

SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT TO A SUPERVISOR

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A relationship between employee commitment to a supervisor and reduced levels of employee turnover has been found in previous research studies (Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009). Since turnover is often associated with high costs, understanding how to retain valuable human resource talent is of increasing importance. In this study, Fields and Winston's (2010) servant leadership instrument, Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert's (1996) employee commitment to a supervisor scale, and Stogdill's (1963) supervisor initiation of structure subscale are used to measure the predictive effect of servant leadership on employee commitment to a supervisor, beyond the effect of a supervisor's task-oriented behavior. One hundred and forty nine of 207 fulltime employees from a university in the U.S. responded to a web-hosted survey that was distributed via email. A multiple regression analysis was conducted that controlled for employee age, employee tenure with the supervisor, employee gender, employee/supervisor gender similarity/dissimilarity, and supervisor task-oriented behavior. Servant leadership was found to have a significant ($p < .001$) effect on employee commitment to a supervisor, shown by an increased R-Square value of 0.224 (22.4%). This study adds empirical evidence to the construct validity of servant leadership theory and the positive influence said behavior has on employee commitment.

Employee turnover is significantly costly to employers, both in financial and non-financial terms (Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010; Hillmer, Hillmer, & McRoberts, 2004; Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Karsan, 2007; Mukamel et al., 2009; O'Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007; Parsa, Tesone, & Templeton, 2009; Waldman, Kelly, Arora, & Smith, 2010; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). Supervisors have been found to be a significant factor, both directly and indirectly, in deterring employee voluntary turnover (Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Kane-Sellers, 2008). Employee commitment to supervisors has been discovered to play a major role in employee retention (Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009). Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert (1996) found that employee commitment to supervisors is also positively related to job performance and is more strongly linked to performance than employee commitment to the overall organization is linked to performance. Since employee commitment to supervisors has empirically shown a relationship with higher employee retention and improved job performance, research of the factors that might cause

heightened employee commitment to the supervisor seems to be a worthwhile pursuit. This study seeks to examine whether or not the servant leadership behavior of a supervisor could be one of these influential factors.

Servant Leadership in the Literature

Investigation of servant leadership theory as a construct is needed because researchers of the theory have just begun the quest for empirical evidence and causal outcomes (Yukl, 2010) and the theory is not without its critics (Andersen, 2009). Movement by researchers towards this end has commenced. In the last decade servant leadership has gained momentum not only among academics, but within the circles of organizational consultants and corporate leaders (Yukl, 2010). The reason for the recent attraction to servant leadership is most likely due to the ethical wavering and failures of top leaders in multiple industries (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Yukl, 2010). Yukl (2010) suggests that the potential benefits of servant leadership behaviors are likely to be related with areas such as improved employee trust, loyalty, and satisfaction with supervisors.

Servant Leadership's Focus and Lack of Focus

Servant leadership's values and behaviors are focused on helping people (Yukl, 2010). The distinctive, central focus and base of servant leadership behaviors, as explained by Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008) and Fields and Winston (2010), is serving the needs of followers. However, servant leadership theory has had multiple dimensions and constructs proposed and studied by researchers over the years. Russell and Stone (2002) found 20 servant leadership attributes in the literature (p. 147). Beyond these attributes, Fields and Winston (2010) identified 25 more servant leadership characteristics (p. 22). Table 1 provides a detailed list of the 45 servant leadership attributes listed between the two studies.

Table 1: Forty-five Servant Leadership Attributes Identified from Russell and Stone's (2002) Literature Review and Field and Winston's (2010) Literature Review

Russell & Stone's Lit. Review	Fields & Winston's Lit. Review
appreciation of others	altruism
communication	authentic self
competence	behaving ethically
credibility	caring for others
delegation	conceptual skills
empowerment	covenantal relationship
encouragement	creating value for the community
honesty	creating value for those outside the organization
influence	developing others
integrity	emotional healing
listening	forming relationships with subordinates
modeling	goal-setting
persuasion	helping subordinates grow and succeed

pioneering	humility
service	leader's agapao
stewardship	persuasion mapping
teaching	putting subordinates first
trust	responsible morality
visibility	servant-hood
vision	shared decision making
	team-building
	transcendent spirituality
	transforming influence
	voluntary subordination
	wisdom

