



## Mediating role of trust on the relationship between servant leadership and team commitment among the employees of IT-sector in south India

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**Abstract.** *Purpose.* Servant Leadership, a much talked about concept, is a new area of research in understanding leadership in organizations. Servant leadership is gaining its importance across industries worldwide. The term servant leadership coined by Robert K. Greenleaf hinting at serving helping the subordinates rather leading in the traditional sense. The purpose of this study is to investigate the existence of servant leadership in Indian IT industry, also to determine the extent that employee job related attitudes namely, job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness associated with the perception of servant leadership in IT industries of South India in a psychological climate termed as trust in leader. Servant leadership being anecdotal in nature lacks sound base of theory and empirical evidence. The literature throws light on the historical background of servant leadership, key characteristics and contrast between the most followed leadership styles and servant leadership in the modern business era. *Methodology.* The study attempts to find empirical evidence for relationship between servant leadership, trust and job related attitudes. The researcher adopted Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) Instrument by J. A. Laub revised by Sharon Dury in 2004, Team Commitment Survey (TCS) by H. Bennett (2000), for data collection. Mediation analysis used to determine the level of association between the variables. *Findings.* Sample of 568 supports the empirical evidence for servant leadership in Indian context with the fitment of servant leadership model along with the followers' job attitudes and the mediating role of trust in leader in improving the association among the variables furthermore. *Values of the results.* The study concludes the supportiveness of servant leaders in enhancing the level of team commitment in the industry.

**Keywords:** IT industry, leadership, servant leadership, team commitment, trust.

### Introduction

Leaders and their styles play a vital role in the present organizational context. Therefore, a wide range of leadership studies were conducted to understand the characteristics of leaders, challenges they face and changing behavior of leaders according to situations. B. Bass strongly argued that the importance of these studies were due to the increased workforce diversity, global competition, technology innovation, increased volatility of businesses and customer requirements (Bass, 1990).

From the existing literature it was evident that, the leadership approach from early 1900s which focused only on control and the authority lies only with the single individual (Rost, 1991); shifted to group approach where leader developed an habit of sharing goals with the subordinates during 1950s (Harrison, 1999) to situational approach then to transactional and inclined to transformational leadership approach by 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, creating a huge vacuum in the leadership studies with its complexity to fit at all stages of organization and situations.

R. J. Lolita stated that, ensuring well-being of the employees across the organizations treated as a greatest challenge for the contemporary leaders (Lolita, 2008). To ensure this, the leader should be empathetic, patient, an active listener, path provider and above all a steward for his / her followers; thus, providing a way for the inception of servant leadership (Freeman, 2004). The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by R. K. Greenleaf in his seminal work (Greenleaf, 1997). Since then many researchers carried out his anecdotal confirmations towards empirical evidence by adding more strength in the academic literature.

Very few empirical studies like J. A. Laub, S. Sendjaya, and R. S. Dennis developed a valid constructs for servant leadership; of which J. A. Laub's Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) stands on top with high standards of measuring the accuracy of servant leadership in organizations (Laub, 1999; Sendjaya, 2003; Dennis, 2004). On the basis of J. A. Laub's SOLA, many researchers studied on different relational aspects of servant leadership with emotional intelligence and work related attitudes, and found statistically significant.

N. Eva, M. Robin, S. Sendjaya, D. van Dierendonck, and R. C. Liden have defined servant leadership on the attributes like other-oriented approach, prioritizing follower individual needs and reorienting the followers for concern for others within the organization and the larger community (Eva et al. 2018).

The present study focus on the employees working in various Information Technology firms located in South India to add an empirical evidence for the servant leadership from Indian perspective; which is first of its kind in Indian context towards servant leadership theory development.

### **Background of the Study**

The world being borderless has opened the gateways for varied workforce diversity in the organizations. In order to be successful in the global markets, the organizations focus more on maintaining a healthy and effective workforce which are multi-talented. Therefore, to maintain this workforce to be highly productive; the organizations strive hard to have great leaders for them; who are selfless, empathetic in nature, committed, builds community by developing the followers. B. Bass stated that, leaders, to promote healthy leader-follower relationships need to be a steward him / herself (Bass, 1990); thus becoming servant leader by him / herself (Greenleaf, 1970).

Servant leadership has its roots in Christian principles. Jesus Christ was named as the first servant leader in the era of humankind. There were many doctrines about Jesus' servant leadership behaviour. Jesus stated, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28, NKJV). Therefore, Christ sent a firm message to His disciples; who were called as apostles later; that a leader's first and foremost responsibility would be an act of service; it's a mandate not an option. Through His deeds and teachings Jesus led a life of servant leader. There exist many instances where Jesus proved Himself as the best and greatest servant leader; of which washing the feet of His own disciples (John 13); proved Him the best and also trained His disciples to perform similar kind of activities for their followers. Thus, the meaning of being servant among the followers was termed as 'greatness.'

C. W. Pollard interpreted Jesus act of washing the feet of His disciples as an act of humbleness a leader should possess irrespective of the designation he / she holds. There is no scarcity of disciples (followers) whose feet (infirmities and short comings) are to be washed (solved); as there were many towels (process of solving the problems) to wipe off with plenty of water available (solutions available) (Pollard, 1996).

Servant leadership have counteracted with all the other leadership theories by inverting the leader-follower pyramid from top-down commanding approach to bottom-up approach focusing on partnership, trust and empathy. Subsequently, the concept of servant leadership and its implications appreciated and widely accepted in the present corporate world.

### **Statement of the Problem**

J. P. Kotter stated that, the need of the hour for business which is highly diversified with human resources, more volatile, transparent, competitive with international players in the domestic markets with fast growing technology adoption and development requires healthy leaders for its stakeholders and employees (Kotter, 1990). With the growing workforce diversity in the business; the organizations focusing more on learning environment at the workplace for better fulfilment and personal growth of employees (Laub, 1999).

Many a leader started to exhibit different styles of leadership to promote a healthy leader-follower relationship across their organizations (Bass, 1990); termed most appropriately as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970). R. C. Thompson, S. Sendjaya and J. C. Sarros stated that Servant leadership lacks empirical evidence in the current academic literature (Thompson, 2002; Sendjaya, Sarros, 2002); which focus more on anecdotal observations rather than objective oriented quantifiable research (Nwogu, 2004). This shift from anecdotal approach to empirical interest paved a revolutionary movement in the advanced, fast-paced organizational change towards human development at work (Laub, 1999).

A few researchers worked: on church-related college (Thompson, 2002), on non-traditional college (Sharon, 2004), on South African educational institutions (Laka-Mathebula, 2004), on educational institution (Rude, 2004), on religious educational organization (Anderson, 2005), on non-profit organization (Irving, 2005), on servant leader development programs (Marilyn, 2006), on nurses (Glass, 2006), on county jails (Keena, 2006), on student achievement (Herndon, 2007), on profit and non-profit organizations (Washington, 2007), on Dutch knowledge-intensive services (de Jong, 2007), on emotionally troubled young persons (Bradshaw, 2007), on manufacturing sector (Rauch, 2007), on schools (Merideth, 2007), on national culture dimensions across 93 countries (Molnar, 2007), on media and pharmaceutical organizations (Staden, 2007), on high-tech employees of aerospace engineering (Johnson, 2008), on higher educational institutions (Hannigan, 2008), on diversified organizations (Herman, 2008), on classroom teaching (Metzcar, 2008), on community leadership programs (Beck, 2010), on project management (Thompson, 2010), on Utility company (Hayden, 2011), on South African organizations (James, 2011), on college students (Paul, 2012), on hotel industry (Carter, 2012), on social entrepreneurs focused on the serving and empowering the followers (Akella, Eid, 2020). Where most of the studies were on academic leadership and few on aerospace, manufacturing and project management in various parts of the globe. With this research evidence, the researcher opted for Indian Information Technology (IT) sector for performing the study, which is one of the untapped sectors in India.

J. A. Irving pioneered the empirical study to examine servant leadership and team effectiveness across different sectors, viz., non-profit, church and business firms; as the sample size of each sector was low; led to a research gap to study the influence of servant leadership on team effectiveness according to the sector of operation (Irving, 2004).

According C. F. Chan and Y. Y. Wan employees' attitudes influence their commitment towards organization (Chan, Wan, 2012). The increased commitment towards the organization increases employee trust in leader, loyal towards organization (Panayiotis, Pepper, Phillips, 2011). M. P. Carlos, C. Filipe augmented that, organizational leaders play a major role towards establishing the employees' commitment level (Carlos, Filipe, 2011); which can be promoted on high note by servant leaders displaying honesty, integrity and trust (Autry, 2001; Blanchard, Hodges, 2003).

