

A Meta-Review of Servant Leadership: Construct, Correlates, and the Process

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Abstract

The goal of this article is to present qualitative and quantitative reviews of servant leadership literature since its formal inception in 1970. Summarizing previous studies, we theorized and explored issues concerning the conception and relevance of servant leadership, the merits of varied measurements, issues concerning construct dimensionality, and the potential effects of national culture on the relationship between servant leadership and its correlates. We developed theory to distinguish servant leadership from competing leadership theories of transformational leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory and examined the direct and the incremental influence of servant leadership on individual and unit-level outcomes. To consolidate extant research and to guide future theory development we tested a mediational process model linking servant leadership to outcomes. Meta-analytic results supported distinctiveness of servant leadership, showed effects of servant leadership on individual-level and unit-level outcomes, and supported theorized mediating effects of trust and fairness perceptions in the relationship.

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Introduction

Interest in leadership predates most of the work in organizational behavior and continues unabated. The well-established frameworks based on the agentic perspective, with its view of individuals as self-serving, and competitive, are deemed inadequate in today's workplace reality and are paving the way for emergent leadership theories that emphasize a relational perspective with its view of individuals as self-actualizing and cooperative (Dinh et al., 2014; Hoch et al., 2018; Whetstone, 2002). An especially promising leadership approach gaining wide popularity is servant leadership (Dierendonck, 2011; Greenleaf, 1970; Liden et al., 2014). Servant leadership is described as a holistic approach where leaders focus on the social, emotional, and ethical aspects of the leader-follower relationship, such that the leaders help followers enhance and grow their capabilities and thus, attain their full potential (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). Although there are other follower-centric approaches that emphasize leaders supporting followers, servant leadership is unique in that it puts strong emphasis on the central purpose of leaders to *serve* followers.

Introduced over 4 decades ago by Robert Greenleaf (1970), initial interest in servant leadership was mostly limited to its applicability in training practices in corporate as well as educational and religious institutions (Spears, 1998). However, the last decade has seen a proliferation of empirical research on servant leadership as evidenced by over 700 citations and 5 literature reviews (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2014; Parris & Peachy, 2013; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck, 2011). This enthusiasm in servant leadership is in stark contrast to the nascent nature of the construct. Several leadership researchers are grappling with the practical issues of integrating philosophy of servitude to the practice of leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011; Parissy & Peachy, 2013; Liden et al., 2014). Moreover the value of servant leadership construct has been articulated at a conceptual level (Graham, 1991; van Dierendonck, 2011) and yet, its unique contribution relative to the dominant leadership approaches needs to be evaluated. A recent meta-analysis (Hoch et al., 2018) examining emerging forms of positive leadership found that servant leadership was the most promising stand-alone approach able to explain key organizational outcomes. Clearly, servant leadership is a topic that has great value for researchers and practitioners alike; however while it is being studied heavily, this construct is yet to be analyzed in a systematic way. Therefore, the primary goal of our study is to evaluate the state of knowledge on servant leadership and to identify areas in need of further empirical research and theoretical development.

We accomplish our goal by engaging in a systematic literature review to gain a clear understanding of how servant leadership has been defined, conceptualized, and assessed by researchers. Our qualitative analysis technique also allows us to examine linkages to other key concepts examined in servant leadership research. Next, we conduct an analysis of the empirical research on servant leadership and evaluate the findings using meta-analytic technique to integrate results across studies and provide assessment of main effects of servant leadership on key follower

outcomes, thus establishing the value of servant leadership to the field. While quantitative meta-analysis helps synthesize empirical results of a body of research, qualitative content analysis focuses on clarifying patterns, aggregating commonalities as well as highlighting emergence of themes, categories, concepts and theories in a body of research and thus help integrate across studies into an explanatory framework. This mixed-methods approach is an important step in establishing both, construct-validity as well as criterion-related validity of the construct as a prelude to the growing momentum on servant leadership research.

Dinh and colleagues (2014) uncovered 66 leadership approaches reported in the top 10 journals that publish leadership research. In light of the long held view that parsimony is a hallmark of good scientific research, it calls to question the addition of new leadership approaches. Therefore, our primary value-added contribution is the assessment of the unique contribution of servant leadership. In light of concerns of conceptual overlap with dimensions of other follower-centric leadership constructs, such as transformational leadership and LMX (Liden, Panaccio et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011) we investigate incremental validity of servant leadership over these approaches.

Our second contribution pertains to identifying a nomological framework that includes not only key correlates, but also key processes through which servant leadership impact organizational outcomes. As van Dierendonck (2011) notes, research revealing underlying processes of servant leadership grounded in theory and sound empirical research is needed. To this end, we test a theoretical framework that utilizes social exchange theory and justice theory to identify mediators of servant leadership to outcomes relationships. In this way, our contribution extends beyond similar studies (e.g., Hoch et al., 2018) and prior reviews (e.g., Parris & Peachey, 2013; van Dierendonck, 2011).

Last but not the least, we contribute to the servant leadership literature by examining servant leadership measurement and national cultural dimensions as moderating influences in an effort to extend knowledge about the generalizability of servant leadership correlates. Our study helps to identify how servant leadership has been conceptualized and measured by researchers in different countries. Additionally, by comparing studies of samples drawn from different cultures we take stock of how societal and cultural norms affect the outcomes of servant leadership. This comparative analysis identifies the gaps as well as a roadmap for cultural researchers in the area of servant leadership.

1. Literature review

When introduced, servant leadership was regarded more as a philosophy rather than a leadership approach that can be operationalized (Spears, 1998). Greenleaf (1977) first defined it in terms of a way of life which begins with “the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first” (p. 7). In Greenleaf’s words, ‘it is meant to be neither a scholarly treatise nor a how-to-do-it manual’ (Greenleaf 1977, p. 49). While Greenleaf (1977) did not provide a formal definition of the construct, his writings highlighted various characteristics of servant leader, and remain widely cited in the servant leadership literature. This has led to differing interpretations and therefore, a multitude of definitions such that there is limited consensus on the characteristics of a servant

leader. Three seminal works- Graham (1991), Spears (1995), and van Dierendonck (2011) have drawn upon Greenleaf's foundation texts to provide conceptual overview that in turn have served as a basis for researchers for defining and measuring the construct in order to understand its value in explaining workplace attitudes and behavior.

We explore the plurality of definitions by conducting a systematic review of all dimensions used for defining "servant leadership" in the literature. To do so, we sought to identify both published and unpublished studies that have examined servant leadership from the oldest available through August 2017, including in-press articles that were available online. We conducted an extensive search using keywords 'servant leadership' and 'servant leader' on multiple databases, including the PsycINFO, ABI/Inform Global, and ProQuest Dissertations. We also searched journals such as *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Personnel Psychology*, and *Journal of Leadership and Organization Studies*. In addition, we supplemented the electronic search with a manual search of reference lists of key articles and literature review papers. Finally, we sought working papers presented at the annual conferences of the Academy of Management (AoM), Southern Management Associate (SMA), and Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP).

We exported texts of 160 studies from the servant leadership literature into the NVivo 10 software. Nivo is a leading tool for qualitative research tool allowing researchers to import data, code content, analyze data with queries, and visualize results (e.g., Robins & Eisen, 2017). We used the automatic search function available in NVivo to identify and then analyze definitions of servant leadership. The search resulted in a total of 25,227 sentences related to servant leadership. In order to code this content, we utilized the definitional frameworks provided in the writings of Graham (1991), Spears (1995) and van Dierendonck (2011). Our choice of these frameworks was based on the rationale that these perspectives have been influential in shaping research on servant leadership; they provide a systematic interpretation of Greenleaf's writings, and based on the number of citations have been utilized extensively by servant leadership researchers.

Our in-depth review of these three writings yielded 19 different dimensions or characteristics that serve to define servant leadership. These can be sub-grouped into three main categories: 1) personal characteristics of a leader (e.g. humility, empathy, persuasion, etc.), 2) characteristics that are followers-oriented (e.g. stewardship, moral development, etc.), and 3) characteristics that are relationship-oriented (community building, mutual trust, etc.). Table 1 presents the coding template and lists these dimensions in bold. Next, we coded definitional keywords culled from these 25227 sentences using our template. The keywords were categorized based on the three categories of characteristics, thus, providing insight into how researchers conceptualize the construct of servant leadership. All the studies were double-coded. Results were compared and disagreements about the nature and categorization of constructs were resolved by reviewing papers from which the text was drawn.

Our results highlighted that the majority of the research on servant leadership has evolved from either the original writings of Greenleaf or the original conceptual stream (Graham, 1991; Spears, 1995; van Dierendonck, 2011). Follower-oriented leader characteristics (121) are most prominent followed by leader's personal characteristics (74) with leader's relationship oriented characteristics (52) as close third. It is worth noting that most, but not all, of the characteristics

reflect Greenleaf's writings. For instance, the characteristic of 'empower and develop people' was included in majority of the texts (99). This is consistent with Greenleaf's (1970) assertion that to be a servant leader one must, "first make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 13). Altruism, too, is a recurring theme that is in line with the central premise of servant leadership, going above and beyond one's self-interest and being motivated by need to serve rather than the need for power. However, the characteristic of 'community building' while mentioned 48 times is not part of Greenleaf's writings and only referenced in Spears' work (1995). Similarly, the leader trait of humility appears 32 times as part of the servant leadership definition; however, humility is not highlighted as a salient characteristic in Greenleaf's work on servant leadership.