Servant Leadership's Progress as a Construct

Yukl (2010) explicates that although most of the evidence regarding the effects of servant leadership has been conceptual and qualitative in nature, recently validated instruments and quantitative studies have begun to move the servant leadership construct from the conceptual to the empirical. For example, Fields and Winston (2010) sought to simplify the servant leadership construct and design and test a simplified measurement tool to assess the servant leadership construct. The 45 attributes of servant leadership itemized in Table 1 above show the level of complexity to which the servant leadership construct has arrived as researchers have sought to explore this leadership phenomenon. Some of the dimensions of servant leadership have overlapped with other leadership theories, which often confuse the servant leadership construct's distinctiveness (Fields & Winston, 2010; Liden, et al., 2008). The pursuit for construct validity and for reliable and validated instruments, such as seen in Fields and Winston's (2010) study, brings a refreshing clarity to the servant leadership construct and heightened hopes for more concrete and clear exploration of the theory.

Servant Leadership and Employee Commitment

A positive relationship between servant leadership and employee commitment has been conceptually proposed (Jacobs, 2006; Russell & Stone, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2010). Although limited in number, servant leadership theory and employee commitment has begun to be qualitatively studied by such researchers as Ebener and O'Connell (2010) and Winston (2004), and empirically confirmed by investigators such as Hu and Liden (2011) and Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008). However, the relationship between servant leadership and employee commitment *to a supervisor* has not been quantitatively researched in the academe.

Statement of Problem, Purpose of Study, and Model

The dearth of research in the literature on the relationship between the variables of employee commitment to a supervisor (WeiBo, Kaur, & Jun, 2010) and servant leadership (Yukl, 2010) beckons investigation. The purpose of this empirical study is to explore the question, "What impact does the servant leadership behaviors of a supervisor have on employee

commitment to the supervisor, beyond the effect of the task-oriented actions of the supervisor?" The research model, as seen in Figure 1, examines servant leadership behaviors of the leader as perceived by the employee as an independent variable that has a positive relationship with the dependent variable of employee commitment to the supervisor as attested to by the employee.

Figure 1: Research Model



Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is: Servant leadership uniquely and positively contributes to employee commitment to the supervisor after controlling for task-oriented behaviors of the supervisor and the demographic variables of employee age, employee/supervisor gender similarity/dissimilarity, and tenure of the employee as a subordinate to the supervisor. In other words, employees will be more committed to supervisors that exhibit higher levels of servant leadership behaviors than supervisors that exhibit lesser levels of servant leadership behaviors, after controlling for the effects of task-oriented behaviors of the supervisor, and the four demographic variables. Further theoretical reasoning for this hypothesis will now be presented. Yukl (2010) described the landmark organizational studies conducted by the University of Michigan in the early 1950s to have found the relations-oriented behaviors of leaders, such as helping to develop subordinates and further their careers, as highly effective in leading groups to improved levels of production. Yukl (2010) likewise referenced the landmark studies conducted by Ohio State University in the 1950s as showing a positive correlation between a supervisor's level of consideration of employees and employee turnover rate. In other words, supervisors that exhibited higher levels of consideration of employees to a certain critical point retained more of their employees; thus, a lower voluntary turnover rate existed among the followers of said supervisors. Winston (2004) theoretically proposed, building upon the work of Patterson (2003), that a leader's foundational concern for employees that is manifest in servant leadership relational behaviors towards employees will cause and inspire employee concern for and commitment back to the leader.

Liden et al. (2008) explained from the literature that a servant leader develops long-term relationship with employees, and the relationship literature has shown that the behaviors a relational leader (such as a servant leader) exhibit results in employees replicating the behaviors of the leader. Thus, since the focus of the servant leader is to serve and develop followers, which requires a level commitment to the follower, would it not seem probable that a similar service and commitment back to the leader would result? Liden et al. (2008) empirically found a correlation between servant leadership behaviors and employee organizational commitment. Based upon the empirical findings and theoretical premises from the literature, this study expects to find that a higher employee commitment to the supervisor (similar to Winston's (2004) theoretical proposal) to be inspired by and positively connected to the initiating relational behaviors of a servant leader towards followers.