Despite of many advances in technology, organizations face hurdles like leadership approach which directly effects team commitment, and team effectiveness. It was observed from many studies that the attrition rate of the organization was not on the remuneration perspective, but on the leadership style of the supervisor. Hence, this paved a way for understanding the need of the hour for business to be successful on leadership perspective. The study used a quantitative descriptive approach to determine whether a relationship exist between team commitment, and team effectiveness with trust as a psychological medium to drive servant leadership as a successful leadership approach.

### **Need for the Study**

R. F. Russell and A. G. Stone stated that, the concept of servant leadership can widely be practiced across organizations irrespective of the sectors. Many studies were carried out extensively in hospital, educational, non-profit, manufacturing sectors, but studies on Information Technology industry still remain as an untapped zone for the existence of servant leadership (Russel, Stone, 2002). Even IT sector also falls under service sector providing technological solutions to the clients require leaders with a desire to serve the subordinators; in return developing the subordinators to follow the footsteps of their servant-led leaders giving rise to high levels of job satisfaction, team commitment and finally developing a healthy and trustful working environment (Sims, 2018) resulting in successful effectiveness of teams with the modern workforce.

The study sought to determine if there is a relationship between the level of perception of servant leadership characteristics and the participant's level of team commitment and team effectiveness in a psychological environment as trust in leader. In this study, servant leadership served as independent variable measured on six characteristics defined by J. A. Laub, team commitment as dependent variable and trust performing a role of mediating variable (Laub, 1999).

### **Objectives of the Study**

To study the existence of servant leadership style in Indian IT sector.

To study the impact of servant leadership on team commitment.

To study the mediating effect of trust in leader on servant leadership, and team commitment.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study limited to the software professionals of Indian IT companies located in South India. This study is aimed at the respondents who are software professionals. In an effort to advance the understanding of leadership influence on team effectiveness, the problem statement considers the correlation between servant leadership and team commitment within various IT firms of South India. Servant leadership serves as the independent variable, whereas, and Team Commitment measurements as the dependent variable of the study.

### **Leadership in IT Firms**

The business world being borderless with high intensity on information technology and communication is in need of empowered multi-talented IT professionals with sound skills, abilities and knowledge (Pahal, 1999). To meet the global demand, the institutional leadership drives the available talent to nourish the existing skills and abilities to the full potential. IT leadership alike with

other leadership requires similar traits as other leaders possess and also require skills pertaining to technology's impact.

The present business world is fast-paced with technology revolution requires quick transformation from one platform to other frequently. This becomes a great challenge to the leaders of global IT giants to withstand the competition and being competitively advantageous by using powerful tools and technology over the rivals.

P. Senge, opined that leaders are designers, stewards and teachers who are accountable for growing organizations, where continuous learning happens with clarity in vision, capability to minimize complexities and improve knowledge sharing (Senge, 1990). Many authors have termed the essential Qualities of the Effective IT Leader as bold, visionary and spiritually-grounded (Winters, 1997), accepting technological transformation and open-mindedness (Kotter, 1990), specific technology-related knowledge (Kearsley, Lynch, 1994), shared vision and commitment (Horgan, 1998), capability to assess the potential of new technology, action-oriented (Kinnaman, 1996), analytical and listening skills (Alter, 1999; Avant, 1996) integrity and being agile (McAdams, 1997), selflessness (National School Boards Association, 1998), creativity (White, 1997), toughness (Cronin, 1993), inquisitiveness (Rosenbach, Taylor, 1993), intuition (Bennis, Nanus, 1986), tenaciousness (Lambert, 1998), ability to network (Wunsch, 1992).

R. White proposed that the most effective future leaders will build upon the skills of the past and present (White, 1997). This fits aptly for IT leaders, as we are in a highly volatile environment where the life cycle of any product or service lasts not more than few days to months. Hence, the IT leaders need to be learned experts so as to capitalize on the success and strengths of the past, and being flexible in exploring the unexpected with minimum risks. Along with this, the changing nature of diverse workforce requires new leadership behaviour so as to address the issues like rightsizing and corporate loyalty. The need of the hour is that, the leader must focus more on empowering and sustainability by building an environment which is innovative and filled with creativity.

Thus, the new era IT leaders transfer their focus from traditional perspective on organization to contemporary flat organizational structures and systems which impact the new technological era successfully. An amalgamation of innate traits of leadership coupled with effective leadership training and deep understanding of new tools and advancements with continuous development yield optimum results as expected. Thus, the study on IT leadership will be of extreme importance in the new revolutionized and technology driven business world.

## Literature review

The views on leadership behavior changing with time by giving priority to stewardship, being more ethical, people-centered management leadership through collaboration (Pahal, 1999) inspired from servant leadership theory may very well be what organizations need now rather than hierarchical-oriented leader with primacy to employees. The emergence of this leadership approach (Washington et al., 2014) explained that traditional autocratic and hierarchical models of leadership were gradually yielding to a newer model of leadership; leading innovation, employee well-being and reason of being in business are given high priority among all the organizations, this rooted in ethical and caring behavior of leaders. L. C. Spears referred to this emerging approach to leadership and service as servant leadership (Spears, 1995).

The term «servant leadership» was already coined four decades ago by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904 — 1990) in his seminal work *The Servant as Leader* (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). It took almost

five decades for his ideas to research and practice, and it is interesting to note that his ideas are as fresh and interesting today as they were in the beginning.

Servant leadership may be of particular relevance in this era by adding social responsibility to transformational leadership which emphasizes more on the needs of followers (Spears, 1995). Inspiration generally considered as the emphasizing component of successful leadership, servant leadership in its context have transformed the relationship of leader-follower by emphasizing on serving rather than on transaction, thereby, creating a great platform for this potential leadership theory.

Subsequently, researchers contributed their own definitions and models, on the basis of Robert K. Greenleaf's work; resulting many interpretations of servant leadership, exemplifying a wide range of behaviors. The operationalization of servant leadership on strong theoretical basis has become a challenge because of very little empirical studies.

### **Servant Leadership Philosophy**

Servant leadership features as a leadership style that is valuable to various set of organizations by enlightening, empowering, and providing direction to employees, as well as beneficial to followers or employees by coupling them as whole individuals with heart, mind and spirit (Frick, 2004). A. McGee-Cooper and G. Looper insisted that servant-leaders achieve this by focusing on the organizational goals, its impact on the societal front, and the existence of oneself in the organization as an employee by informing about the organizational strategy; creating well-structured organizational culture with opportunities to learn, train and share (McGee-Cooper, Looper, 2001).

R. K. Greenleaf outlined servant leadership as a unique philosophy of leadership whose focal point termed as service. He stated that essence of servant leader is to demonstrate a natural feeling to serve first; then a sensible and aspired choice to lead (Greenleaf, 1970).

R. K. Greenleaf described the servant leader:

«The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's needs are being served.» (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 13).

R. Greenleaf demonstrated that, leaders are the people who realises that they are servants first; endeavour to meet the highly prioritized needs of the followers. Servant leaders have "a sense for the puzzling and be able to predict the unpredictable" (Greenleaf, 1977; p. 22). It is evident and to be understood that servant leadership is not a «one-size-fits-all» approach which can fit any organization at any point of time, and also to be noted that it can be a «tailor-made» approach for organizations to make use of. Servant leadership is an enduring, transformational and a stand-alone approach which integrates life to work with a sense of belongingness and knowing the purpose of being a supporting element for positive societal change (Spears, 1995).

### **Laub's Servant Leadership characteristics**

After L. C. Spears, ten characteristics of servant leadership, various authors have introduced variations to these characteristics (Spears, 2002). Based on an extensive literature search, J. A. Laub developed six clusters of servant leadership characteristics (Laub, 1999), whereas, R. F. Russell and A. G. Stone propounded their model of leadership in nine and eleven functional characteristics and additional characteristics respectively (Russell, Stone (2002). The drawback of this model is that there is no particulate category to differentiate between functional and accompanying attribute. K. A. Patterson's model termed servant leadership with seven dimensions (Patterson, 2003). The

inclusive factor than J. A. Laub's model is that virtues; describing elements of one's character that exemplifies excellence. The strength of this model lies in the conceptualization of the notion of the need to serve.

