisfaction items are original to Laub (1999), Laub found them to have a reliability of $\alpha = .81$. Laub's servant leadership and job satisfaction scales have a Pearson correlation of .64, $p < .01$ (Laub, 1999). Laub (1999) and others purposely tested to learn about the relationship of servant leadership to job satisfaction and found reasonably high correlations in different populations (Anderson, 2005; Chu, 2008; Drury, 2004; Hebert, 2003; Johnson, 2008; Svoboda, 2008; Thompson, 2002).

The CSES (Judge, et.al., 2003) is a brief (12 items) measure of the four dimensions of self-evaluation (self-concept): generalized self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (low neuroticism). These four dimensions were each related to job satisfaction and Judge, et.al. (1997) theorized that combining the four measures would yield a more powerful measure. In a meta-analysis of the four separate traits with both job satisfaction and job performance, Judge & Bono (2001) found that each of the four traits had a significant impact on both job satisfaction and job performance. In 2003, Judge, et.al. published the CSES instrument to measure core self-evaluation as a single construct.

A later review of the literature (Judge, 2009), after several years of research with the CSES by various authors, and a still later meta-analysis (Chang, et.al., 2012) continue to demonstrate the efficacy of the CSES for both job satisfaction and job performance. In fact, Judge (2009) stated that "... high scores on core self-evaluations ... are related to a broad array of work and no-work criteria, including increased levels of job and life satisfaction, better job performance, higher work motivation, and higher income ..." (p. 59).

Variables and Analyses

Our model employed servant leadership (from OLA, 60 items, $\alpha = .99$) as the independent variable and core self-evaluation (CSES, $\alpha = .84$) and job satisfaction (from OLA, $\alpha = .90$) as dependent variables. Each individual in the study reported their core self-evaluation, job satisfaction, and the level of servant leadership they perceived. We studied the correlations among the three constructs to test whether they are significantly related.

In addition, we employed regression analysis to test whether servant leadership predicts core self-evaluation. This would test whether servant leadership has a significant positive impact on employees and would also demonstrate that core self-evaluation is at least somewhat malleable. The regression analysis also tested whether servant leadership and CSE predict job satisfaction. This would give us confidence that our measures are correct since the literature has already found this and further validate the findings of previous studies.

To conduct the regression analysis, we employed several control variables. We controlled for gender, with males coded 1 and females coded 2. and for firm. Additionally, we used

job satisfaction as a control variable when predicting core self-evaluation, and similarly, we employed core self-evaluation as a control when predicting job satisfaction. We took this added approach because our data was completely reported by individual subjects in one survey administration. Thus, our findings could be prone to mono-method bias. Most causes of such biases (such as social desirability) would affect scores on any psychological constructs such as servant leadership, CSE, and job satisfaction. Our analytic approach, by adding the control variables into the equation first, attributed any such generally-shared variance to the control variables, leaving the variance explained by servant leadership much cleaner and less contaminated by any potential mono-method biases. Accordingly, we used stepwise hierarchical regression to test our hypotheses. In Step 1, we included firm and gender; in step 2, we included job satisfaction as a control when predicting CSE and CSE as a control when predicting job satisfaction. In step 3, we added servant leadership but took out the control added in step 2, and finally, in step 4, we re-introduced the control variable from step 2. This allowed us to compare the impact of servant leadership on core self-evaluation and job satisfaction with (i.e., step 4 vs. step 2) and without (i.e., step 3 vs. step 1) the control variable.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations can be seen in Table 1. There were significant differences in demography across the three firms; firm 1 respondents were more likely to be male ($r = .13, p < .01$) while firm 2 respondents were more likely to be female ($r = -.11, p < .05$). Firm 3 respondents reported lower levels of servant leadership ($r = -.13, p < .01$).

Across all three firms, servant leadership was positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .80, p < .001$) and core self-evaluation ($r = .50, p < .001$), and core self-evaluation was positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .56, p < .001$). While the pattern of correlations is certainly consistent our hypotheses, we conducted regression analyses to include important controls and examine the relationship more closely.