Lastly, the Ohio State and University of Michigan studies referenced above found that a leader's relational behaviors and task-oriented behaviors are behaviors that make leaders

effective (Yukl, 2010). This study measured supervisor task-oriented behaviors as part of the control variables and analyzed how they relate to employee commitment to the supervisor in comparison and contrast with the effects of the relational-oriented behaviors of servant leadership on employee commitment to the supervisor. Servant leadership, which penetrates the human higher-order need for relationship beyond task-oriented engagement with supervisors, is expected to be shown to result in a higher and more positive effect on employee commitment to the supervisor than simply engaging employees in a task-oriented manner.

Research Method

Sample

A university located in the southwestern region of the United States with 207 fulltime employees participated in this study. One hundred and forty nine university employees responded to this study's survey, representing a 72% response rate. Fifty two percent of respondents were female and 41.6% were male, while 6.7% of respondents' gender was unreported. Fifty eight percent of all respondents reported having supervisors that were the same gender as themselves, while 33.6% did not and 8.1% chose not to respond. A cross-tabulation analysis revealed that 52.6% of women and 23% of men have female supervisors. The age-group demographics were: 18-30 years old (18.1%), 31-45 years old (24.8%), 46-60 years old (32.9%), above 60 years old (16.1%), and not reported (8.1%). The tenure of respondents working for their current supervisor was reported as follows: less than 1 year (29.5%), 1-3 years (40.3%), 4-5 years (11.4%), more than 5 years (11.4%), and not reported (7.4%). The sample group is made up of both staff and faculty. Adjunct faculty were not included in the sample. One hundred and eighteen out of the 149 employees, who responded to the survey, actually filled out the survey without any missing values; thus, these 118 surveys were used when running the statistical correlation and multivariate analyses.

Measures

Servant leadership. Fields and Winston (2010), together with a panel of experts on servant leadership theory, formulated a new servant leadership scale to empirically research the distinctive behavior of the servant leadership construct. The single dimension tool, detailed in Table A1, seeks to measure the distinctive behaviors of servant leadership that focus on the leader's service to and development of followers (Fields & Winston, 2010). Fields and Winston's (2010) instrument was successfully used to test the servant leadership distinctive through a sample of 456 employees across multiple industries. The scale's reliability was confirmed in Fields and Winston's (2010) study by an exploratory factor analysis that resulted in a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.96. This current study employed Fields and Winston's (2010) tool due to its parsimonious, single dimension approach and its initial showing of psychometric validity. The reliability scale statistics were run on the instrument again. Only surveys where respondents completed all the items for the corresponding instrument being assessed were utilized, which was the standard also used to analyze the reliability of the other two instruments employed in this research. The servant leadership scale had an alpha of 0.96 in this study's sample.

Employee commitment to supervisor. Becker et al. (1996) sought to understand the potential relationship between employee “commitment as a multidimensional phenomenon and performance” (p. 465). The theoretical framework upon which the study was constructed included a literature review, the multiple and varied targets (individuals, groups, occupations, professions) within an organization of an employee’s commitment, and the bases (motivations) of an employee’s commitment to the targets. The bases, building upon Kelman’s (1958) work, are divided into three types: compliance, identification, and internalization. Becker et al.’s (1996) study found that employee commitment to supervisors was more strongly linked to performance than employee commitment to the overall organization. Becker et al.’s (1996) data collection method was conducted through two separate surveys, the second of which is applicable to this research study.

Becker et al.’s (1996) second instrument included nine questions and four scales to measure *foci and bases of commitment*. The nine questions were used to measure employees’ identification with their supervisor and internalization of the same values of their supervisor. The same instrument was used to measure employee identification and internalization with the organization overall. Five questions measured employee identification and four questions measured internalization with each foci. Becker et al.’s (1996) study also utilized and analyzed both of these dimensions as one dimension, which together represented the overall commitment of an employee to the supervisor. When tested for scale reliability in Becker et al.’s (1996) initial study, the one dimension scale returned an alpha of 0.89. In this study, Becker et al.’s (1996) one dimension instrument, shown in Table A2, was used to measure overall employee commitment to the supervisor and had an alpha of 0.92 in this study’s sample.