Different conceptual models exist only to confuse our understanding and every model has its strengths as well as weaknesses. A refined view of servant leadership model depicts the relation between antecedents, behaviour, mediating processes, and outcomes and by integrating various conceptual models with appropriate empirical evidence obtained.

From the Fig. 1, it can be observed that the conceptual variability can be reduced with six key clusters of servant leader characteristics; providing a better impression in the cognition of followers on servant leadership. Servant-leaders empower their followers in the lines of development; by showing humbleness and modesty; are reliable and authentic; accept people for who they are, path makers by providing a clear direction, and exercise themselves as stewards working for a holistic purpose.

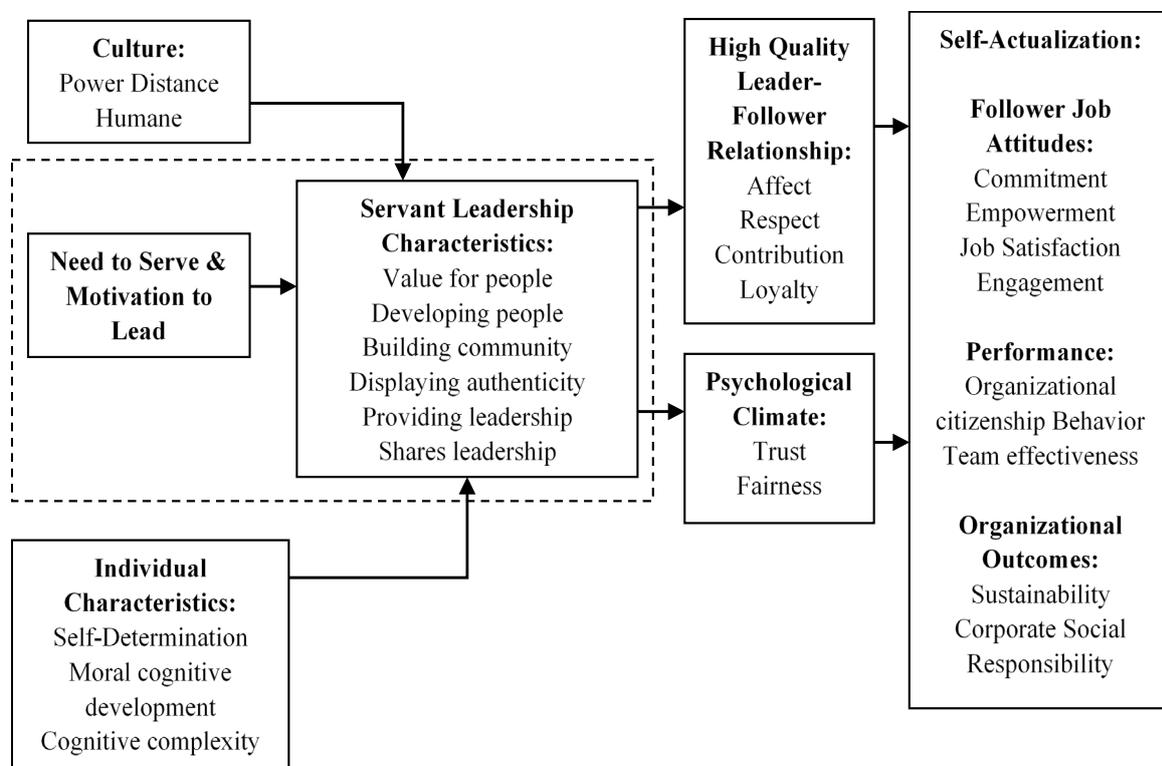


Figure 1. Antecedents and Consequences of Servant Leadership (Source: Reddy, Kamesh, 2016)

Empowering and developing people being one of the characteristics is a driving tool focused on empowering followers (Reddy, Kamesh, 2016); aiming on developing a proactive, self-confident attitude among followers and giving them a feel of experiencing one's own power. J. A. Laub depicts that the valuing people and encouraging their personal development thrives the behaviour on self-directed decision making information sharing and coaching for innovative performance (Laub, 1999). The servant-leader's attitude for each individual is the central issue; in terms of gratitude, acknowledgement, appreciation and realization of uniqueness as each person is special with exceptional skills and abilities coupled with inclined attitude towards learning (Dierendonck, Patterson, 2010).

Sharing Leadership; the next key characteristic of servant leader urges on the ability to be selflessness by placing one's own needs and desires as secondary to need-achievement of followers as primary objective (Patterson, 2003). Servant-leaders values people for who they are by actively seeking and acknowledging the valuable contributions of others. This characteristic provokes the leader to put others' interests first than his or her interests. This is treated as the responsibility (Avolio et al., 2009) for persons in one's charge. A modest servant-leader retreats when a task has been successfully accomplished.

Authenticity, a characteristic expressing the «true self», related to integrity, consistent with inner thoughts and feelings (Macik-Frey et al., 2009). Authenticity, being true to oneself (Donaldson, Davis, 1991) demonstrates itself by doing what was assured, distinguished within the organization, showing honesty and openness (Russell, Stone, 2002).

Providing Leadership ensures that employees are aware on the expectations, is beneficial for both employees and the organization (Greenleaf, 1977; Reddy, 2019). To make workplace dynamic, the leader's responsibility will lead to provide right degree of accountability, with high-quality dyadic interpersonal relations (Luthans, 2002), by creating new alternatives approaches for problem solving, with firm belief on values and principles that administer one's actions (Russell, Stone, 2002).

Building community, a characteristic of servant leader talks about the willingness of serving the followers, instead of exhibiting authority and self-interest (Macik-Frey et. al., 2009). Leaders termed as role models; stimulate others to act as they are by exercising a closely to social responsibility, loyalty, and team work.

### **Jesus Model of Servant Leadership**

The servant leader foresee the organizational future and takes on clarifying goals, unleashing the hurdles of past, focusing on present and moving forward for facing the future consequences (Podsakoff, 1996); creating a strategic vision for organizational sustainability in the long-term perspective (Shamir, 1995). Servant leadership a follower-centric approach on focused trust building and credibility in the workplace leading to spirituality at workplace (Reddy, 2019). Recent scholarly models and descriptions of Christian leadership are characterized by descriptions of:

- mimetic imitation of the Divine (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998; Kanungo, 2001);
- concern for correct use of power (Kanungo, Mendonca, 1996; van Dierendonck, 2011);
- Follower-centred approaches (Stone, Winston, 1999; Russell, 2001).
- An overt Christological focus (Horsman, 2001; Sendjaya et al., 2008)

It is evident from Biblical foundations that the concept of Servant Leader personifies by Jesus Christ in Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV):

<sup>25</sup>But Jesus called them to Himself and said, «You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup>Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. <sup>27</sup>And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — <sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.»

The above scripture clearly notifies to mankind that it is the fundamental duty of the leader not to head for exercising the authority or power. Being, Son of God by Himself, Christ Jesus never felt to exercise the power but to serve the need with His compassionate love and merciful grace to the mankind, that He just accomplished His duty, by instructing the leaders to serve first than to be a leader.

Also Jesus defined His leadership as one of service (Matthew 20: 28, NIV): «the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many». Jesus radicalized this notion of leading as service with the ultimate act of self-sacrifice referring to as being «obedient to death — even death on a cross» (Philippians 2: 8, NIV).

In the same way Jesus message on service and self-sacrifice in leading takes the form of acceptance and obeying the commands of Heavenly Father, 'but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7, NKJV). Being humble is what the innate characteristic of Jesus to follow the commands of the Heavenly Father.

The servant leadership of Jesus of Nazareth, concluding is his recompensing and self-sacrificial death, has been the central focus for Christian scholars and practitioners in the on-going quest to find an effective and moral model for leadership (Graham, 1991).

This provides a firm foundation of paradigm shift in organizational leadership in terms of servant leadership.

### Theoretical Framework of Servant Leadership

To perform the study on servant leadership in Indian Information Technology industry, the researcher fabricated the J. A. Laub's model of servant leadership on the basis of Servant Leader characteristics, the outcomes of this leadership as Job Satisfaction, Team Commitment, and Team Effectiveness in a psychological climate as Trust. As already discussed no leadership style can be adopted as it is, needs tailor-made fitment as per the organization, because one size does not fit all.