Our analysis also enabled us to explore whether different aspects of servant leadership are more salient in definitions utilized in studies from different countries. We found few differences across countries such as between U.S.-based and non-U.S.-based samples. Dimensions like "empathy", "awareness" are prominent in the definitions in research based on U.S. samples, while, "interpersonal acceptance", "providing directions" and "authenticity" are more likely to be absent in U.S.-based research. The content analysis also revealed that leader characteristics are not emphasized as much in European research relative to studies based on U.S. or Asian samples. For instance, authenticity, foresight, wisdom, humility, altruism or empathy are rarely mentioned in papers originating from European countries.

Our samples came from emerging as well as developed countries allowing us to engage in a comparative analysis on which components of servant leadership definitions are salient. While the labeling of countries as 'developing' (emerging) and 'developed' can be ambiguous, according to the United Nations, it is based on economic advancement such as 'developed' countries, on average, have a higher per capita income and rank higher on the United Nations' Human Development Index (including indices of good education, health care, and quality of life). Developing countries, comprise of 80 % of the world's population and are diverse in many socio-cultural and other ways; however, previous research suggests few commonalities. Research utilizing the GLOBE project (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) <http://www.ucalgary.ca/mg/GLOBE/Public>) identified an ideal leader profile in developing countries comprising of empowerment, participative, but decisive, trustworthy, paternalistic and also performance-oriented, fair and just, especially in interpersonal relationships, diplomatic, conscious of status differences, while being modest and humble, and team integrator (Aycan, 2002). Our analysis of the servant leadership conceptualization identified common elements of empowerment, humility, and trust. Additionally, our tabulation did not see any significant difference on how servant leadership is defined in samples from emerging nations relative to developed nations. Furthermore, studies from developed nations utilized characteristics of empowerment, empathy more often than the studies from emerging countries. Finally, stewarding and commitment of growth was mentioned in fewer more studies from the emerging countries relative to studies from developed nations.

Table 1: Conceptualization of Servant Leadership

Categorization	Definitions			Characteristics	Sample from Developed nations	Sample from Emerging Nations
	Graham, 1991	Spears, 1995	van Dierendonck, 2011			
Leader characteristics (74)	X	X	X	Humility, De-emphasize glorification	11	8
				Listening	5	4
				Empathy, Other centered, Believe in others	17	10
				Healing	5	5
				Awareness, Self-aware, psychological flexibility	5	6
				Persuasion	4	5
				Conceptualisation	3	3
				Foresight, Wisdom	5	5
				Authentic, Credibility, None manipulative	6	8
				Accept people for who they are, humanistic, agreeable	1	1
				Altruist	4	6
Personal integrity	5	2				
Followers Oriented (121)	X	X	X	Autonomy	1	1
				Moral development	7	8
				Emulation, motivation	1	2
				Stewarding	6	12
				Commitment of the growth	9	15
				Empower and develop people, Beyond self interest, Selflessness, Followers needs first, Other centered	34	25
				Provide direction	2	5
Relationship Oriented (52)	X	X		Relational power, Shared power decision making; shared leadership; doing well for others; Motives alignment	5	4
				Community building, common good; long term relationship	13	14
				Trust, Interpersonal acceptance		

Note. Characteristics of servant leadership identified by Graham (1991), Spears (1995) and van Dierendonck (2011) (in bold) and all other characteristics found in our sample break-down/categorized into three clusters: Leaders' characteristics, Follower-oriented characteristics and Relationships-oriented characteristics

Overall, our qualitative analysis of the way in which scholars have conceptualized servant leadership reveals reliance upon Greenleaf's seminal work to define and conceptualize the construct. However, the differing interpretations have led to a plurality of definitions, such that there is limited consensus on the characteristics of a servant leader. Our qualitative analysis demonstrated that the multiple interpretations of Greenleaf's writings have yielded 44 dimensions of servant leadership that have served as the basis of several servant leadership measures. There were no significant differences in leadership definitions based on economic status of the countries from which the sample was collected.

1.1 Operationalization, Measurement, and Cross-cultural Variability of Servant Leadership

Undeterred by the absence of formal definition and a commonly accepted theoretical framework (Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011), empirical research continues to grow at an accelerated pace (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011; Parissy & Peachy, 2013; Liden et al., 2014). A review of the literature highlights a dozen different operationalizations of servant leadership (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Ehrhart, 2004; Laub, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; Sendjaya & Cooper, 2011; Reed, Vidaver-cohen, & Colwell, 2011; Reinke, 2004; van Dierendonck, & Niutjen, 2011). The multitude of measures highlight complexity and ambiguity in analyzing servant leadership but also raise concerns as to whether results differ across studies because of different measures used.

Most of the servant leadership measures utilized in research are multi-dimensional instruments. Predominantly, researchers have summed scores on the dimensions and treated servant leadership as a global construct manifested by its dimensions (Law, Wong, & Mobley, 1998). For instance, the most commonly used measure, the 28-item Servant Leadership Scale (Liden et al., 2008) has been empirically shown to have seven distinct dimensions that fall under a higher order factor (Hu & Liden, 2011), that is captured in a 7-item short version (Liden et al., 2015).

To further explore the operational and measurement issues associated with the servant leadership concept, we identified 116 texts that provided information on empirical studies of servant leadership. These were imported into the NVivo 10 software. Over half of the texts in our sample (52%) came from studies published over 2014-2016 with most studies undertaken in the US, followed by China and the rest of the samples came from Europe, Asia and Africa. In other words, This constitutes 68% independent samples from developed countries while the remaining samples for emerging nations. In terms of measures, Laub (1999), Barbuto & Wheeler (2006), Ehrhart (2004) and Liden et al. (2008) are the most cited. Laub (1999) (n=7) and Barbuto & Wheeler (2008) (n=11) are most commonly utilized for unpublished dissertations, while Liden et al. (2008) (n=13) as well as Ehrhart (2004) (n=14) are most frequently used instruments in HRM/OB journals. A similar pattern emerged when we examined the research sample by country: Laub (1999) and Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) have been exclusively used in U.S. samples, while Liden et al.'s (2008) and Ehrhart's (2004) measures have been used worldwide. Categorization for developed vs emerging nations shows that Ehrhart (2004) and Liden et al. (2008) are most used in samples drawn from both groups.

As we examine relationships between servant leadership and its correlates, it is important to determine whether or not these relationships are homogenous in nature. Our findings from the qualitative review suggest the need for synthesizing findings of studies using disparate measures and across different countries. Specifically, we expect that the cultural characteristics of participant location contribute to variance among the relationships since leadership cannot be isolated from the cultural values of a society.

The GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) has demonstrated remarkably similar preferences for specific leadership behaviors across the context of national cultures of 62 countries, such as universal desire for value-based and team-oriented leadership, but also unanimous disdain for leaders focused on protecting their own self-interest. Despite these consistent general patterns across cultures, there may be subtle differences in reactions to servant leadership based on specific cultural characteristics. It is an important step for extending knowledge about generalizability of servant leadership correlates relationships across different countries to determine the source of cultural variability.

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

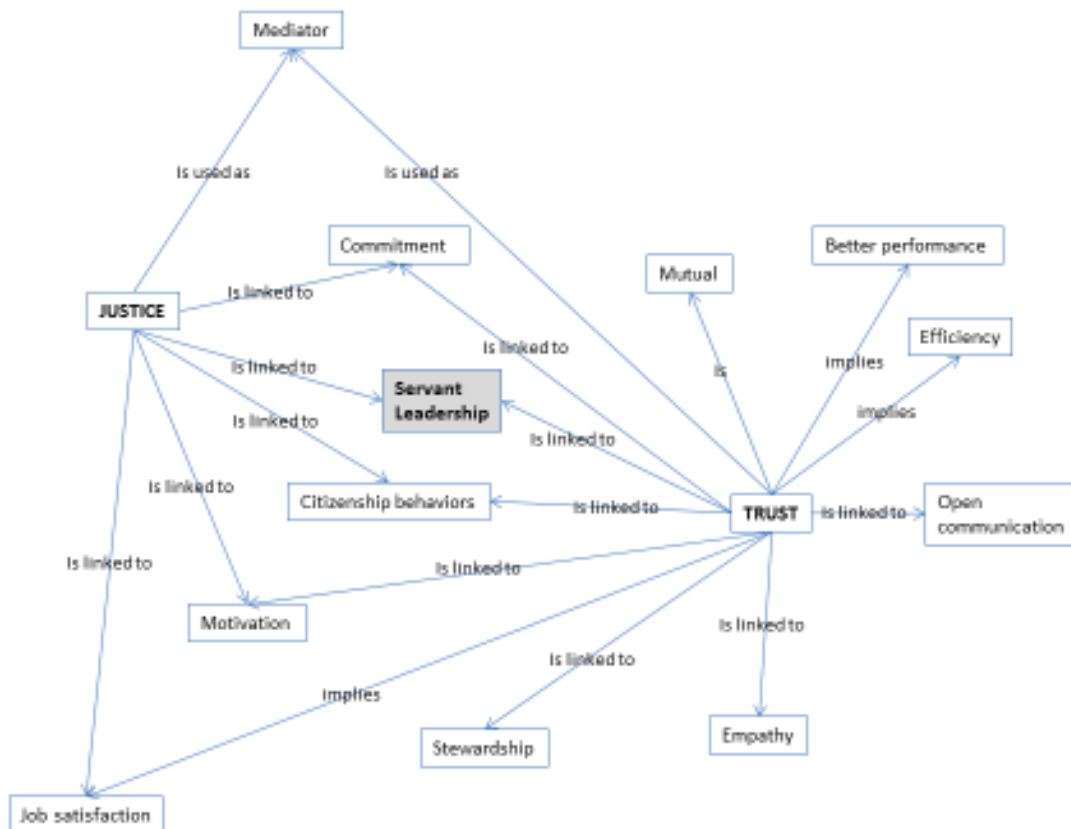
For servant leadership to be retained as a viable approach, it needs to provide a value-added contribution to our understanding of leadership that extends beyond other leadership approaches. In this study, we focus on the control of two most dominant approaches, transformational leadership and leader-member exchange. We think it is appropriate to focus on these two leadership theories for several reasons. First, servant leadership shares the key tenet of development of strong interpersonal relationships with followers through trust and encouragement with transformational leadership and leader-member exchange (Turner et al., 2002). Transformational leadership is about leaders inspiring followers by offering a vision that goes beyond their self-interests. Moral reasoning, a tenet of servant leadership, has been shown empirically to be an important characteristic of transformational leaders as well (Turner et al., 2002). LMX is another important leadership theory that captures the dyadic relationships in organizations. Through the exchange of resources, information, and support, leaders are able to shape employee attitudes and behaviors of their subordinates. The LMX dimensions of loyalty, inter-personal affect, effort/contribution, and respect are similar to several dimensions of servant leadership, including empowering and developing people as well as providing direction. In addition to the theoretical overlap between servant leadership, transformational leadership and LMX, there are more empirical studies on servant leadership that include transformational leadership (Liden et al., 2008; Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009; Schneider & George, 2011; Searle & Barbuto, 2013; van Dierendonck et al., 2014) and/or LMX (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2013) than other leadership approaches. To conduct meaningful meta-analysis we need to focus on relationships that have adequate sample size in extant research.