Control variables. Becker et al.’s (1996) study controlled the variable of employee duration of employment with their current employer, thus duration of employment with employer while under the supervision of the supervisor is controlled in this study. Becker et al.’s (1996) study also controlled for respondents age and gender and since these two demographic variables have been shown to often affect employee commitment, these two variables are controlled for in this study. The demographic variable *employee/supervisor gender similarity/dissimilarity* was also included because it was thought that the difference between genders might influence the level of employee commitment to the supervisor. The four demographic control variables were included at the end of this study’s survey. Gender was reported as *male* or *female*. Employee/supervisor gender similarity/dissimilarity variable was asked about via the question: “Is your supervisor's gender the same as your gender?” Respondents answered either *yes* or *no*. To control for age, respondents were asked to report to which of the following age groups they pertained: *18-30 years old*, *31-45 years old*, *46-59 years old*, or *above 60 years old*. Employees were asked how long they worked for their current supervisor, whereby respondents were asked to select from one of the following answers: *less than 1 year*, *1-3 years*, *4-5 years*, or *more than 5 years*.

Supervisor task-oriented behaviors that clarify roles and task expectations are also controlled for since employees look to supervisors for task clarification and goal direction, which servant leadership theory does not measure since servant leadership theory primarily focuses on the relational aspects of the leader with followers. A subscale section of Stogdill’s (1963) *Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire VII* (LBDQ VII) called *Initiation of Structure* that is made up of ten questions is used to control for supervisor task-orientation behaviors since the LPDQ VII has been used extensively and consistently found to be a valid and reliable measurement

scale (Black & Porter, 1991; Selmer, 1997; Yukl, 2010). Table A3 lists the 10 questions from the LPDQ VII that are incorporated into this study's questionnaire. Stogdill's (1963) LBDQ VII instrument's leadership dimension of *initiation of structure* returned an alpha of 0.89 when assessing the tool's reliability in this study's research. Table 2 shows the alpha scores for the LBDQ VII and the two other instruments, along with the corresponding data used for the statistical calculation.

Table 2: *Instrument Alpha Scores, N of Items, and N of Valid Cases, N of Excluded Cases*

Instrument	Alpha	N of Items	N of Cases and %	
			Valid	Excluded
Servant Leadership	0.96	10	118	0
Supervisor-Related Commitment	0.92	9	118	0
LBDQ VII: Subscale - Initiation of Structure	0.89	10	118	0

Data Collection Procedures

All three instruments described above, together with questions to gather data on the control variables mentioned, were combined into one electronic survey in Survey Monkey. After discussions with university leaders, it was agreed upon that the best means for distribution would be an email invitation from the researcher to his colleagues to participate in the study. The researcher's invitation was distributed to faculty and staff of the university via university email accounts by the provost, along with a note from the provost encouraging employees to participate. In order to maintain confidentiality of the respondents, the survey was generated via the researcher's personal Survey Monkey account and all surveys were returned by the respondents via the respondents' submission of the survey at the Survey Monkey website. The survey was open for 15 days with two reminder emails sent before the closing deadline: one on day 4 and one on day 15 in order to encourage participation. The pleasant surprise of rapid response by employees to the initial email invitation occurred. Within the first hour, 50 out of 207 employees had taken the electronic survey. After 24 hours, 94 employees had completed the survey. By the end of the survey period, a total of 149 respondents had participated in the survey.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to analyze to what extent the level of servant leadership predicts employee commitment to a supervisor, while taking into account the control variables of this study's model. As seen in Table 3, the descriptive table from the multiple regression analysis output, utilizing the listwise deletion option, reduced the amount of cases from 149 to 118 due to missing values on the returned surveys. However, for a study examining six independent variables and one dependent variable, a sample of 118 cases is considered sufficient to achieve adequate statistical power and potential generalizability (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

Table 3 shows servant leadership had a significant and positive correlation with employee commitment to the supervisor ($r = 0.72, p < 0.001$). Likewise, a supervisor's initiation of structure was found to have a significant correlation with employee commitment to the supervisor ($r = 0.55, p < 0.001$). Servant leadership and initiation of structure was found to have a significant correlation ($r = 0.67, p < 0.001$) as well. There were no demographic variables found to have a significant relationship with any non-demographic variables.