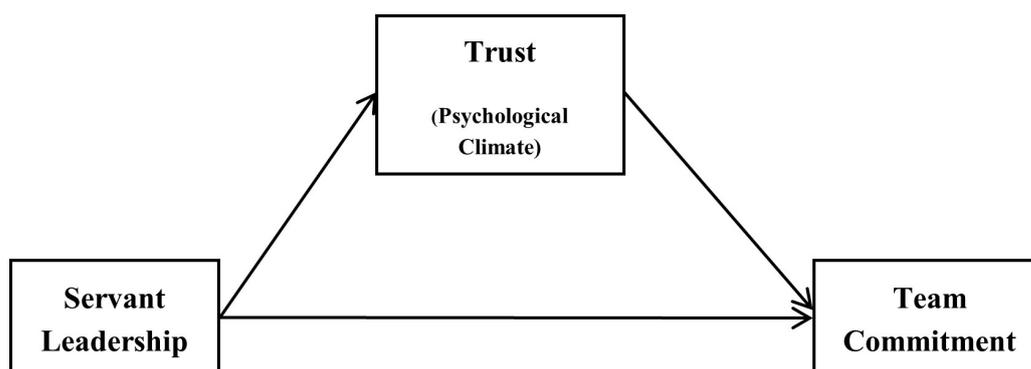


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework of Servant Leadership

### Team Commitment

Team commitment is the positive psychological contract between the employees and the team which lead their decision to continue their membership and less likely to leave the organization (Fairholm, 1997). When an employee is satisfied with the assigned duties and responsibilities; will feel to be the organization on long-term basis; continue to have a strong belief with the organization's goals and values; strive to work hard to maintain membership in the organization (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2002).

N. J. Allen and J. P. Meyer developed an organizational commitment model comprising three levels of commitments namely continuance commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment. Continuance commitment refers to employee view towards the loss of investment made by the organization when he or she leaves. Normative commitment reflects the level of obligation that the employee feels to continue within the organization. Affective commitment refers to the attitude an employee show towards the received recognition for the work done, contribution towards, and passionate connection to the organization (Allen, Meyer, 1996).

## Trust

R. C. Nyhan and J. H. A. Marlowe defined trust as the belief an individual have in their leader's competence to act in a fair, ethical and predictable (Nyhan, Marlowe, 1997). A. K. Mishra defined trust as the willingness of susceptibility to others based on what others expect and believe in trust, openness and concern (Mishra, 1996). Similarly, trust can also be defined as the group behaviour towards other group actions. Hence there is a furthermore description on trust as specific actions which can be displayed by group with the supervision of the leader (Mayer et al., 2007).

Trust is therefore a sustaining factor for individual and organizational effectiveness (Ramli, Nasina, 2014). Besides sustainability, trust it is more valued in influencing the relationship and the behaviour of each party toward the others (Robinson, 1996). However, if the trust is broken, it can lead to undesirable effects (Mayer et al., 1995).

## Servant Leadership and Team Commitment

Studies confirm that servant leadership significantly associated with organizational commitment (Ambali, et al., 2011; Cerit, 2010). In essence, Servant leadership brings a rejuvenated sense of building community (Barbuto, Wheeler 2006), creating a sense of belongingness towards the organization (Brownell, 2010). Exercising servant leadership will help the organization to improve its effectiveness which implies utmost job satisfaction, enhanced organizational commitment, reduced turnover, and trust with commitment to the information provided by the leader. In addition to this, Y. Cerit revealed that servant leadership practice show significant and positive relationship with commitment of the employees (Cerit, 2010). Moreover, R. Hoveida et al. found the significant relationship between manager's servant leadership and the staff's commitment (Hoveida, et al., 2011). Hence the following hypothesis developed for the study:

*Hypothesis 1: Perception of Servant leadership is positively related to the perception on Team commitment.*

## Servant Leadership and Trust

Studies empirically defended that servant leadership and trust are significantly related. E. E. Joseph and B. E. Winston revealed that employee perceptions of servant leadership and leader and organizational trust are positively correlated (Joseph, Winston, 2005). Z. Dannhauser and A. B. Boshoff also stated that servant leadership, trust and team commitment are related with each other (Dannhauser, Boshoff, 2006). Servant leadership is a significant predictor of trust (Sendjaya, Pekerti, 2010). A. Chatbury et al. found the significant relationship between servant leadership and trust in leader (Chatbury et al., 2011). M. S. Rezaei with colleagues revealed that servant leadership and trust are significantly related and this is due to the perceived trust in leader by subordinates (Rezaei et al., 2012). The corner stone of approachability, the leader experiences from the subordinates is his / her due respect towards the infirmities or problems the subordinates come up with for support; keeping them in confidence is the utmost respect the leader should possess. Keeping this in view, the researcher proposed following hypothesis for the study:

*Hypothesis 2: Perception of Servant leadership is positively related to trust.*

## Trust and Team Commitment

T. Yeh revealed that trust and team commitment correlated positively and significantly (Yeh, 2009). M. R. Laka-Mathebula in her study proved that trust is correlated with team commitment (Laka-Mathebula, 2004). Team commitment, being a most important dimension towards the success of the organization, it is the responsibility of leader to maintain a healthy, learning and supportive working environment. Leader must possess a flavour of trustworthiness and being supportive at all times with the team members. Research studies reveal that, team productivity collapses not because of inability of the team members or dynamics, but of the trust they put in with their leader. Team

builds on trust and crushes when it there is no trust in leader. Thus, this study proposes hypothesis as below:

**Hypothesis 3:** *Perception of Trust is positively related to team commitment.*

### **Trust mediates the Relationship between Servant Leadership and Team Commitment**

V. L. Goodwin et al. (2011) concluded that trust behaves as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership and various outcome variables such as organizational citizenship behaviour, performance and organizational commitment (Goodwin et al., 2011). Besides C. F. Chiang and Y. Y. Wang revealed that trust mediated the relationship between leadership and organizational commitment (Chiang & Wang, 2012); supporting B. J. Avolio argument that impact of the leadership on the followers mediates through psychological climate called trust (Avolio, 1990). Thus, this study proposes H4 as below:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Trust mediates a positive relationship between the perception of servant leadership and perception on team commitment.*

## **Research methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, an exploratory study was carried out to identify the key characteristics of servant leadership and the influence of psychological climate, trust, on the employee outcome; team commitment. In the second stage, data collection was made by self-administering structured questionnaires to 1200 respondents (IT employees) from six major hubs of IT sector (Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Cochin, Trivandrum and Visakhapatnam) of five South Indian states (Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala ).

Population for this study can be identified as the employees of IT Sector of South India.

Out of the locations, Hyderabad tops with outsourcing, Chennai for Engineering R&D and Product Development, Bangalore with Software development, Cochin for development of enterprise applications, Trivandrum for hardware and security solutions, and Visakhapatnam for IT support services. To ensure randomness in the sample unit 200 respondents were chosen from each city mentioned above.

### **Rationale for Sampling Unit**

As the IT sector and the allied services of IT development, infrastructure, and business process management services primarily concentrated in the above mentioned locations across five states of South India.

### **Sampling Technique**

In this study stratified random sampling technique on the basis of geographical location irrespective of the respondent cadre was adopted for data collection. To ensure randomness in the sample unit 200 respondents were chosen from each city mentioned above.

### **Sample size**

As a result, of data collection out of 1200 questionnaires circulated, only 568 fully filled in questionnaires were received.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection process focused on IT employees working in South India with a structured and self-administered questionnaire. Below sections provide the process of scale adoption.

### **Servant Leadership Scale**

The researcher adopted Organizational Leadership Assessment Scale (OLA) for data collection of servant leadership (Laub, 1999). The development of OLA took rigours steps for transformation,

of which Delphi investigation stands high giving Cronbach alpha coefficient as 0.98 a positive signal of reliability for OLA Scale (Laub, 1999); by clustering all the identified sixty servant leader characteristics in to six: (a) valuing people, (b) developing people, (c) building community, (d) displaying authenticity, (e) providing leadership, and (f) sharing leadership.