Central to the evaluation of the construct is to assess relationships between servant leadership and employee workplace outcomes. An adequate amount of empirical research has now been conducted on servant leadership to allow a meta-analytic investigation to synthesize the state of knowledge on correlates of servant leadership. As a prelude to the quantitative analysis, we

developed a concept map (Figure 1.) that allowed us to organize and represent key relationships investigated by servant leadership researchers. The servant leadership map illustrated the current zeitgeist of servant leadership research as well as revealed theoretical underpinnings for the hypothesized relationships. For instance, it illustrated that the two constructs most frequently utilized are organizational justice and trust.

Despite similarities between servant leadership and transformational leadership and LMX (e.g., Ehrhart, 2004), several key conceptual distinctions are noteworthy and expected to explain effects of servant leadership on employee outcomes over and above these two frameworks. For example, Graham (1991) noted that while transformational leaders rely on innate skills and training to inspire their followers, a servant leader’s humility and spiritual insight spur followers’ growth and moral uplifting. Leader’s support and caring emboldens employees to explore new ideas, experiences, and expertise. Thus, we expect empirical evidence to establish that the follower-centered leadership style of servant leaders will result in employees’ positive attitudes and behaviors, over and above the effects of transformational leadership. Liden, Panaccio et al., (2014) contended that while transformational leaders motivate followers to sacrifice their own needs for the sake of organizations, servant leaders sacrifice their own needs for the followers.

Figure 1. Concept Map of Servant Leadership research



2.1 Individual-level Correlates of Servant Leadership after Accounting for Transformational Leadership

By putting employees first and treating them with dignity and respect, servant leaders promote positive employee attitudes (van Dierendonck, 2011). The elements of humility, authenticity, and interpersonal acceptance, none of which is an attribute associated with either transformational leadership make it possible for employees of a servant leader to exhibit increased trust in leader (Chan & Mak, 2014; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2011), satisfaction (Chiniara & Bentein, 2014; Siddiqi, 2014), organizational commitment (Goh & Zhen-Jie, 2014; Harwiki, 2013; Miao et al., 2014), organizational identification (Yoshida et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2012 (a)), and lower turnover intention (Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo et al., 2009).

Hypothesis 1: Controlling for transformational leadership at the individual-level, servant leadership is positively related to employee perceptions and attitudes of (a) trust in leader, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) organizational commitment, as well as employee behaviors of (d) task performance and (e) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).

2.2 Individual-level Correlates of Servant Leadership after Accounting for Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Unlike LMX where leaders are motivated to serve followers in anticipation of social exchange returns, servant leadership emphasizes helping subordinates grow and succeed by putting their needs above others including the leaders' own. This is likely to encourage followers to emulate the serving nature of their leaders by engaging in behaviors that benefit other stakeholders, such as peers (e.g., organizational citizenship behaviors, OCBs towards coworkers), customers (e.g., OCBs towards customers), the leader (van Dierendonck, 2011) as well as the organization (e.g., OCBs towards organization) (Bambale, 2015; van Dierendonck, 2011; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010).

Servant leadership theory is also unique, because it includes aspects of leadership not contained in LMX. For example, while servant leader's effectiveness is a function of the growth in the people who are served by the leader (Whetstone, 2002), in LMX context, success of a leader is reflected in the quality of the relationship between an employee and a manager, and therefore, a key driver of employee job attitudes, effectiveness, and retention (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997). Servant leadership involves humility and stewardship (Dierendonck, 2011), while differentiation between how leader treats individual subordinates is the hallmark of LMX. Given servant leaders' greater emphasis on behaviors that encourage and empower subordinates (Liden et al., 2008, 2014), we contend that servant leadership makes unique and incremental contributions on individual outcomes beyond those of transformational leadership and LMX.

Hypothesis 2: Controlling for LMX at the individual-level, servant leadership is positively related to employee perceptions and attitudes of (a) trust in leader, (b) justice perceptions, (c) job satisfaction, (d) organizational identification, and (e) organizational commitment, as well as

employee behaviors of (f) task performance and (g) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), whereas is negatively related to (h) turnover intentions.

2.3 Unit-level Correlates of Servant Leadership

As servant leadership research moves beyond the individual employee level emphasis, it becomes important to examine meta-analytic evidence to test its utility in shaping outcomes at multiple levels of analysis (Ehrhart, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011; Neubert, Kacmar, Carolson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2011; Walumbawa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010). Some of the unit-level perceptions and attitudes studied in the servant leadership literature are team potency, the shared confidence in a team's capabilities (Hu & Liden, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2011), unit-level commitment, and trust in management. Unit-level behaviors examined as correlates of servant leadership are performance (Hunter et al., 2013) and OCBs (Ehrhart, 2004; Hunter et al., 2013). Because of the unique features of servant leadership, such as prioritizing follower needs and focusing on bringing out the full potential in followers, the follower-centered focus is more proximal in servant leadership relative to transformational leadership. Therefore, we expect servant leadership to explain unique variance beyond transformational leadership in studies that examine effects on unit-level outcomes (Liden et al., 2008).

Hypothesis 3: Controlling for transformational leadership at the unit-level, servant leadership is positively related to unit-level behaviors of (a) performance and (b) OCBs.

2.4 Process of Servant Leadership

Preliminary exploration is underway to identify the processes underlying the relationship between servant leadership and outcomes. Social exchange theory frequently serves as a mechanism to explain the linkages between servant leadership and follower outcomes (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Organizational justice theory has also been theorized to explain key relationships in the nomological framework of servant leadership (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012; Mayer, Bardes, Piccolo, 2008). We develop a model that integrates these two prominent mediating mechanisms, social exchange and justice, as each addresses a unique process that transmutes servant leadership into valued outcomes. Integrating these complementary mediating mechanisms offers several theoretical advantages. Social exchange theory poses that because exchange-based relationships, such as those between a leader and a follower, involve unspecified obligations, followers are motivated to trust their leaders to discharge their obligations and do their part by reciprocating the benefits received (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Justice theory suggests that justice motives fulfill different psychological needs, including the instrumental need for control, the relational needs for belonging and self-esteem, and the need for a meaningful existence (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). When followers view leaders' actions as fair and consistent with moral mandates about interpersonal conduct, such as respect for human dignity, followers tend to show more positive attitudes and actions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

The two explanations complement one another in that an enduring relationship between leader and follower is grounded in mutual trust as per social exchange theory, while fairness principles, including prevailing norms of moral conduct, serve as bases according to justice theory). Trust in the leader is an indicator of confidence that the leader will behave in a fair, ethical, and consistent manner (Liden, Panaccio et al., 2014). Fairness perceptions are central to how employees assess their outcomes, the processes underlying allocation of resources and interpersonal treatment in the workplace (Colquitt et al., 2013). Researchers have examined a common set of antecedents of trust and fairness (Brockner & Siegel, 1996), with a key determinant in the development of follower trust and fairness perceptions being the leader's stability (Lewicki, Wiethoff, & Tomlinson, 2005). According to Greenleaf's (1977, 2002) writings, dependability and ability to serve the followers is central to servant leadership. Commitment to the followers' personal needs and professional growth as well as sensitivity to dignity and ethical treatment, makes a servant leader a highly stable influence on employees.

Servant leaders, unlike transformational leaders, demonstrate not only interpersonal acceptance, but also encourage betterment of the followers by focusing on self-development (Simon, 2014). Because followers believe they can count on their leader to guide and support their actions, indicative of the high degree of trust in leader (Goh & Low, 2014; Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2014; Schaubroeck et al, 2011; van Dierendonck, 2011), followers are likely to have confidence in their abilities and competence to achieve desirable goals (Chan & Mak, 2014; Senjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Therefore, followers, in turn, develop workplace attitudes as well as engage in actions that benefit others as well as the organization. Additionally, justice perceptions give a sense of control and predictability to the followers. Servant leaders, by definition, are sensitive to follower needs and therefore, treat them with dignity and respect (Greenleaf, 2002). Additionally, the high ethical component of servant leader behavior translates to equitable and fair treatment of followers (Mayer, Bardes, Piccolo, 2008). A servant leader can be counted on to provide resources and opportunities that are just and fair. Because of these defining characteristics of servant leaders, followers experience higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational identification, and commitment and report lower intentions to leave. They are also emboldened to pursue valued actions such as in-role performance as well as OCBs. Following social exchange and justice theories, our model situates trust and fairness perceptions as proximal attitudes that are positively influenced by servant leadership, and in turn, lead to valued employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Hypothesis 4: The relationships between servant leadership and attitudinal outcomes of organizational commitment, organizational identification, job satisfaction and turnover intention, as well as behavioral outcomes of job performance and OCBs, are mediated by (a) trust in leader and (b) fairness perceptions.