Table 3: Construct Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Employee Commitment	4.51	1.33						
2. Gender	1.45	0.50	.05					
3. Gender Similarity with Supervisor	1.37	0.49	-.09	-				
4. Age Group	2.44	1.01	.05	.29**				
5. Tenure	2.08	0.96	-.08	.23*	-			
6. Supervisor's Initiation of Structure	3.72	0.66	.55 ^t	-.05	.17**	.26**		
7. Servant Leadership	4.07	0.91	.72 ^t	.02	-.03	.14	-.03	.67 ^t

Note. $N = 118$ (listwise deletion of missing variables). Gender is coded 1 = female, 2 = male. Supervisor's Gender is coded 1 = yes, 2 = no. Age Group is coded: 1 = 18-30 years old, 2 = 31-45 years old, 3 = 46-60 years old, and 4 = Above 60 years old. Tenure is coded 1 = Less than 1 year, 2 = 1-3 years, 3 = 4-5 years, 4 = More than 5 years.

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

Multicollinearity Analysis

Since a significant and high correlation ($r = 0.67, p < 0.001$) between servant leadership and supervisor's initiation of structure was found, the multicollinearity of the variables present within the regression results were examined by running the collinearity diagnostics in SPSS. Tolerance values of more than .10 and variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 10 indicate a lack of multicollinearity, indicating that the predictor variables are distinct and thus maintain their individual roles and ability to predict the effects on the dependent variable (Field, 2009; Hair, et al., 2006; Pallant, 2007). Table 4 shows the tolerance and VIF statistical values, which demonstrate the absence of significant multicollinearity that may affect this study's results.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Collinearity Diagnostics: Tolerance and VIF

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF
Gender	0.90	1.12	0.89	1.12

Gender Similarity with Supervisor	0.90	1.11	0.89	1.12
Age Group	0.92	1.09	0.90	1.11
Tenure	0.85	1.18	0.84	1.19
Supervisor's Initiation of Structure	0.94	1.07	0.51	1.97
Servant Leadership			0.53	1.90

Note: $N = 118$. Dependent Variable: Commitment to Supervisor.

Regression Analysis

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis and found the servant leadership model to have a significant effect ($p < .001$) on employee commitment to a supervisor, showing an increase in the R-Square value by 0.22 (22%) above the effects caused by the demographic variables of this study and supervisor task-oriented behavior (initiation of structure). The unstandardized (B) coefficients and the standardized Beta coefficients from the multiple regressions in Table 5 show that after controlling for the demographic variables and a supervisor's initiation of structure, a significant regression coefficient for servant leadership was found ($B = 0.959$, $p < 0.01$). Also, note on Table 5 that a supervisor's initiation of structure was not found to be significant when including servant leadership in the model. Based on the statistical findings described above, support was found for the hypothesis of this study that states servant leadership uniquely and positively contributes to employee commitment to the supervisor beyond the task-oriented behaviors of the supervisor.

Table 5: Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Employee Commitment to a Supervisor

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	$SE B$	β	B	$SE B$	β
Constant	.22	.90		.29	.74	
Gender	.18	.22	.07	.11	.18	.04
Gender Similarity with Supervisor	-.05	.23	-.02	-.18	.19	-.07
Age Group	.03	.11	.02	-.04	.09	-.03
Tenure	-.03	.12	-.02	-.09	.10	-.06
Supervisor's Initiation of Structure	1.10*	.16	.54*	1.89	.18	.09

Servant Leadership		.96*	.13	.65*
R ²	.31		.53	
R ² Change	.31		.22	
F for Change in R ²	9.82*		52.82*	

Note: $N = 118$

* $p < .001$

Discussion

The sole purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between servant leadership behaviors of a supervisor and subordinates' commitment to the supervisor, as a glaring dearth exists in the literature regarding quantitative research around these variables. Through regression analysis, this study quantitatively found significantly strong support for its hypothesis that servant leadership behaviors of a supervisor uniquely and positively affect employee commitment to said supervisor. This finding was expected as servant leadership has been quantitatively found, although to a limited extent, to be related with employee commitment to the overall organization (Hu & Liden, 2011; Liden, et al., 2008). Likewise, servant leadership is a relational-based approach to leadership and relational-based leadership approaches have been found to affect other positive results such as improved employee performance and reduced employee turnover (Yukl, 2010).

The regression analysis interestingly showed supervisor initiation of structure (task-oriented behavior) as not having a statistical effect on employee commitment to the supervisor once servant leadership was introduced into the model. Perhaps, the reason behind this finding is due to the inferior effect of the initiation structure behavior when comparing it to the effect of servant leadership behavior. For example, could it be that when an employee has a boss who initiates structure, the employee responds to this behavior in a positive level of commitment; however, when an employee has a boss who also demonstrates a high level of servant leadership, the employee's commitment to the supervisor is overshadowed and motivationally dominated by the relational and inspiring behaviors of the servant leader?