Table 1: Descriptives and Correlations

	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Firm 1	.92	.27						
2 Firm 2	.05	.22	-.77***					
3 Firm 3	.03	.17	-.60***	-.04				
4 Gender	1.62	.49	.13**	-.11*	-.06			
5 Servant leadership	239.31	51.46	.04	.05	-.13**	-.05		
6 Job Satisfaction	25.32	4.19	.06	-.02	-.08	.07	.80***	
7 Core Self-Evaluation	3.81	.63	.03	.02	-.07	-.00	.50***	.56***

Note: n=425. + indicates $p < .10$. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$

Table 2: Regression Analysis

<i>Dependent Variable Step</i>	Core Self-Evaluation				Job Satisfaction			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<i>Predictor variables</i>								
Firm 1	.11	.04	.01	.02	.14+	.07	-.03	-.03
Firm 2	.11	.07	.01	.05	.08	.02	-.09+	-.09*
Gender	-.00	.04	.02	.04	-.08	-.07+	-.03	-.04
Core Self-Evaluation						.56***		.22***
Job Satisfaction		.56***		.45***				
Servant Leadership			.50***	.14*			.80***	.69***
R ²	.01	.32	.25	.33	.01	.32	.64	.67
F	.80	48.96***	35.08***	40.32***	1.81	50.06***	184.39***	172.62***

N=425. All coefficients are standardized.

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

Regarding Hypothesis 1, servant leadership predicted higher core self-evaluation both before ($b = .50, p < .001$) and after controlling for job satisfaction ($b = .14, p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Regarding Hypothesis 2, servant leadership predicted higher job satisfaction both before ($b = .80, p < .001$) and after controlling for core self-evaluation ($b = .69, p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was also supported. Further, this effect was quite substantial; even after controlling for core-self evaluations, servant leadership explained an incremental 35% of variance in job satisfaction. Regarding Hypothesis 3, core self-evaluation predicted job satisfaction both before ($b = .56, p < .001$) and after the inclusion of servant leadership ($b = .22, p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was also supported.

Discussion

One of servant leadership's distinguishing characteristics as a leadership theory is its emphasis on a leader's value of working to develop their followers. While other values-based leadership theories such as transformational and ethical leadership surely include follower development as a factor of effective leaders, servant leadership casts employee development into a primary role. We believe that servant leadership provides many benefits to followers, some of which are constructs subsumed by or proximal to core self-evaluation (self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism). Thus, we conducted a field study of three firms surveying the relationship between follower perceptions of servant leadership and their own core self-evaluation. We also measured job satisfaction as a control since it has been found to be related to both servant leadership and core self-evaluation.

Our findings supported our hypotheses that the three constructs are significantly correlated with each other. In addition, by using regression analysis, we also found that servant leadership appears to predict core self-evaluation and job satisfaction and that CSE appears to predict job satisfaction.

Research Contributions

The current study found that servant leadership predicts core self-evaluation. This addresses the first part of Greenleaf's (1970) definition of servant leadership: that it positively impacts the lives of the individuals being led.

The current study potentially builds on the core self-evaluation literature by showing that core self-evaluation might be somewhat malleable. We contend that core self-evaluation has not been studied as a dependent variable nearly enough in organizational research. This is probably because core self-evaluation advocates (Judge, et.al., 1997) consider it akin to a personality trait. Given that personality traits are, if not immutable, highly stable over time by definition, it is not surprising that researchers might be discouraged from considering variables that might predict core self-evaluation, with the possible exception of individual difference and demographic variables. However, if core self-evaluation were fixed, we probably would not have found the pattern we observed in our data.

Implications for Practice

The current study builds on the values-based and servant leadership literature by relating the construct to an important individual characteristic that has been studied intensively. No study to our knowledge has examined servant leadership, or any values-based leadership, and core self-evaluation together.