3. Methodology

3.1.1 Eligibility Criteria

From the studies we identified in the literature search, we only included articles that provide quantitative correlation data (r) on servant leadership and at least one correlate in our meta-analysis. Given our desire to test relationships between servant leadership as an overall construct with other variables, we also excluded articles that presented only correlations at the dimension level. When there were very similar sample descriptions between studies (e.g., the same country and industry, approximately the same sample size, or including several overlapping constructs) or overlapping authorship, we followed Wood's (2008) detection heuristic and made judgments to exclude data that might come from the same sample yet were reported in multiple articles. These exclusions resulted in 145 independent samples at individual level (total $N=40,133$) and 23 independent samples at unit level (total $N=2009$) from a total of 168 studies, including 137 published papers and book chapters, 24 dissertations, and 7 unpublished reports.

3.1.2 Coding

The coded studies measured servant leadership most often with Liden and colleagues' (2008) measure (32 of 145 studies at individual level; 11 of 23 studies at unit level) and Ehrhart's (2004) measure (31 of 145 studies at individual level; 9 of 23 studies at unit level). We found that with regard to servant leadership, behavioral outcomes fell into a few sub-categories. We first adopted Williams and Anderson's (1991) categorization scheme (i.e., task performance vs. OCB-I vs. OCB-O). Next, consistent with Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, and Blume, (2009), we incorporated other OCB-related constructs (e.g., helping, voice, taking charge, sportsmanship) into this schema and aggregated OCBs that could not fit within this scheme into a general OCB category. Creative behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors stood out as two additional categories. Several studies have used multi-level (i.e., group-level or organizational-level) designs. In the case of unit-level performance, we followed Podsakoff and colleagues' (2009) approach and aggregated a number of group or organizational performance measures, such as subjective measures of productivity, efficiency, profitability, customer service quality, as well as objective measures of financial performance. Coding decisions with respect to attitudinal outcomes involved justice perceptions and organizational commitment. We coded justice variables all into a broadly defined justice category, according to Colquitt and colleagues' discussions (2001). Organizational commitment was coded with most measures based on Allen and Meyer's (1990) formulation or on Mowday, Steers, and Porter's (1979) conceptualization. When all three types of commitment were reported in a study, we coded only the affective version given its relevance to our theorizing. Half of the studies were double coded and compared results, yielding a 94.6% agreement. All disagreements arose from typographical errors and disagreements about the nature and categorization of constructs. These were resolved upon consulting the original articles and through discussion.

3.1.3 Analytical Strategy

Following Hunter and Schmidt's (2004) guidelines, we conducted random-effects meta-analysis to obtain the corrected correlations between servant leadership and correlates at the individual and unit levels. In Table 2 we report the corrected population correlation coefficient (ρ), its standard deviation ($SD\rho$), as well as the 80% credibility interval and 95% confidence interval. An interval including zero can be interpreted as the ρ not significantly different from zero (indicating no effect in the population). Similarly, the z-test is a test of significance of the ρ (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). In addition, we calculated the failsafe k, for which a higher value indicates a more robust finding.

Because we are interested in the possible moderating effects of the servant leadership measure used as well as cultural variability across samples from different countries, we conducted a test of homogeneity with the significant Q statistics (reported in Table 2) suggesting heterogeneity in the underlying sample (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001), warranting a moderator search (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). For measurement, we examined two scale categories, including Ehrhart's (2004) measure, and Liden and colleagues' (2008) measure and its variations (e.g., Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012). We also contrasted these two major categories with the rest of the measures used in other studies. For cultural variability, we followed procedures advocated by Aguinis and colleagues (2008) and classified studies into different cultural groups based on the country in which data were collected. Specifically, we used the median split of Hofstede's (2001) country-level scores of power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance. We conducted separate meta-analyses for different cultural groups and compared the corrected population correlation coefficient (ρ) between studies in the high- vs. low-score groups (e.g., High vs Low power distance groups).

In order to further examine the incremental validity of servant leadership (*Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3*) and test the mediating mechanisms (*Hypothesis 4*), we performed meta-analytic structural equation model (MA-SEM) analyses using LISREL (9.1; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1998). To complete the pooled correlation matrix containing all variables of interest, we supplemented the corrected population correlation coefficients calculated in this study with those of other meta-analyses. As common in organizational research, we calculated the harmonic means of the sample sizes and used them as the sample sizes for the corresponding analyses. Specifically, we began with Model A, Model B, and Model C in which servant leadership is the antecedent of selected outcome variables, while controlling for other leadership measures. We then tested competing models representing differing mediational relationships: In alternative Model 1, the effects of servant leadership on employee outcomes are fully mediated by trust in leader and justice. Alternative Model 2 adds direct paths from servant leadership to all outcomes, suggesting that the effects of servant leadership on outcomes are partially mediated by trust in leader and justice. Finally, we examined causal ordering between attitudinal and behavioral outcomes based on Model 2. In these three models, we controlled for LMX. We compared models and evaluated them using the most common goodness of fit statistics and their commonly accepted cutoff values (e.g., comparative fit index: CFI >.90, Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index: NFI > .90, and Standardized) Root Mean Square Residual: SRMR<.06; McDonald & Ho, 2002). As suggested by Preacher and colleagues (2010), we further tested the mediation hypotheses by the Monte Carlo approach. We ran 10,000

repetitions for Monte Carlo simulations for each indirect effect of servant leadership. The coefficients with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) that do not include zero indicate that the hypothesized mediation effects are significant.

4. Results

4.1.1 Correlates of Servant Leadership

Before presenting hypothesis testing, we examined employee-level as well as unit-level correlates of servant leadership. As seen in Table 2, there is support for the positive relationships between servant leadership and the individual-level outcomes of task performance ($r=.19, \rho=.21$), OCBs ($r=.31, \rho=.38$), creative behaviors ($r=.28, \rho=.34$), justice perceptions ($r=.53, \rho=.51$), trust in leader ($r=.63, \rho=.73$), organizational commitment ($r=.42, \rho=.50$), organizational identification ($r=.43, \rho=.46$), job satisfaction ($r=.51, \rho=.61$), need satisfaction ($r=.51, \rho=.56$), and psychological empowerment ($r=.49, \rho=.55$). We also found support for the negative relationships between servant leadership and individual level counterproductive behaviors ($r=-.14, \rho=-.13$), turnover intention ($r=-.26, \rho=-.29$) and burnout ($r=-.26, \rho=-.30$). At the unit level, we found support for the positive relationships between servant leadership and the outcomes of unit performance ($r=.30, \rho=.36$), unit OCBs ($r=.39, \rho=.47$), constructive climates ($r=.51, \rho=.57$), team potency ($r=.54, \rho=.50$), unit-level trust in management ($r=.63, \rho=.66$), unit-level organizational commitment ($r=.36, \rho=.57$), and the negative relationship between servant leadership and unit-level turnover intention ($r=-.27, \rho=-.37$).

4.1.2 Hypothesis Testing.

Results for *Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3* are presented in Figure 2 (path coefficients) and Table 3 (fit statistics of all models). In Model A, controlling for transformational leadership, the path coefficients between servant leadership and the outcome variables of task performance ($\beta = .14, p < .01$), OCBs ($\beta = .30, p < .01$), trust in leader ($\beta = .43, p < .01$), organizational commitment ($\beta = .36, p < .01$), and job satisfaction ($\beta = .42, p < .01$) remained significant. In Model B, controlling for LMX, the significant path coefficients between servant leadership and the outcome variables remained significant for task performance ($\beta = .22, p < .01$), OCBs ($\beta = .29, p < .01$), justice perceptions ($\beta = .57, p < .01$), trust in leader ($\beta = .76, p < .01$), organizational commitment ($\beta = .55, p < .01$), organizational identification ($\beta = .49, p < .01$), job satisfaction ($\beta = .69, p < .01$), and turnover intention ($\beta = -.44, p < .01$). In accordance with Hypothesis 1 and 3, results of both Model A and Model B provided support to the incremental value of servant leadership at the individual level. In Model C, Consistent with Hypothesis 2, controlling for transformational leadership, the path coefficients between group-level servant leadership and the outcome variables of unit performance ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) and unit OCBs ($\beta = .45, p < .01$) supported the incremental value of servant leadership at the unit level.