Constructs of valuing people measure the servant leader characteristic for «valuing people», from instrumental perspective («Manager / Supervisor in your organization accepts people as they are») and informational perspective («Manager / Supervisor in your organization appreciates for what you contribute to the organization») measures the leader's characteristic for valuing his / her subordinates. The constructs of «developing people» form («Manager / Supervisor in your organization provides opportunities for people to develop to their full potential») the basis for measuring servanthood of the leader in developing the followers by providing a platform for achieving excellence. Similarly, the constructs of «building community» talks about («Manager / Supervisor in your organization facilitates the building of community and team»), and («Manager / Supervisor in your organization values differences in culture, race and ethnicity») drives to conclude the authenticity of the constructs in measuring the innate character of servant leader for well-versed community building at workplace. The construct «displaying authenticity» carries the items like («Manager / Supervisor in your organization honestly evaluates himself before seeking to evaluate others») and («Manager / Supervisor in your organization says what he / she means, and means what he / she say) forms the basis for measuring leader's quality for setting him / her-self as an example while discharging the responsibilities. The construct «providing leadership» displays the items like («Manager / Supervisor in your organization encourages people to take risks even if they may fail»), («Manager / Supervisor in your organization is competent — have the knowledge and skills to get things done») and («Manager / Supervisor in your organization provides the support and resources needed to help workers meet their goals») forms the basis for measuring leader's competitiveness, and readiness to support the subordinates in decision making and risk-taking. Same with «sharing leadership» and items as («Manager / Supervisor in your organization encourages each person to share in building the organization's vision»), («Manager / Supervisor in your organization encourages each person in the organization to exercise leadership») and («Manager / Supervisor in your organization leads from personal influence rather than from the authority of their position») forms the basis for measuring leader's influence on followers in decision-making, empowerment of ground staff for career enhancement.

### ***Team Commitment Survey (TCS)***

To measure team effectiveness of the employees, Team Commitment Survey (TCS) developed by H. Bennett was used (Bennet, 1997; 2000). The roots of Team Commitment Survey (TCS) were from the Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) developed by N. J. Allen and J. P. Meyer as a validated instrument for measuring Organizational Commitment (Allen, Meyer, 1996).

### ***Survey Instrument***

A structured and self-administered questionnaire is designed for collecting data from the respondents. This questionnaire comprises questions that can be easily answered on the scales viz., dichotomous scale, multiple choice, five-point Likert scale, and open ended questions. Part-A comprises of 11 (eleven) demographic related items. Part-B with 52 items on servant leadership characteristics. Whereas, Part-C termed as team commitment with 20 (twenty) items. Finally concluded with the variable trust termed as psychological climate with 9 (nine) items.

### ***Reliability Analysis***

The relationships among the individual items will be investigated by considering the average item-total correlation and average inter-item (Cronbach's Alpha) correlation. Item-total correlation

was considered to be one of the methods available to test reliability of instrument (Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability coefficient. For reliability coefficient values, it was suggested that 0.70 is the minimum requirement for basic research (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 1. Reliability Statistics for the items in the questionnaire

Variable	No. of items	$\alpha$
Servant Leadership	52	.973
Team Effectiveness	11	.92
Trust	9	.945

Table 1 depicts that the Cronbach alpha coefficient is greater than 0.7, which meets the minimum requirement to accept the reliability of the instrument adopted.

## Data analysis

### Response Rate

From the table 2 it can be clearly understood that out of 1200 questionnaires circulated; only 568 fully filled in questionnaires were received with a response rate of 47.4%.

Table 2. Response Rate

Name of the State	Place	No. of Respondents contacted	No. of Responses	Non-response Rate
Telangana	Hyderabad	200	136	32%
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam	200	64	68%
Tamil Nadu	Chennai	200	128	36%
Karnataka	Bangalore	200	158	21%
Kerala	Cochin	200	43	78.50%
	Trivandrum	200	39	80%
Total		1200	568	52.60%

### Demographic Statistics

The target population for this study identified as the employees of IT Sector of South. The respondents represent a variety of disciplines and years of experience in the IT industry. Table 3 presents the demographic profile gathered from the sample population. A total of six major cities in five states of South India are focused. From the 1200 responses received 568 responses were found to be valid and usable with no discrepancies or ambiguity.

Table 3. Respondents demographic details

Demographic Description		Total sample <i>n</i> = 568	Hyderabad 136 (23.9)	Chennai 128 (22.5)	Bangalore 158 (27.8)	Cochin 43 (7.6)	Trivandrum 39 (6.9)	Visakhapatnam 64 (11.3)
Gender	Male	416 (73.2)	99 (72.8)	97 (75.8)	113 (71.5)	33 (76.7)	28 (71.8)	46 (71.8)
	Female	152 (26.8)	37 (27.2)	31 (24.2)	45 (28.5)	10 (23.3)	11 (28.2)	18 (28.2)
Age (in years)	21–25 Yrs	240 (42.2)	54 (39.7)	46 (35.9)	76 (48.1)	8 (18.6)	26 (66.7)	30 (46.9)
	26–30 Yrs	136 (23.9)	34 (25)	34 (26.6)	34 (21.5)	14 (32.5)	10 (25.6)	10 (15.6)
	31–35 Yrs	128 (22.5)	32 (23.5)	32 (25)	32 (20.2)	13 (30.2)	3 (7.7)	16 (25)
	36–40 Yrs	16 (2.8)	4 (2.9)	4 (3.1)	4 (2.5)	2 (4.7)	0 (0)	2 (3.1)
	Above 40 Yrs	48 (8.5)	12 (8.8)	12 (9.4)	12 (7.6)	6 (14)	0 (0)	6 (9.4)
Marital Status	Married	200 (35.2)	50 (36.8)	49 (38.3)	51 (32.3)	21 (48.8)	5 (12.8)	24 (37.5)
	Unmarried	368 (64.8)	86 (63.2)	79 (61.7)	107 (67.7)	22 (51.2)	34 (87.2)	40 (62.2)

Education	B Tech	200 (35.2)	48 (35.3)	43 (33.6)	58 (36.7)	13 (30.2)	17 (43.6)	21 (32.8)
	M.Tech/ME/MS	40 (7)	10 (7.3)	10 (7.8)	10 (6.3)	4 (9.3)	1 (2.6)	5 (7.8)
	MCA	48 (8.5)	12 (8.8)	11 (8.6)	13 (8.2)	4 (9.3)	2 (5.1)	6 (9.4)
	B Sc	136 (24)	30 (22.1)	28 (21.8)	41 (25.9)	6 (14)	14 (35.9)	17 (26.6)
	M Sc	48 (8.5)	12 (8.8)	12 (9.4)	12 (7.6)	6 (14)	1 (2.6)	5 (7.8)
	PhD	8 (1.4)	2 (1.4)	2 (1.6)	2 (1.2)	1 (2.3)	0 (0)	1 (1.5)
	Others	88 (15.5)	22 (16.2)	22 (17.2)	22 (13.9)	9 (20.9)	4 (10.3)	9 (14)
Experience	0–4 Years	288 (50.7)	66 (48.5)	60 (46.9)	86 (54.5)	15 (34.9)	27 (69.2)	34 (53.1)
	5–8 Years	144 (25.4)	36 (26.5)	34 (26.6)	38 (24.1)	13 (30.2)	10 (25.6)	13 (20.3)
	9–12 Years	64 (11.3)	16 (11.8)	16 (12.5)	16 (10.1)	6 (14)	2 (5.1)	8 (12.5)
	13–16 Years	24 (4.2)	6 (4.4)	6 (4.7)	6 (3.8)	3 (7)	0 (0)	3 (4.7)
	> 17 Years	48 (8.4)	12 (8.8)	12 (9.4)	12 (7.6)	6 (14)	0 (0)	6 (9.4)

*Note:* Values given in the parenthesis are calculated in percentage of their column totals.

### Correlation of Constructs

For testing the relationships between the constructs identified and validated were analyzed. Eleven constructs that were set in the bivariate correlations are Valuing people, Developing People, Building Community, Displaying Authenticity, Providing Leadership, Sharing Leadership, Team Commitment, and Trust.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix (Pearson Correlation)

Variables	VP	DP	BC	DA	PL	SL	SrLr	TC	T
VP	1.000								
DP	.766**	1.000							
BC	.661**	.754**	1.000						
DA	.566**	.658**	.763**	1.000					
PL	.633**	.681**	.744**	.752**	1.000				
SL	.665**	.671**	.680**	.777**	.790**	1.000			
SrLr	.695**	.732**	.767**	.750**	.814**	.757**	1.000		
TC	.425**	.361**	.436**	.389**	.502**	.324**	.597**	1.000	
T	.430**	.505**	.455**	.493**	.524**	.450**	.767**	.670**	1.000
N	568	568	568	568	568	568	568	568	568

Readings from the Table 4 confirm that the bivariate correlations for the constructs across the characteristics of servant leadership and the outcome — team commitment in the psychological climate trust are significant. Correlation coefficients (in absolute value) which are  $\leq 0.35$  are generally considered to represent low or weak correlations, 0.36 to 0.67 modest or moderate correlations, and 0.68 to 1.0 strong or high correlations with  $r$  coefficients  $\geq 0.90$  very high correlations. All the coefficient values obtained are  $> 0.35$  hence it can be concluded that the inter-correlation among the characteristics of servant leadership, team commitment and trust in the leader ranges from moderate to strong relation, and significant at 0.01 level of significance.