Implications of this study's finding for practitioners have potential bottom-line effects. Managing and retaining valuable human resources and top talent is a topic commonly seen in the popular press and talked about in executive circles. Employee retention has been found to be linked to employee commitment to a supervisor; the higher employee commitment to a supervisor, the higher the level of retention. This study showed that servant leadership behaviors of a supervisor heighten employee commitment to the supervisor. The regression analysis showed that servant leadership fully mediated the relationship between a supervisor's initiating of structure with employee commitment to the supervisor; thus, emphasizing the essentiality of servant leadership as part of the equation for a supervisor's initiating of structure to have any significant effect on employee commitment to the supervisor. Based on these findings, practitioners might consider designing training and performance management interventions to

assist managers and leaders in understanding, developing, and demonstrating servant leadership behaviors when strategically attempting to reduce turnover costs and retain human resources that are increasingly needed in a highly competitive, knowledge-based economy.

Future Research

The findings from this study provide a stepping stone upon which to build future research on servant leadership and its causal outcomes. The possible avenues of future exploration that might be considered are many, several of which will be described here. First, future research might compare the level of commitment of employees who report having supervisors who exhibit a high level of servant leadership with the commitment of employees who report having supervisors who exhibit a high level of structure initiation and with employees who report having supervisors who exhibit both a high level of servant leadership and a high level of structure initiation. The purpose of such an exploration would be to seek answers to this study's finding regarding the statistically diminishing effect of initiation of structure on employee commitment in the face of servant leadership. Second, Becker et al.'s (1996) employee commitment to a supervisor instrument could be used to measure the commitment construct in two dimensions (employee identification with the supervisor and employee internalization of the values of the supervisor) and how these two dimensions are affected by the servant leadership behaviors of the supervisor. Third, other relational-based leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, might be introduced into a future research model to examine if servant leadership affects employee commitment to the supervisor above and beyond that of other relational-based behaviors. Lastly, similar studies might carry this study forward by researching this study's variables in other industries and cultural settings. For example, since this study was conducted at a higher-educational institution, it might prove valuable to explore the relationship between servant leadership and employee commitment to a supervisor in the business, governmental, and healthcare sectors to confirm whether or not the interplay between these variables are similar across industries.

Strengths and Limitations

The sample's number of respondents was robust and provided a more than sufficient amount of cases upon which to statistically compare the one independent variable, the five control variables, and the dependent variable (Hair, et al., 2006). The sample, however, was made up of employees from one private, non-profit higher-educational institution located in the southwestern region of the United States and as a result the generalizability of the findings across industries and other parts of the country are limited. For example, the initiating of structure by a supervisor in a corporate manufacturing operation might be more highly valued by employees and related with employee commitment to a supervisor due to the technical focus of such an environment, as contrasted with the more free-flowing, less-technical type of environment of a higher educational organization. Further, the study's sample was primarily made up of an ethnically homogenous group in one region of the country; therefore, the effects of diverse cultures upon the studied variables were not able to be controlled and as such the generalizability of the findings across ethnic cultures and regional cultures is limited.

Common method variance (CMV) and biases, according to P.M. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), is a common threat to the findings of behavioral science research. This study took great strides to ensure anonymity of the respondents in order to improve the probabilities of employees answering in a way that accurately reflects their true perceptions of the items in the survey; however, the employment of instruments such as Crowne and Marlow's (1960) to control for respondent biases such as social desirability bias were not utilized. This study's instrument was intentionally designed to be answered within a minimal amount of time since respondents participated according to their free will. Ensuring a short amount of time required to participate in this study's research was thought to be an important aspect in acquiring such voluntary response. A second weakness in regard to CMV was the ordering of the scales in this study's survey. Each scale was presented as its own set of questions, instead of randomly mixing the items among all scales. According to Chang, Witteloostuijn, and Eden (2010), the presentation of an instrument's items in such a diverse manner assists in countering respondents' cognitive reactions to the items. Limitations, such as the ones documented here, might be helpful to consider by prospective doctoral students and scholars desiring to carry forward the research begun in this study.