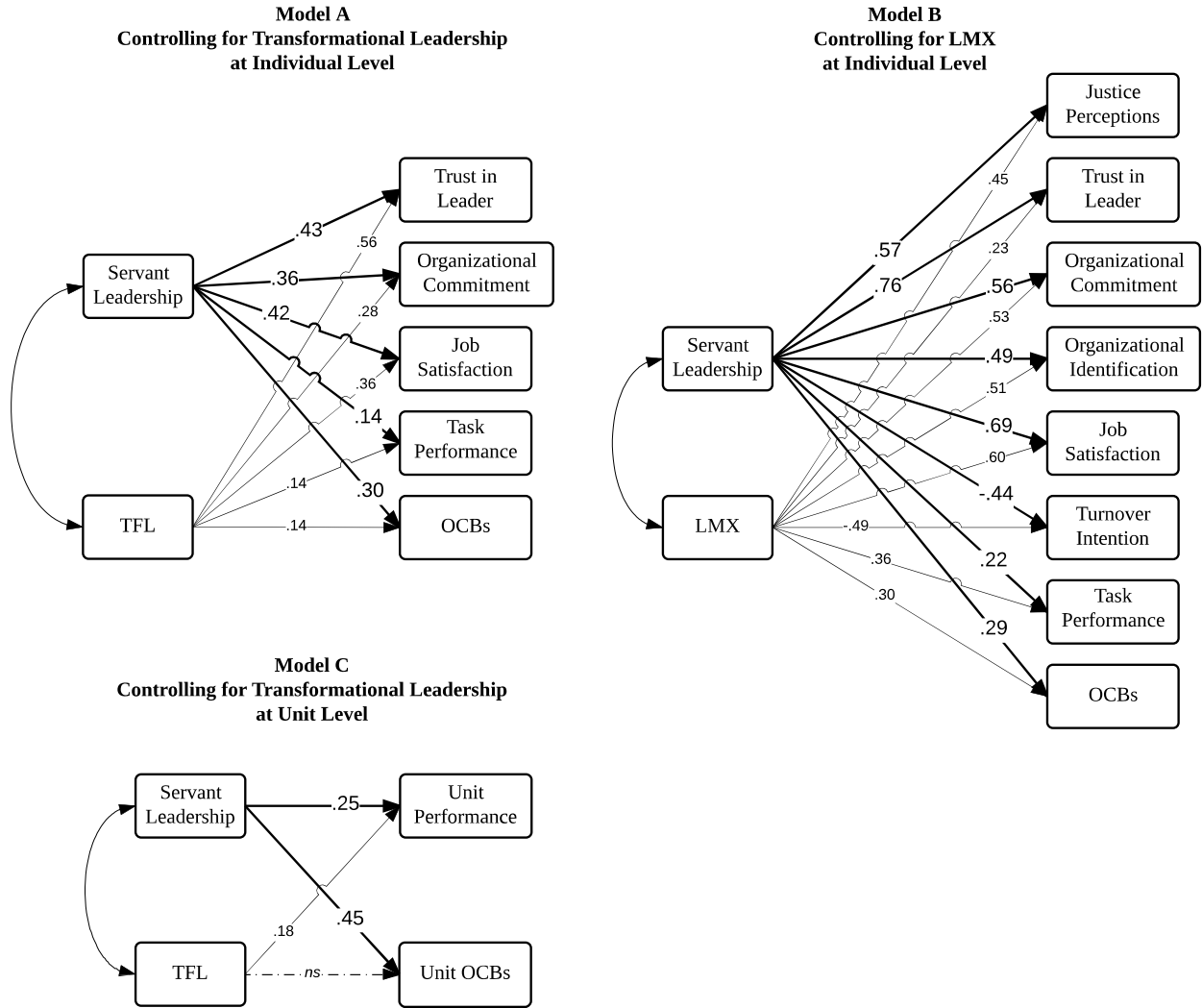
Table 2. Correlates of Servant Leadership

	k	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	z-test	95% CI		80% CV		Homogeneity Test Q	Fail-safe k	
							Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper			
Individual-Level Correlates													
Leadership													
Transformational	13	2598	0.59	0.58	0.18	11.28	0.48	0.68	0.34	0.81	91.67	***	62
LMX	33	8351	0.61	0.69	0.14	28.71	0.64	0.74	0.51	0.87	134.97	***	195
Perceptions and Attitudes													
Justice Perceptions	6	2188	0.53	0.51	0.23	5.37	0.33	0.70	0.21	0.81	86.26	***	25
Trust in Leader	12	2807	0.63	0.73	0.16	16.03	0.64	0.82	0.53	0.93	63.22	***	75
Organizational Trust	7	2030	0.56	0.52	0.24	5.64	0.34	0.70	0.21	0.83	102.51	***	29
Organizational Commitment	27	5970	0.42	0.50	0.23	11.36	0.42	0.59	0.21	0.80	274.04	***	109
Organizational Identification	5	1848	0.43	0.46	0.07	14.23	0.40	0.53	0.37	0.56	10.65	*	18
Job Satisfaction	33	7137	0.51	0.61	0.23	15.39	0.53	0.68	0.32	0.90	309.18	***	167
Needs Satisfaction	3	852	0.51	0.56	0.05	19.47	0.50	0.62	0.50	0.62	3.51	ns	14
Empowerment	6	1446	0.49	0.55	0.06	23.32	0.51	0.60	0.48	0.63	7.44	ns	27
Turnover Intention	10	3588	-0.26	-0.29	0.08	11.03	-0.34	-0.24	0.19	0.40	28.50	***	39
Behaviors													
Task Performance	18	4945	0.19	0.21	0.09	10.07	0.17	0.25	0.10	0.32	45.38	***	19
Aggregated OCB	33	12408	0.31	0.38	0.16	13.48	0.33	0.44	0.17	0.59	280.00	***	93
General OCBs	12	4130	0.25	0.30	0.12	8.78	0.24	0.37	0.15	0.46	57.76	***	24
OCB-I	16	6236	0.30	0.37	0.16	9.01	0.29	0.45	0.16	0.57	132.66	***	42
OCB-O	9	1860	0.31	0.39	0.11	10.52	0.32	0.47	0.25	0.54	22.44	**	26
Customer-Oriented OCBs	5	2478	0.30	0.38	0.18	4.74	0.22	0.54	0.15	0.61	63.58	***	14
Creative Behaviors	8	5078	0.28	0.34	0.12	8.00	0.25	0.42	0.18	0.49	63.40	**	19
Counterproductive Work Behaviors	6	2001	-0.14	-0.13	0.02	16.32	-0.14	-0.11	-0.15	-0.10	6.41	ns	14
Wellbeing													
Work Engagement	4	990	0.43	0.46	0.17	5.45	0.30	0.63	0.25	0.68	27.69	***	15
Burnout	8	4156	-0.26	-0.30	0.06	14.85	-0.34	-0.26	-0.38	-0.23	17.40	*	32
Unit-Level Correlates													
Unit-level Leadership													
Transformational	8	1306	0.53	0.58	0.12	13.80	0.50	0.67	0.43	0.74	19.04	**	39
Unit-level Perceptions and Attitudes													
Constructive Climates	12	1779	0.51	0.57	0.17	11.50	0.48	0.67	0.35	0.80	47.47	***	57
Service Climate	7	648	0.48	0.57	0.23	6.48	0.39	0.74	0.27	0.86	32.28	***	33
Team Potency	5	445	0.54	0.50	0.21	5.36	0.32	0.69	0.23	0.77	18.54	**	20
Trust in Management	3	315	0.63	0.66	0.06	18.50	0.59	0.73	0.58	0.74	2.24	ns	17
Organizational Commitment	4	344	0.36	0.57	0.28	4.09	0.30	0.84	0.21	0.93	22.76	***	19
Turover Intention	3	260	-0.27	-0.37	0.18	3.50	-0.58	-0.16	-0.61	-0.14	9.23	**	14
Unit-level Behaviors													
Unit-level Performance	15	1784	0.30	0.36	0.12	11.93	0.30	0.42	0.21	0.51	31.83	**	39
Unit-level OCBs	11	1266	0.39	0.47	0.13	12.24	0.39	0.55	0.31	0.63	23.54	**	41

Note. k = number of studies, N = cumulative sample size, r = average observed effect size; ρ = estimated population effect size, after correcting for sampling error and measurement error in both the predictor and the criterion; SD ρ = standard deviation of estimated population effect size; CI = confidence interval; CV = credibility interval; z-test = a test of significance of ρ ; Q is a test of homogeneity, with significant values suggesting heterogeneity in the underlying sample; fail-safe k = the number of unavailable studies with non-significant results that would have to exist to reduce the finding to a trivial value - negative values indicate non-robust findings;

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

Figure 2. Incremental Validity of Servant Leadership



Note. TFL = transformational leadership; LMX = leader-member exchange. Harmonic mean of Model A = 5794; Harmonic mean of Model B = 4418; Harmonic mean of Model C = 2028. Leadership measures that we controlled were indicated in the respected model. All paths were significant at $p < .01$ level, except that the path between TFL and unit OCBs was not significant.

Table 3. Meta-analytic Structural Equation Model Results

Model	CFI	NFI	TLI	GFI	SRMR	χ^2	df	RMSEA	AIC
<i>Incremental Validity</i>									
Model A	0.93	0.93	0.84	0.93	0.06	1618.39	9	0.18	1656.39
Model B	0.92	0.92	0.85	0.90	0.06	2541.95	25	0.15	2601.95
Model C	0.90	0.90	0.42	0.95	0.08	200.98	1	0.31	218.98
<i>Mediational Processes</i>									
Model 1	0.85	0.85	0.74	0.78	0.13	6093.64	25	0.23	6153.64
Model 2	0.97	0.97	0.90	0.95	0.06	1098.74	13	0.14	1182.74
Hypothesized Model	0.99	0.99	0.90	0.98	0.03	401.03	5	0.13	501.03

Note. Meta-analytic correlation matrix is available from the authors upon request. We obtained all the correlates of servant leadership through our meta-analysis. Other sources of meta-analytical correlations include Dulebohn, J. H., Bommer, W. H., Liden, R. C., Brouer, R. L., & Ferris, G. R. (2012); Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. (2002); Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O., & Ng, K. Y. (2001); Meuser, J. & Cao, X. (2012); Riketta, M. (2005); Riketta, M. (2002); Cohen-Charash, Y., & Spector, P. E. (2001); Wang, G., Oh, I. S., Courtright, S. H., & Colbert, A. E. (2011); Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000); Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990); Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001); LePine, J. A., Erez, A., & Johnson, D. E. (2002); Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993); Colquitt, J. A., Scott, B. A., Rodell, J. B., Long, D. M., Zapata, C. P., Conlon, D. E., & Wesson, M. J. (2013); Podsakoff, N. P., Whiting, S. W., Podsakoff, P. M., & Blume, B. D. (2009); Harrison, D. A., Newman, D. A., & Roth, P. L. (2006); and Zhao, H., Wayne, S. J., Glibkowski, B. C., & Bravo, J. (2007). If more than one meta-analysis reported on the same relationship, we used the estimate reflecting the greatest amount of data. In testing of incremental validity, we ran 3 models controlling for different leadership measures. Specifically, In Model A, we controlled for transformational leadership at individual level. In Model B, we controlled for LMX at individual level. In Model C, we controlled for transformational leadership at unit level. In testing of mediation effects, we controlled for LMX in all Model 1, Model 2, and the Hypothesized Model.