### Interpreting the Organizational Leadership Assessment Scale (OLA)

J. A. Laub developed an evaluation process to conclude the status of organization in a meaningful leadership direction by confirming the existence of servant leadership. The author characterized the organization in three categories of servant leadership paradigm (Laub, 2003).

J. A. Laub further developed two subsets for each category, resulting in the six organizational categories (Laub, 1999). Based on the mean Organizational Leadership Assessment score, each organization is categorized and placed in one of the six categories.

Table 5. J. Laub's OLA Score Ranges and Organizational Categories

Organizational Category and Health Level	OLA Score Ranges	Total Scores*
Org1 Absence of Servant Leadership characteristics (Toxic Health)	1.00–1.99	52–103
Org2 Autocratic Organization (Poor Health)	2.00–2.99	104–156
Org3 Negatively Paternalistic Organization (Limited Health)	3.00–3.49	157–181
Org4 Positively Paternalistic Organization (Moderate Health)	3.50–3.99	182–207
Org5 Servant-Oriented Organization (Excellent Health)	4.00–4.49	208–233
Org6 Servant-Minded Organization (Optimal Health)	4.50–5.00	234–260

*Note:* \* Scores obtained from the 52 items of OLA adopted by researcher and rounded off to the nearest whole number.

J. A. Laub briefly described each category based on the OLA Score Ranges and also noted the status of organizational culture (Laub, 1999). As the total number of items of OLAS is 52 taken on a 5-Likert point scale, the minimum and maximum values obtained were 52 and 260 respectively. Based on the OLA score ranges defined by Laub, the researcher categorized organization on the basis of servant leadership in Table 5.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for OLA Score Ranges

Total Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage over Mean**
52–103	40	7%	
104–156	80	14%	44%
157–181	120	21%	
182–207	112	20%	
208–233	144	25%	56%
234–260	72	13%	
Total	568	100%	100%

*Note:* \*\* Mean value = 186.62 from table 5.4 and percentage over mean calculated at 187\*.

From the table 6, it can be depicted that only 7% of the respondents feel that their organizational leadership does not show any signs of servant leadership, termed as «toxic organizational health». The employees believe that they were devalued, dejected from decision making, lack of opportunity for development.

14% of respondents feel that they work in an autocratic styled organization, termed as «poor organizational health.» Here most of the employees do not feel valued, have no opportunity for their professional growth, their leader does not listen to the ideas sought, and encouraged the employee relationships. Moreover, the leadership style followed was autocratic — power being concentrated at top levels and the instructions were forced in order to accomplish the leader's wishes.

21% of respondents perceived that they were associated with a negatively paternalistic organization, termed as «limited organizational health.» In this type of organizations, most of the employees sense that they were valued more for their contributions, provided with training just to increase performance in terms of organizational requirements. Power concentrated only at the top level, and sometimes given chance in decision making. The groups often comprised with unproductive competitive spirit.

20% of the respondents experienced that they were associated with a positively paternalistic organization, termed as «moderate organizational health», which denotes that workers were valued, provided with required training, recognized for their ideas but the decision remains at the top management and also employee relationships were valued for mutual benefits. The employees perceive a moderate level of trust from their leaders.

25% of the respondents stated that they were associated with servant-oriented organization, termed as «excellent organizational health.» Here, the employees were valued not only for their contributions but also for whom they are. Decentralization and sharing of leadership empower the

employees in decision making. A positive and collaborative working environment which adhere employees to work more closely for mutual benefit among employees and the organization was maintained.

Only 13% of respondents stated that they were associated with servant-minded organization, termed as «optimal organizational health.» Even though the percent of respondents is low, the purpose of the study received its recognition; the existence of servant leadership in IT sector of South India. The employees were highly valued and this driven them to contribute more towards their organization and helped them to work extensively in decision making and idea generations. They were actively listened to all the time by their leaders and recognized and implemented their ideas. An optimum level of sharing of leadership among all the employees made them to contribute exceptionally. This paved strong pillars like authenticity, trust, integrity for successful development of optimal organizational health.

The overall percentage of responses over Servant Leadership across the organizations was obtained as 56% whose total OLA scores are more than the mean i.e. 186.62. Hence, it is evident that the practice of servant leadership type approach does exist in the present IT sector. In contrary to it, 44% of the responses negate with the approach and this is mainly due to lack of firm conceptualization of servant leadership across industries and domains.

### Hypothesis Testing

The relationship between servant leadership and team commitment were retrieved from the simple linear regression analysis using SPSS and mediation using Process application developed by Andrew F. Hayes. The results of the analysis are present in the below tables.

#### ***Hypothesis 1: Perception of Servant leadership is positively related to the perception on Team commitment***

From the other coefficients it can be suggested that there exist an overall positive association between servant leadership and team commitment: the higher the level of understanding, developing, valuing, displaying authenticity, building community, sharing and displaying leadership towards the subordinates, the greater the level of team commitment by the followers.

Table 7. Model Summary for Servant Leadership and Team Commitment

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.597a	.357	.356	11.05938

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), SrLr

The value calculated for  $R^2$  was 0.357, which suggests that 35.7% of the variability of the data could be explained by the linear regression.

Table 8. Coefficients (Servant Leadership and Team Commitment)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	$\beta$		
(Constant)	38.309	2.046		18.725	.000
SrLr	.189	.011	.597	17.714	.000

The regression line, expressed in the form given in Equation (1), is  $TC = 38.309 + 0.189SrLr$ , where the predictor variable Servant Leadership (SrLr), and the outcome variable Team Commitment (TC). The estimated regression parameters are  $a = 38.309$  (intercept) and  $b = 0.189$  (slope). This regression line can be interpreted as follows: At  $SrLr = 0$ , the value of TC is 38.309. For every one unit increase in SrLr, the value of TC will increase on average by 0.189. Effects of both the intercept and slope are statistically significant ( $p < .005$ ).

**Result:** Null hypothesis (H01) set is disproved as the results reveal that the behavior of servant leader has a significant positive relation with the perception on team commitment in IT industry of South India.

**Hypothesis 2: Perception of Trust is positively related to team commitment**

The value calculated for  $R^2$  was 0.448, which suggests that 44.8% of the variability of the data could be explained by the linear regression. From the table 9. the correlation coefficient value between trust in leader and team commitment obtained is 0.670 which depicts as a moderate relationship between them. For further understanding the significance of Trust in leader and team commitment.

Table 9. Coefficients (Trust(T) and Team Commitment (TC))

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	$\beta$		
(Constant)	39.288	1.656		23.721	.000
T	1.063	.050	.670	21.454	.000
	R	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	Stdandard Error of the Estimate	
	.670a	.448	.448	10.23970	

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Team Commitment, Predictors: (Constant), Trust (T)

The regression line, expressed in the form given in Equation (2), is  $TC = 39.288 + 1.063T$ , where the predictor variable Trust (T), and the outcome variable Team Commitment (TC). The estimated regression parameters are  $a = 39.288$  (intercept) and  $b = 1.063$  (slope). This regression line can be interpreted as follows: At  $T = 0$ , the value of TC is 39.288. For every one unit increase in T, the value of TC will increase on average by 1.063. Effects of both the intercept and slope are statistically significant ( $p < .005$ ).

**Result:** Null hypothesis (H02) set is disproved as the results reveal that the employee’s trust in leader has a significant positive relation with their team commitment in IT industry of South India

**Hypothesis 3. Perception of Servant leadership is positively related to trust**

From the other coefficients it can be suggested that there exist an overall positive association between servant leadership and follower’s trust in leader: the higher the level of understanding, developing, valuing, displaying authenticity, building community, sharing and displaying leadership towards the subordinates, the greater the level of follower’s trust in leader.