Our findings indicate that servant leadership can be an important values-adding instrument for enhancing the development, growth, and self-concept of employees. At minimum, servant leadership, as with other values-based leadership styles, has been found to have a very strong relationship with job satisfaction, job performance, work motivation, and positive work behaviors. These outcomes have been studied mainly in the context of enhancing the organization. By examining CSE, we also have made a tentative step towards establishing servant leadership's significant role in enhancing constructs like employees' generalized self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and positive affect. In other words, servant leadership may contribute to an employee's positive self-concept by enhancing overall worker happiness, feelings of empowerment, sense of self-confidence, and overall positive sense of self. This takes us back to the heart of Greenleaf's (1970) indicators of servant leadership. While more research needs to be conducted on the topic, this is clearly an impressive list of employee outcomes that may well be associated with servant leadership.

Altogether, our findings show that servant leadership, a values-based leadership approach, appears to contribute to both individual employees and the organization by enhancing employee core self-evaluation and job satisfaction.

Future Research Directions

Given that this is probably the first study of the relationship between a values-based leadership (servant leadership) approach and core self-evaluation, and that core self-evaluation appears to be enhanced by servant leadership, it would be important for additional studies to validate this finding.

Given that there have been so few studies using core self-evaluation as a dependent variable generally, it would be important for additional studies to do so; that is, to test more definitively whether core self-evaluation is a malleable or stable trait.

Given that a number of studies have found that both servant and related leadership styles and climates, as well as core self-evaluation, appear to predict individual level job satisfaction and job performance, and also given that job satisfaction and job performance have tended to be highly correlated across many studies, it would be useful for additional studies to investigate more about the relationships among these four variables. What exactly is the relationship between servant leadership and the core self-evaluation of employees? How exactly is it that core self-evaluation and servant leadership can produce increased job satisfaction and job performance? What are the mechanisms in these relationships?

Future scholars should also consider a longitudinal research design and procuring data on constructs through multiple, varied sources. Finally, more attention can be paid to elements of servant leadership, specific dimensions of CSE, and possible moderators/mediators of this relationship.

Limitations

Our study has two primary limitations. First, the study was cross-sectional in nature, and as a result we are limited in what we can conclude about servant leadership as a causal mechanism for increasing core self-evaluation. However, we did observe a correlational pattern consistent with such a relationship.

The other significant limitation regards the percept-percept nature of our independent and dependent variable. We were unable to obtain data from a different source regarding servant leadership, thus both servant leadership and core self-evaluation were assessed by the same individual employees. This is one reason why the controls are so important to the current study. The main problem with mono-method research is that significant findings like those observed here could be attributable to some positive g-factor (e.g., positive affectivity, job satisfaction, social desirability bias, etc.) that leads to a spurious correlation between x and y . Such a bias, however, would almost undoubtedly also bleed into job satisfaction. Thus, entering job satisfaction (or core self-evaluation) first in a stepwise model has the effect of partialling out shared variance attributable to any unobserved nuisance variable such as a g-factor. Because we found a positive relationship after including the control, we have some confidence that our findings are not attributable to such a nuisance variable, though we cannot rule out the possibility completely.

Another issue is effect size. We note that the change in variance explained by servant leadership was small (1% of incremental variance) with the inclusion of all of the control variables. However, our inclusion of job satisfaction as a control for core self-evaluation, and vice versa, affected this. When, for example, job satisfaction was not controlled for, the amount of reported variance in core self-evaluation explained through servant leadership (i.e., step 3 vs. step 1) was 24%. When core self-evaluation was not controlled for, the amount of reported variance in job satisfaction explained through servant leadership (i.e., step 3 vs. step 1) was 63%. Because of the mono-method issue and the

study's lack of a longitudinal design, the current study cannot conclusively resolve whether servant leadership causes job satisfaction or core self-evaluation, but it provides a probable step in that direction.

Finally, generalizability to other settings and other measures is always a possible limitation; however, employing three firms in a field study addresses generalizability concerns to some extent.

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