Table 3 also presents the fit statistics obtained from MA-SEM for testing mediation effects (*Hypothesis 4*). The hypothesized sequential mediational model, controlling for LMX provided the best fit to the data as well as statistics that overall meet the commonly accepted cutoff values: ($\chi^2 = 401.03$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$; $NFI = .99$; $CFI = .99$; $GFI = .98$; $SRMR = .03$; $TLI = .90$). Mediation tests supported our hypothesized indirect effects of servant leadership through justice perceptions on organizational commitment (.14, 95% CI: LL=.017, UL=.292), job satisfaction (.21, 95% CI: LL=.094, UL=.346), task performance (.15, 95% CI: LL=.024, UL=.310), but not organizational identification (.11, *ns*, 95% CI: LL=-.017, UL=.253), turnover intention (.03, *ns*, 95% CI: LL=-.100, UL=.158), or OCBs (.04, *ns*, 95% CI: LL=-.081, UL=.179). Similarly, the indirect effects of servant leadership through trust in leader showed support for organizational commitment (.17, 95% CI: LL=.020, UL=.390), organizational identification (.16, 95% CI: LL=.018, UL=.358), job satisfaction (.13, 95% CI: LL=.019, UL=.283), and turnover intention (-.23, 95% CI: LL=-.454, UL=-.064), but not for task performance (.02, *ns*, 95% CI: LL=-.143, UL=.192), or OCBs (.11, *ns*, 95% CI: LL=-.043, UL=.297). Thus, partial support was found for the mediation mechanisms proposed in *Hypothesis 4*. Table 4 presents the results of our hypotheses in a tabular form.

Table 4. Results for Hypotheses

No.	Hypothesis	Findings
1	Controlling for transformational leadership at the individual-level, servant leadership is positively related to employee perceptions and attitudes of (a) trust in leader, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) organizational commitment, as well as employee behaviors of (d) task performance and (e) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).	Supported
2	Controlling for LMX at the individual-level, servant leadership is positively related to employee perceptions and attitudes of (a) trust in leader, (b) justice perceptions, (c) job satisfaction, (d) organizational identification, and (e) organizational commitment, as well as employee behaviors of (f) task performance and (g) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), whereas is negatively related to (h) turnover intentions.	Supported
3	Controlling for other leadership approaches at the unit-level, servant leadership is positively related to unit-level behaviors of (a) performance and (b) OCBs.	Supported
4	The relationships between servant leadership and attitudinal outcomes of organizational commitment, organizational identification, job satisfaction and turnover intention, as well as behavioral outcomes of job performance and OCBs, are mediated by (a) trust in leader and (b) fairness perceptions.	Partially Supported

4.3 Supplementary Analyses

Our meta-review summarized and uncovered multiple measurements of servant leadership that can potentially influence relationships with its correlates. This is consistent with the measurement and validity concerns raised by researchers (van Dierendonck, 2011). Therefore, we conducted supplementary analysis that examined if the type of measure impacted the effect sizes of servant leadership on the examined outcomes. Additionally, since the studies included varied in terms of the source of the sample, we examined if variability in cultural dimensions played a role in the outcomes of servant leadership.

4.3.1 Measure Breakdowns. Comparisons between each of the examined categories (available when k of each category is larger than 2) are presented in Table 5. We observed that the measure used had impact on the effect sizes of servant leadership, but the directions of influence were not consistent. Significant differences (Q test, $p < .05$) were found in 8 out of 12 breakdown comparisons. Specifically, Ehrhart's scale was associated with transformational leadership at .57 ($k=4$), whereas Liden and colleagues' (2008) scale and its variations were associated with transformational leadership at .43 ($k=5$). Ehrhart's scale was associated with LMX at .54 ($k=4$), whereas Liden and colleagues' (2008) scale and its variations were associated with LMX at .76 ($k=5$). Studies using Ehrhart's scale found a smaller effect of servant leadership on trust in leader (.62, $k=4$) and task performance (.20, $k=5$), compared to studies using Liden et al.'s scales (trust in leader, .74, $k=2$; and task performance, .26, $k=5$). However, studies using Ehrhart's scale found a bigger effect of servant leadership on turnover intention (-.33, $k=5$), compared to studies using other scales (-.27, $k=4$). At the unit level, studies using Ehrhart's scales were associated with constructive climates at .70 ($k=6$), unit performance at .30 ($k=6$), and unit OCBs at .40 ($k=5$), whereas studies using Liden and colleagues' measures were associated with constructive climates at .46 ($k=5$), unit performance at .40 ($k=8$), and unit OCBs at .52 ($k=6$).

4.3.2 Cultural Variability. We further examined cultural variability in reactions to servant leadership based on the following cultural characteristics, such as power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance across samples from different countries (Hofstede, 2001). Power distance refers to the extent to which the individuals within a country tend to accept social stratification and unequal distribution of power, while the individualism dimension describes the extent to which individual interests prevail over collective interest and ideologies of individual freedom prevail over ideologies of equality. Masculinity stands for the extent to which a society emphasizes ambition, acquisition of wealth, and differences between male and female gender roles. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance captures societal differences related to tolerance of the unpredictable, such that organizations operating in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance

scores display high tolerance for ambiguity and chaos, while the desire for predictability is a hallmark of organizations in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

We analyzed all correlates of servant leadership for which we had at least three studies in each of the sub-groups of cultural dimensions (e.g., high and low power distance subgroup). The results summarized in Table 5 and Table 6 present significant cultural differences regarding key correlates of servant leadership at individual-level as well as unit-level. It is important to note that these cultural moderator analyses were based on a small number of studies, and therefore, the results should be interpreted as suggestive rather than conclusive.

Table 5. Measures Breakdown

	k	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	z-test	95% CI		80% CV		Q Test
							Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	
Individual Level											
Transformational Leadership											
Ehrhart	4	674	0.53	0.57	0.04	25.45	0.52	0.61	0.51	0.62	**
Liden	5	880	0.49	0.43	0.16	5.92	0.29	0.57	0.22	0.63	
Other scales	4	1044	0.77	0.71	0.15	9.57	0.56	0.85	0.52	0.90	
LMX											
Ehrhart	4	1308	0.48	0.54	0.16	6.64	0.38	0.69	0.33	0.74	*
Liden	5	1103	0.74	0.76	0.10	17.60	0.68	0.85	0.64	0.89	
Other scales	24	5940	0.60	0.72	0.11	32.52	0.67	0.76	0.58	0.85	
Organizational Commitment											
Ehrhart	7	2152	0.39	0.43	0.19	5.87	0.29	0.58	0.18	0.68	
Liden	13	1624	0.39	0.47	0.15	11.37	0.39	0.55	0.28	0.66	
Other scales	7	2194	0.50	0.59	0.27	5.71	0.39	0.80	0.24	0.95	
Job Satisfaction											
Ehrhart	6	1391	0.49	0.59	0.14	10.67	0.48	0.70	0.42	0.76	
Liden	5	1082	0.44	0.52	0.23	5.03	0.32	0.73	0.23	0.82	
Other scales	22	4664	0.53	0.63	0.24	12.18	0.53	0.73	0.32	0.94	
Trust in Leader											
Ehrhart	4	706	0.51	0.62	0.27	4.57	0.35	0.88	0.27	0.96	**
Liden	2	436	0.67	0.74	0.04	25.39	0.68	0.79	0.68	0.79	
Other scales	6	1665	0.70	0.77	0.08	24.53	0.71	0.83	0.67	0.87	
Turnover Intention											
Ehrhart	5	1355	-0.30	-0.33	0.05	14.27	-0.38	-0.29	-0.40	-0.27	**
Liden	1	293	-0.12								
Other scales	4	1940	-0.25	-0.27	0.09	5.93	-0.36	-0.18	-0.39	-0.16	**
Task Performance											
Ehrhart	5	1290	0.19	0.20	0.11	4.18	0.11	0.30	0.06	0.34	**
Liden	5	1224	0.24	0.26	0.06	9.32	0.21	0.32	0.18	0.34	
Other scales	8	2431	0.16	0.18	0.09	5.55	0.12	0.25	0.06	0.30	
Creative Behaviors											
Ehrhart	4	3358	0.33	0.33	0.10	6.89	0.24	0.43	0.21	0.46	
Liden	3	1440	0.26	0.37	0.16	4.12	0.20	0.55	0.17	0.57	
OCBs											
Ehrhart	13	6646	0.31	0.36	0.11	11.93	0.30	0.42	0.22	0.50	
Liden	11	3223	0.30	0.41	0.18	7.43	0.30	0.52	0.18	0.64	
Other scales	9	2539	0.32	0.40	0.23	5.27	0.25	0.55	0.11	0.70	
Unit Level											
Constructive Climates											
Ehrhart	6	699	0.58	0.70	0.18	9.59	0.55	0.84	0.47	0.92	**
Liden	5	1000	0.41	0.46	0.07	13.63	0.39	0.52	0.36	0.55	
Unit-level Performance											
Ehrhart	6	615	0.27	0.30	0.13	5.46	0.19	0.41	0.13	0.47	**
Liden	8	1112	0.34	0.40	0.09	13.44	0.35	0.46	0.30	0.51	
Unit-level OCBs											
Ehrhart	5	485	0.33	0.40	0.14	6.43	0.28	0.52	0.22	0.57	**
Liden	6	781	0.43	0.52	0.09	14.47	0.45	0.59	0.41	0.63	

Note. k = number of studies, N = cumulative sample size, r = average observed effect size; ρ = estimated population effect size, after correcting for sampling error and measurement error in both the predictor and the criterion; SD ρ = standard deviation of estimated population effect size; CI = confidence interval; CV = credibility interval; z-test = a test of significance of ρ ; Q test (Hedges & Olkin, 1985) indicates difference in variances across categories, *** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$.