Table 10. Mediation Model

Direct effects	Coefficient	SE	T	CI	Model $R^2$
<b>Trust (T) as outcome</b>					
Constant	3.72	1.0312	3.6080	1.69, 5.74	.5885
Servant Leadership (SrLr)	.1531	.0054	28.4518	.14, .16	
<b>Team Commitment (TC) as outcome</b>					
Constant	35.274	1.8879	18.683	31.56,38.98	.4654
Trust (T)	.8157	.0761	1.7213	.67, .96	
Servant Leadership (SrLr)	.0642	.0152	4.23	.034, .094	
<b>Total Effect Model</b>					
<b>Team Commitment (TC) as outcome</b>					
Constant	38.3089	2.0459	18.7249	34.29, 42.32	.3567
Servant Leadership (SrLr)	.1891	.0107	17.7143	.168, .210	
<b>Indirect Effect</b>					
SrLr → T → TC	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
	.1249	.0130	.0997	.1505	
<b>Total Effect</b>					
	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
	.1891	.0107	.1682	.2101	
<b>Direct Effects</b>					
	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
	.0642	.0152	.034	.094	

Mediation Analysis was performed to find out the mediating role of Trust on influence of Servant Leadership on Team Commitment by using «Process» application developed by Andrew F. Hayes.

The value calculated for  $R^2$  was 0.5885, which suggests that 58.85% of the variability of the data could be explained by the linear regression. The regression line, expressed in the form given in Equation (3), is  $T = 3.7206 + 0.1531SrLr$ , where the predictor variable Servant Leadership (SrLr), and the outcome variable Trust (T). The estimated regression parameters are  $a = 3.7206$ (intercept) and  $b=0.1531$ (slope). This regression line can be interpreted as follows: At  $SrLr = 0$ , the value of T is 3.7206. For every one unit increase in SrLr, the value of T will increase on average by 0.1531. Effects of both the intercept and slope are statistically significant ( $p < .005$ )

**Result:** Null hypothesis (H03) set is disproved as the results reveal that the behavior of servant leader has a significant positive relation with the perception on trust the employees have on their leader in IT industry of South India.

**Hypothesis 4: Trust mediates a positive relationship between the perception of servant leadership and perception on team commitment.**

The Fig. 4 shows the Model fitting information for Servant Leadership and team commitment with trust in leader as a mediating variable. This table denotes whether the model predict the outcome, for this team commitment a dependent variable is tested against servant leadership, independent variable and trust as a mediating variable.

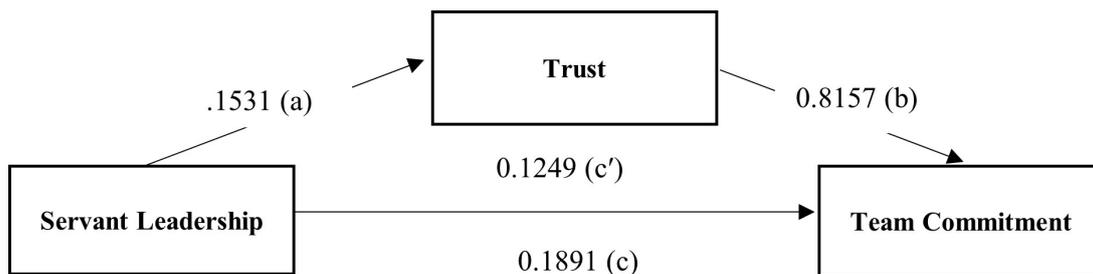


Figure 3. Servant Leadership and team commitment with trust in leader as a mediating variable  
Whereas, a = impact of Servant Leadership (SrLr) on Trust (T); b = impact of Trust (T) on Team Commitment (TC); c = impact of Servant Leadership (SrLr) on Team Commitment (TC); c' = combined effect of Servant Leadership (SrLr) and Trust (T) on Team Commitment (TC)

From the table 10, the value calculated for  $R^2$  was 0.4654, which suggests that 46.54% of the variability of the data could be explained by the linear regression.

A mediation analysis is comprised of three sets of regression:

- i)  $X (IV) \rightarrow Y (DV)$
- ii)  $X (IV) \rightarrow M (MV)$  and
- iii)  $X (IV) + M (MV) \rightarrow Y (DV)$ .

Whereas, IV, MV & DV are independent, mediating and dependent variables respectively

First Regression i.e.  $x (IV) \rightarrow y (DV)$  termed as Servant Leadership (SrLr) on Team Commitment (TC) the equation found to be as,

$$Y = a + b_1 X$$

Whereas, X= Servant Leadership (SrLr), Y = Team Commitment (TC), a = constant,  $b_1$  = intercept

And the equation can be denoted as

$$TC = 38.0389 + 0.1891 * SrLr$$

Second Regression i.e.  $x (IV) \rightarrow m (MV)$  termed as Servant Leadership (SrLr) on Trust (T) the equation found to be as,

$$M = a + b_2 X$$

Whereas, X = Servant Leadership (SrLr), M = Trust, a = constant,  $b_2$  = intercept

And the equation can be denoted as

$$T = 3.72 + 0.1531 * SrLr$$

Third Regression (Mediation Analysis) i.e.  $x$  (IV) +  $m$  (MV)  $\rightarrow$   $y$  (DV) termed as Servant Leadership (SrLr) and Trust (T) on Team Commitment (TC) and the equation found to be as,

$$Y = a + b_4 X + b_3 M$$

Whereas,  $X$ = Servant Leadership (SrLr),  $Y$ = Team Commitment (TC),

$M$  = Trust (T),  $a$  = constant,  $b_3$  &  $b_4$  = intercept

And the equation can be denoted as

$$TC = 35.274 + 0.0642 * SrLr + 0.8157 * T$$

The Total Effect stands at 0.1891 ( $b_1$ ) is in the first regression line: a total effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  (without  $M$ ). The direct effect 0.0642 ( $b_4$ ) is in the third regression equation: a direct effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  after taking into account a mediation (indirect) effect of  $M$ .

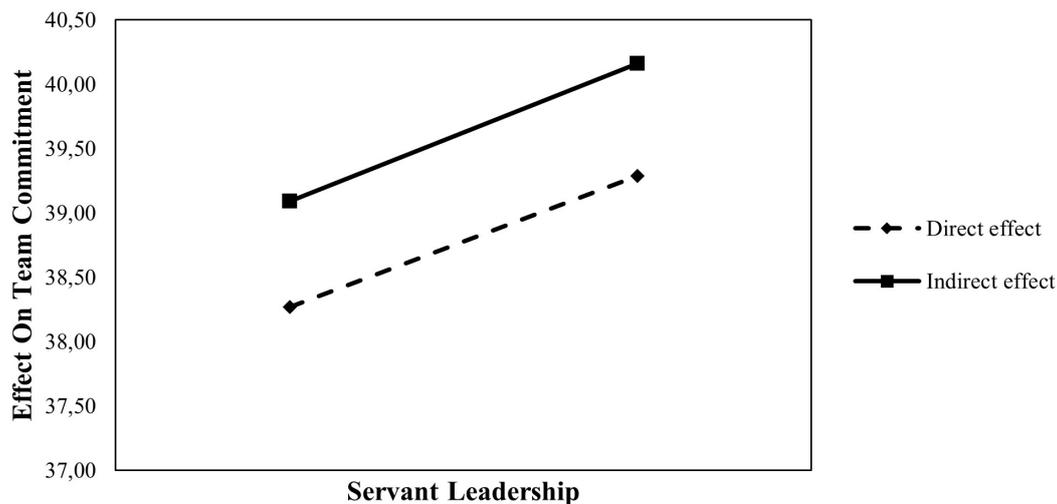


Figure 4. Mediation Effect On Team Commitment

Finally, the mediation effect (indirect effect) is the total effect minus the direct effect (i.e.  $b_1 - b_4 = 0.1891 - 0.0642 = 0.1249$ ), which equals to a product of a coefficient of  $X$  in the second regression equation and a coefficient of  $M$  in the third regression equation (i.e.  $b_2 \times b_3 = -0.1531 \times 0.8157 = 0.1249$ ).

The regression line, expressed in the form given in Equation (4), is  $TC = 35.2739 + 0.8157T + 0.0642 * SrLr$ , where the predictor variable Servant Leadership (SrLR), and the mediating variable Trust (T) and the outcome variable Team Commitment (TC). The estimated regression parameters are  $a = 35.2739$  (intercept) and  $b = 0.8157$  and  $c = 0.0642$ . Effects of both the intercept and slope are statistically significant ( $p < .005$ )

The Upper Limit (LLCI) and Lower Limit (LL) in both direct and indirect effects show a positive range ( $> 0.00$ ) This clearly emphasizes that trust in leader mediates an improvised association between servant leadership and team commitment. Hence it can be confirmed that trust in leader is one of the important factors for enhanced team commitment. Which means that there exist a positive association between the combined effect of servant leadership and follower's trust in leader on team commitment.