Conclusion

This study's findings adds preliminary quantifiable evidence in building the empirical case for the positive effect that servant leadership has on employee commitment to supervisors who demonstrate servant leadership behaviors. In a general manner, this research likewise adds to the academe's quantifiable exploration of the servant leadership construct and its causal outcomes, which as Yukl (2010) noted, is still in its beginning stages. It is hoped that this study's findings will inspire and motivate researchers to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and other variables such as employee satisfaction with a supervisor, employee intention to remain with their employer, and employee performance. Lastly, this study's findings could potentially provide practitioners insight about a leadership approach that can be utilized in a way that results in decreased costs and developed competitive advantages that are not easily replicated by competitors.

About the Author

Dr. Shane Sokoll is a College of Business faculty member at Concordia University Texas in the city of Austin where he teaches and serves as director of the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Human Resource Management (HRM). The HRM courses for which he provides oversight are offered in traditional, accelerated, and online delivery formats. Dr. Sokoll holds a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership with a major in Human Resource Development, a Master in Business Administration (MBA) with a major in HRM, and is a certified Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR). He has developed and taught courses such as Fundamentals of HRM, Principles of Management, Management Control Systems, Training and Development, International HRM, Organizational Staffing, Strategic Management in Human Resources, all of which incorporate a strong emphasis on leader/employee development and organizational outcomes. Dr. Sokoll's quantitative and qualitative research is presently focused on employee commitment, employee

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Appendix

Table A1: *Fields and Winston's (2010) New Parsimonious Measure of Servant Leadership Behaviors*

Items comprising a new parsimonious measure of servant leadership behaviors ($\alpha = .96$)

1. Practices what he/she preaches
2. Serves people without regard to their nationality, gender, or race
3. Sees serving as a mission of responsibility to others
4. Genuinely interested in employees as people
5. Understands that serving others is most important
6. Willing to make sacrifices to help others
7. Seeks to instill trust rather than fear or insecurity
8. Is always honest
9. Is driven by a sense of higher calling
10. Promotes values that transcend self-interest and material success

Response scale for extent to which this statement describes the behavior of a focal leader:

1 = definitely no; 2 = no; 3 = neutral; 4 = yes; 5 = definitely yes

Note. Adapted from “Development and evaluation of a new parsimonious measure of servant leadership,” by D. L. Fields and B. E. Winston, 2010. School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship. Regent University. Virginia Beach, VA.

Table A2: Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert’s (1996) Supervisor-Related Commitment Instrument

Items measuring *supervisor-related identification items* ($\alpha = .85$)

1. When someone criticizes my supervisor, it feels like a personal insult
2. When I talk about my supervisor, I usually say “we” rather than “they”
3. My supervisor’s successes are my successes
4. When someone praises my supervisor, it feels like a personal compliment
5. I feel a sense of “ownership” for my supervisor

Items measuring *supervisor-related internalization items* ($\alpha = .89$)

6. If the wishes of my supervisor were different, I would not be as attached to my supervisor
7. My attachment to my supervisor is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by my supervisor
8. Since starting this job, my personal values and those of my supervisor have become similar
9. The reason I prefer my supervisor to others is because of what he or she stands for, that is, his or her values

All items on one scale measuring *overall employee commitment to the supervisor* ($\alpha = .89$)

Response scale for extent to which the employee agrees with the statement:

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Note. Adapted from “Foci and bases of employee commitment: Implications for job performance,” by T. E. Becker, R. S. Billings, D. M. Eveleth, and N. L. Gilbert, 1996. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(2), p.467. Copyright 1996 by Academy of Management.

Table A3: Stogdill’s (1963) Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire Subscale - Initiation of Structure

Items measuring supervisor’s initiation of structure, meaning clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected.

1. Lets group members know what is expected of them
2. Encourages the use of uniform procedures
3. Tries out his/her ideas in the group
4. Makes his/her attitudes clear to the group
5. Decides what shall be done and how it shall be done
6. Assigns group members to particular tasks
7. Makes sure that his/her part in the group is understood by the group members
8. Schedules the work to be done
9. Maintains definite standards of performance
10. Asks that group members follow standard rules and regulations

Response scale for extent to which the employee agrees with the statement:

1 = Always; 5 = Never acts as described by the item

Note. Adapted from “Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire-Form XII,” by R. M. Stogdill, 1963. Retrieved from <http://fisher.osu.edu/supplements/10/2862/1962%20LBDQ%20Form%20XII.pdf>, pp. 2-6.