Table 6. Cultural Variability: Individual Level Correlates

		k	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	z-test	95% CI		80% CV		Q Test
								Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	
Transformational Leadership												
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	4	819	0.67	0.71	0.12	11.80	0.59	0.82	0.55	0.86	**
	Low	9	1779	0.55	0.53	0.21	7.72	0.40	0.66	0.27	0.79	
LMX												
Power distance	High	13	3705	0.56	0.65	0.16	14.29	0.56	0.74	0.44	0.86	*
	Low	20	4646	0.64	0.73	0.10	32.63	0.68	0.77	0.60	0.86	
Individualism	High	15	3446	0.66	0.73	0.08	35.68	0.69	0.77	0.63	0.83	**
	Low	18	4905	0.56	0.66	0.16	17.15	0.59	0.74	0.45	0.87	
Masculinity	High	20	4621	0.62	0.71	0.08	38.61	0.68	0.75	0.61	0.82	*
	Low	13	2528	0.58	0.67	0.18	13.23	0.57	0.77	0.43	0.90	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	3	855	0.65	0.80	0.13	10.82	0.65	0.94	0.63	0.96	**
	Low	30	7496	0.6	0.68	0.13	27.69	0.63	0.77	0.74	0.85	
Trust in Leader												
Individualism	High	4	1527	0.72	0.78	0.08	20.39	0.70	0.85	0.68	0.88	**
	Low	8	1280	0.58	0.66	0.20	9.27	0.52	0.80	0.40	0.92	
Masculinity	High	4	1527	0.72	0.78	0.08	20.39	0.70	0.85	0.68	0.88	**
	Low	8	1280	0.58	0.66	0.20	9.27	0.52	0.80	0.40	0.92	
Justice Perceptions												
Masculinity	High	3	720	0.63	0.68	0.07	16.85	0.60	0.76	0.59	0.77	***
	Low	3	1468	0.43	0.39	0.24	2.81	0.12	0.66	0.08	0.70	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	3	1250	0.43	0.39	0.24	2.81	0.12	0.67	0.08	0.70	***
	Low	3	938	0.63	0.68	0.06	19.08	0.61	0.75	0.60	0.76	
Job Satisfaction												
Power distance	High	10	1963	0.47	0.52	0.26	6.26	0.36	0.68	0.18	0.85	*
	Low	23	5174	0.53	0.64	0.20	15.34	0.56	0.72	0.38	0.90	
Individualism	High	23	5174	0.53	0.64	0.20	15.34	0.56	0.72	0.38	0.90	*
	Low	10	1963	0.47	0.52	0.26	6.26	0.36	0.68	0.18	0.85	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	8	2005	0.53	0.64	0.27	6.59	0.45	0.83	0.29	0.99	*
	Low	25	5132	0.51	0.59	0.20	14.67	0.51	0.67	0.33	0.85	
Organizational Commitment												
Power distance	High	7	2226	0.54	0.57	0.28	5.36	0.36	0.78	0.21	0.93	*
	Low	20	3744	0.37	0.47	0.18	11.29	0.38	0.55	0.30	0.70	
Individualism	High	20	3744	0.37	0.47	0.18	11.29	0.38	0.55	0.23	0.70	*
	Low	7	2226	0.54	0.57	0.28	5.36	0.36	0.78	0.21	0.93	
Masculinity	High	17	2834	0.38	0.46	0.19	9.86	0.37	0.56	0.22	0.71	*
	Low	10	3136	0.48	0.54	0.25	6.71	0.38	0.70	0.21	0.86	
Task Performance												
Power distance	High	8	2343	0.21	0.23	0.11	6.12	0.15	0.30	0.09	0.36	*
	Low	10	2602	0.17	0.19	0.07	9.08	0.15	0.23	0.11	0.28	
Individualism	High	10	2602	0.17	0.19	0.07	9.08	0.15	0.23	0.11	0.28	*
	Low	8	2343	0.21	0.23	0.11	6.12	0.15	0.30	0.09	0.36	
Masculinity	High	9	2355	0.16	0.18	0.07	7.91	0.14	0.23	0.09	0.27	*
	Low	9	2590	0.22	0.23	0.10	7.18	0.17	0.29	0.11	0.35	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	5	1283	0.28	0.32	0.05	13.44	0.27	0.37	0.25	0.39	**
	Low	13	3662	0.15	0.17	0.07	8.39	0.13	0.21	0.08	0.26	
OCBs												
Power distance	High	20	6188	0.28	0.33	0.14	10.70	0.27	0.39	0.15	0.50	*
	Low	13	6220	0.35	0.43	0.17	9.29	0.34	0.52	0.22	0.65	
Individualism	High	13	6220	0.35	0.43	0.17	9.29	0.34	0.52	0.22	0.65	*
	Low	20	6188	0.28	0.33	0.14	10.70	0.27	0.39	0.15	0.50	
Masculinity	High	12	6081	0.36	0.44	0.17	9.13	0.34	0.53	0.22	0.65	**
	Low	21	6327	0.27	0.32	0.14	10.88	0.27	0.38	0.15	0.50	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	14	3838	0.28	0.34	0.11	11.37	0.28	0.40	0.20	0.48	*
	Low	19	8570	0.32	0.40	0.18	9.78	0.32	0.48	0.17	0.63	

		k	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	z-test	95% CI		80% CV		Q Test
								Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	
Transformational Leadership												
Power distance	High	5	932	0.52	0.61	0.03	45.72	0.59	0.64	0.57	0.65	**
	Low	3	374	0.56	0.52	0.20	4.59	0.30	0.74	0.27	0.77	
Individualism	High	3	374	0.56	0.52	0.20	4.59	0.30	0.74	0.27	0.77	**
	Low	5	932	0.52	0.61	0.03	45.72	0.59	0.64	0.57	0.65	
Masculinity	High	3	374	0.56	0.52	0.20	4.59	0.30	0.74	0.27	0.77	**
	Low	5	932	0.52	0.61	0.03	45.72	0.59	0.64	0.57	0.65	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	2	183	0.62	0.53	0.28	2.71	0.15	0.92	0.95	0.89	*
	Low	6	1123	0.51	0.60	0.04	38.32	0.56	0.63	0.55	0.64	
Unit-level Performance												
Power distance	High	7	964	0.33	0.39	0.10	10.49	0.31	0.46	0.26	0.51	*
	Low	8	820	0.27	0.33	0.13	7.30	0.24	0.41	0.16	0.49	
Individualism	High	8	820	0.27	0.33	0.13	7.30	0.24	0.41	0.16	0.49	*
	Low	7	964	0.33	0.39	0.10	10.49	0.31	0.46	0.26	0.51	
Masculinity	High	8	820	0.27	0.33	0.13	7.30	0.24	0.41	0.16	0.49	*
	Low	7	964	0.33	0.39	0.10	10.49	0.31	0.46	0.26	0.51	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	6	562	0.27	0.30	0.15	5.02	0.18	0.42	0.11	0.49	**
	Low	9	1222	0.32	0.39	0.09	13.30	0.33	0.44	0.28	0.50	
Unit-level OCBs												
Power distance	High	5	714	0.46	0.54	0.07	16.64	0.48	0.61	0.45	0.64	**
	Low	6	552	0.33	0.39	0.12	7.67	0.29	0.49	0.23	0.55	
Individualism	High	6	552	0.33	0.39	0.12	7.67	0.29	0.49	0.23	0.55	**
	Low	5	714	0.46	0.54	0.07	16.64	0.48	0.61	0.45	0.64	
Masculinity	High	6	552	0.33	0.39	0.12	7.67	0.29	0.49	0.23	0.55	**
	Low	5	714	0.46	0.54	0.07	16.64	0.48	0.61	0.45	0.64	
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	6	528	0.31	0.38	0.14	6.85	0.27	0.49	0.21	0.55	**
	Low	5	738	0.48	0.54	0.04	27.54	0.50	0.58	0.49	0.60	

Eleven paired comparisons showed statistically significant differences between high and low power distance sub-groups (Q test, $p < .05$). More specifically, the effects of servant leadership on LMX, job satisfaction, turnover intention, burnout, OCBs, and unit level constructive climates were stronger in low power distance samples. In contrast, its effects on organizational commitment, task performance, unit level transformational leadership, unit performance, and unit level OCBs were stronger in high power distance samples. Similarly, 11 paired comparisons for individualism were statistically significant, summarized in Table 5. Interestingly, the effects of servant leadership on LMX, job satisfaction, trust in leader, OCBs, and unit level constructive climates were stronger in high individualism samples, whereas its effects on organizational commitment, burnout, task performance, unit level transformational leadership, unit performance, and unit level OCBs were stronger in low individualism samples. Thirteen paired comparisons showed a significant difference between high and low masculinity sub-groups. The effects of servant leadership on LMX, trust in leader, justice perceptions, OCBs, and unit level constructive climates were stronger in high masculinity samples, whereas its effects on organizational commitment, turnover intention, burnout, task performance, counterproductive work behaviors, unit level transformational leadership, unit performance, and unit level OCBs were stronger in low

masculinity samples. Finally, only 11 paired comparisons on uncertainty avoidance were significant. The effects of servant leadership on individual level transformational leadership, LMX, job satisfaction, task performance, counterproductive work behaviors, and unit level constructive climates were stronger in high uncertainty avoidance group, whereas its effects on justice perceptions, individual OCBs, unit level transformational leadership, unit performance, and unit OCBs were stronger in low uncertainty avoidance group.

5 Discussion

Despite forty years of research, it has been debated whether servant leadership is a unique and valuable theory of leadership or is an aspirational model of leadership. In fact, it has even been claimed that “servant leadership...models simply do not work in the real world” (Mumford & Fried, 2014, p. 630). In an attempt to objectively assess such claims, we used a unique combination of qualitative and quantitative meta-analytic methods to take stock of the available research and gauge whether servant leadership is unrealistically optimistic, that is, ‘too good to be true’ (Whetstone, 2002:390). Combining the power of multiple primary studies, we confirmed the hypothesis that even when controlling transformational and/or LMX, servant leadership is related to important individual- and unit-level outcomes thus responding to criticisms that servant leadership is mostly aspirational, rather than being a meaningful and practical theory of leadership (De Waal & Sivro, 2012; Mumford & Fried, 2014). Our results assert that servant leaders influence a variety of employee attitudes and behaviors, with stronger impact on some attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction) and moderate on others (e.g., turnover intention) as well as stronger impact on some behaviors (e.g., OCB) and moderate on other behaviors (e.g., performance). The consistency in our findings, with effects ranging from moderate to strong, with respect to a large number of outcomes establish servant leadership as a robust leadership framework. Furthermore, our supplementary analysis illustrated that despite a plurality of measures, servant leadership is a unique construct capable of making value-added contributions to the leadership literature.

Our study took a comprehensive stock of how societal and national cultural norms affect the relationship servant leadership and its correlates. Our findings revealed a complex array of differences across cultures, which at times are distinct from those reported for other leadership approaches such as LMX. Our findings should prompt future theorizing and empirics to understand this phenomenon. Our investigation also set out to understand the mechanism underlying the effects of servant leadership on valued workplace outcomes. Results from the meta-analytic path analyses demonstrate that trust and justice perceptions operate as mediating mechanisms between servant leadership and employee outcomes. Moreover, the fit statistics revealed support for the hypothesized causal ordering between attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. We contend that the mediation results reported here advance servant leadership theory, which in turn may inspire researchers to develop and empirically test enhanced models that further contribute to servant leadership theory. Our findings hint at the potential for integrating different theoretical perspectives and have important implications for how servant leadership is conceptualized, operationalized, and executed.

5.1 Theoretical Implications.

Our results yielded robust relationships between servant leadership and desirable employee outcomes even after controlling for transformational leadership or LMX with magnitude of the correlations ranging from .21 to .73. One of the interesting observations was that servant leadership appears to have stronger effect on OCBs than on job performance. It could be that servant leadership behaviors signal leader's willingness to put extra effort into the relationship, which then motivates the followers to reciprocate by contributing beyond the job requirements and norms- a premise consistent with the social exchange perspective.

Our findings also reveal two issues that are worth attending to. First, most papers were based on studies using composite measures. Although easy to apply, composite measures preclude insight into the differences in effects of specific dimensions. Second, although Liden and colleagues (2015) examined the relationship between the Liden et al. 28- and 7-items scales with Ehrhart's (2004) scale and found them to be correlated .94 and .90 respectively, in the current investigation we found subtle differences in the results based on the servant leadership measure used. These results suggest that it may be best to follow van Dierendonck's (2011) recommendation to use one of the only two measures (Liden et al., 2008, 2015 or van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) that underwent rigorous scale development.

One of the most troubling omissions in the extant research is the absence of theoretical mechanisms bridging servant leadership and outcome variables. Integrating social exchange theory and organizational justice perspective, we reasoned that employees' perceptions of trust and fairness in the servant leader translate to positive work outcomes. This theory-based process model ties not only the outcomes previously examined, but also offers to accommodate variables that are yet to be examined. Our unifying framework tying independent, mediators, and outcome variables should facilitate future theory development and quantitative studies. It also opens the door for exploring plausible process models based on alternate theoretical models so that there is fine-tuned understanding of the nomological position of servant leadership among other variables.

Our results revealed heterogeneity in effect sizes. Due to the relatively small sample sizes, our analyses were unable to satisfactorily explain most of the variation. Our exploration, however, suggests a few potentially fruitful avenues. The moderating effects of the measure used may be explained by differences among the servant leadership dimensions underlying each measure. The variation in effect sizes may also be explained by a number of individual differences.

Servant leadership effectiveness is intrinsically dependent on the values, beliefs and norms shares by the members of society and nation. Our results suggest that individualism and masculinity strengthen the relationship between servant leadership and trust in leader. Masculinity strengthens while uncertainty avoidance weakens the relationship between servant leadership and justice perceptions. As for behavioral correlates, power distance and uncertainty avoidance strengthen the relationship between servant leadership and task performance, but weaken its relationship with OCBs at individual level. In contrast, individualism and masculinity strengthen servant leadership's effect on individual level OCBs, but weaken the effect on task performance. In addition, masculinity weakens the effect of servant leadership on counterproductive work behaviors, whereas uncertainty avoidance strengthens its effect. The results were more consistent at the unit level, power distance strengthens while individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty

avoidance weaken the effect of servant leadership on unit performance and unit OCBs. Interestingly, these findings are distinct from what has been reported for LMX (e.g., Rockstuhl et al., 2012), a variable that is consistently correlated at .50 or higher with servant leadership. While these preliminary results are interesting, the small sample of studies utilized in the analysis and findings different from those reported with respect to LMX, preclude their consideration as conclusive evidence warranting further investigation in future studies. We also observed mean differences for servant leadership as well as outcome variables across cultures, which may provide alternative explanations for the culture moderating effects. These potential differences between cultures may have important implications for theoreticians and practitioners.

Despite its merits, our study is not without limitations. Our results speak well to the existing knowledge, but we are limited by the primary studies we summarized. Servant leadership research, at least quantitatively, is still in its infancy. A second limitation of our study concerns our inability to test other interesting research questions, because of the lack of the adequate number of studies needed for meta-analytic investigation. For example, we were unable to test if servant leadership has more (or less) effect in non-traditional work arrangements, such as those employing part-time and seasonal workers. Similarly, we could only speculate if individual characteristics, such as personality, have an effect on servant leadership, as there were not enough studies reporting on these relationships. Our meta-analytic review suffered from the limitation of relying too heavily on cross-sectional coefficients and single source data, because they represented a vast majority of included studies.

5.2 Practical Implications and Future Directions.

Our results suggest that servant leadership is not merely a fanciful idea but it is a useful precursor to important employee outcomes. In practical terms HR professionals and top management can note that followers with a servant leader may experience greater trust and fairness, which then result in positive work attitudes and behaviors. These results hint at the importance of a prioritization of followers' interests. Organizations may be able to use servant leadership as conduit for fulfilling both employees' needs and organizational promises.

The potential for future research in servant leadership is excitingly promising. Although considerable evidence has accumulated on the positive relationships between servant leadership and work outcomes, more knowledge is needed about antecedents of, and context surrounding servant leadership. We recommend that researchers develop more detailed and complex models wherein they examine the degree to which individual differences (e.g., demographic and personality), group variables (e.g., justice climate), or organizational/industry level factors (e.g., organizational culture) alter the strength of relationship between servant leadership and its correlates. If research on other theories of leadership is any indication (for example leader-member exchange theory, Dulebohn et al., 2012) then the effects of servant leadership may also be influenced substantially by elements of the context – including those of national culture. We also recommend that researchers assess the dimensions of servant leadership separately in order to better understand the aspects of servant leadership that drive relationships with each outcome. Similarly, dependent variables may be examined at a dimensional level. For example, many outcomes, such as OCB, have varied meaning depending on the target of the OCBs. Likewise

justice and commitment have been shown to have multiple dimensions or foci. Future research should investigate whether some dimensions of servant leadership relate more strongly with selected outcome dimensions. Another direction for future research is to ensure more consistency in how servant leadership is operationalized and measured. As van Dierendonck (2011) emphasized that it may be best for researchers to use only the Liden et al. (2008) or the van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) scales given their psychometric superiority over other measures. Future researchers also need to pay greater attention to the reciprocal nature of the leader-follower relationship (Van Dierendonck, 2011), and the consequences for other stakeholders (e.g., community). Finally, future research may benefit from longitudinally designed studies and using multi-source data.

Results of our meta-analysis provide support for the efficacy of servant leadership. Even when controlling for leader-member exchange and/or transformational leadership, servant leadership demonstrated significant relationships with key individual-level and team-level outcomes. By combining qualitative and quantitative reviews of servant leadership research since its formal inception, we were able to provide a 45-year history of discoveries to show that servant leadership is a distinctive and valuable leadership theory.

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Note. Data from all the articles of these references was included in our meta-analysis except for the articles marked with a star.

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