**Result:** Null hypothesis ( $H04$ ) set is disproved as the results reveal that the employee's trust in leader has a significant mediating role in enhancing the of employee team commitment along with their supervisor's servanthood.

## Discussion of results and implications

### Discussion of Results

#### *The existence of Servant Leadership in organizations*

To study the existence of servant leadership in organizations, the researcher adopted OLA Score Ranges defined by Laub; with the minimum and maximum values being 52 and 260 respectively. The cumulative values determine the organization's health in terms of practicing servant leadership. As the concept of servant leadership was not properly conceptualized and the application of this leadership style may not support fully. The results have shown remarkable results on this leadership practice. More than 50% of the respondents have concluded that their organizations were practicing servant leadership style, but a mere 13% of the respondents stated that they were associated with servant-minded organization, termed as «optimal organizational health.» Even though the percent of respondents is low, the purpose of the study received its recognition, i.e., the existence of servant leadership in IT sector of South India. The employees were highly valued and this driven them to contribute more towards their organization and helped them to work extensively in decision making and idea generations.

#### *Hypotheses H1 — H4*

**H1:** *Perception of Servant leadership is positively related to the perception on Team commitment.*

Findings from regression for H1 signify that the perception of servant leadership is positively related to the perception on team commitment with p-value as 0.00, with a good model fit for the data collected. From the parameter estimates the values show a significant low positive association between servant leadership and team commitment this may be due to the lack of conceptual clarity on the attributes of servant leadership style. A leadership style can be adopted at any level, but can be validated only with the results obtained. Since this style of leadership still at infant stage, a strong positive association was not achieved.

**H2:** *Perception of Servant leadership is positively related to trust.*

The perception of servant leadership on trust is another milestone to understand its association. As it was discussed earlier, trust being the most reliable variable a follower finds in the supervisor for obtaining any kind of association and vice-versa. In this regard, the results from correlation show a moderate positive correlation. So, the first hurdle of association between servant leadership and trust cleared.

Servant leadership mainly focuses on developing people, showing empathy and sharing leadership, which means that there exist a positive association between servant leadership and follower's trust in leader. Hence, it can be suggested that there exist an overall positive association between servant leadership and follower's trust in leader: the higher the level of understanding, developing, valuing, displaying authenticity, building community, sharing and displaying leadership towards the subordinates, the greater the level of follower's trust in leader.

**H3:** *Perception of Trust is positively related to team commitment.*

The Pearson's correlation coefficient between Perception of trust and team commitment shows a moderate positive association at 0.67. From the results of regression the model fits well with the data obtained with p-value at 0.000. This means the formulated constructs are well fitted with the context in assessing trust with team commitment.

So, leadership style can be one of the major elements affecting commitment. The coefficients for servant leadership at different categories show positive association between follower's trust in leader and team commitment. With this positive association it can be concluded that the ethical

and trustworthy behavior of the leader can bring harmony, oneness, and openness for sharing and supporting in a well-versed healthy working environment.

**H4:** *Trust mediates a positive relationship between the perception of servant leadership and perception on team commitment.*

The mediating effect of trust on servant leadership towards team commitment showed positive and increased the level of association. A good model fit was observed from the results with p-value at 0.000. This means the formulated constructs are well fitted with the context in assessing mediating effect of trust on servant leadership with team commitment. The  $R^2$  value shows the increased effect between servant leadership and team commitment with the influence of trust a psychological contract between leadership style and subordinate. The  $R^2$  value has increased from 35.7% to 46.54% by introducing trust as a mediating variable. This clearly supports the study that, trust in leader makes a remarkable effect on team commitment. Also the coefficient of trust in leader stands at 0.8157, which improvised the combined association of servant leadership with trust in leader on team commitment.

The combined effect of various dimensions of servant leadership has a significant impact on trust in leader; supporting the effect of trust as a mediating variable and servant leader behavior for improving the level of team commitment. With the increased level of team commitment, the employee's attitude towards job shifting reduces. Many studies have revealed that the employees leave the organization not because of salary or job requirements, but because of leader behavior. So, a trustworthy leader coupled up with servanthood touch for their subordinates will definitely succeed in organization.

### **Implications of Research**

Findings from this study provide reliable support for theory testing and validating in the Indian IT industry context. The research study provides an empirical evidence for servant leadership theory and its influence on the employees on the basis of team commitment.

### **Implications for Academia**

This study had contributed to academia and research trying to ascent the existing literature and statistical evidence for theory development. The theoretical model developed in this study is a comprehensive model that covered the characteristics of servant leadership and its influence on team commitment by introducing a mediating variable called trust. This theoretical framework is specialized for Indian IT sector and can be reframed according to the industry.

The researcher modified the original theoretical model proposed by Laub, and considered only the servant leader characteristics and the employee attitudinal behavior and trust being only mediating variable expressed as psychological climate were treated as main parameters for the study. This gap in can be looked into for further directions and implications of servant leadership towards theory building.

The study reveals that servant leadership in organizations is not intensely practiced, and those who practice are unable to conceptualize because of lack of availability of standardized literature on servant leadership. This gives a base for researchers to perform their studies in Indian context and also provides a substantial support for literature on servant leadership and its implication in India across industries and sectors.

### **Implications for the Industry**

Results and findings of servant leadership on attitudinal outcomes of employees would give industries, a positive flavor of practicing the style. The industry with diversified workforce encounters a wide range leadership styles based on demographics, attitude towards followers, traits, psychological contract, zeal to empower are to name a few. By practicing servant leadership,

leaders would be able to transform, empower and build community with the team members by sharing leadership.

The exploratory analysis of servant leadership on the allied attitudinal outcomes will provide a psychological climate which develop the employees to own the responsibilities.

The organizations with the available trends in leadership development with changing focus from leader-centric to follower-centric can develop certain developmental programs for the organizational leaders, by giving an opportunity to understand the essence of servant leadership, and imbibing leaders to lead with a servant's heart. This study on Servant leadership will support the practitioners with a sense of belongingness, showing empathy, trust building and treating all the employees equal. Also, the study provides a platform for exhibiting caring, support, defining clarity in objectives and responsibilities by providing the means of achieving the outputs.

## **Conclusion, Limitations and Direction for Future Research**

### **Conclusion**

Servant leadership, an area of research with few literature and empirical evidence encouraged researchers to develop sound theoretical platform with empirical support for conceptualizing this leadership. In addition to this, the present research attempt to support its contribution towards theory development with reference to Indian context.

The first phase of this research provides support for the existence of Servant Leadership in organizations. The organizations show limited practice of servant leadership termed as servant-minded organization (optimal organizational health).

Building a harmonious community among the teams and the workplace is vital for servant leader. The study reveals that, supervisors are well-versed to go along with the team members and exhibiting a sense of togetherness by building a healthy community irrespective of culture, race and ethnicity. Being a leader by example, the servant leader, displays openness and accepts criticisms.

Trust is the most fundamental attribute a follower finds in the supervisor for obtaining any kind of association and vice-versa. The leaders share leadership among the employees to make them responsible for achievement of goals not just as an individual, but as a team. This sharing of leadership portrays the leader's capability to recognize, train and develop the deserving committed members of the team and transform them as servant leaders. This description concludes the existence of servant leadership in Indian IT Industry.

While examining the association between servant leadership and team commitment the values show a significant low positive this may be due to the infant state and lack of conceptual clarity on the attributes of servant leadership style. By treating servant leadership and team commitment with trust the association has increased and the R<sup>2</sup> value has increased from 6.4% to 11.1%, supporting the combined association of servant leadership with trust in leader on team commitment.

India being an extensively diversified country in cultural perspective, shows different sets of people and variant leadership styles provides support in the existence of practicing servant leadership in Indian IT Industry.

Servant leaders, thus, develops an environment where the employees work with utmost responsibility, supportive nature, understanding the iniquities of the team members, valuing one another through collaboration can achieve mutual growth in a psychological climate termed as trust in leader. Finally, the current study attempts to offer a platform for the development of servant leadership notion.

### Limitations

The study is a first effort in the Indian context on the impact of servant leadership style on employee job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness in the IT sector. The data obtained from the respondents may show some bias while responding to the constructs framed. In order to reduce the respondents' bias in filling up the questionnaire, the researcher assured the confidentiality of the participants. The respondents were assured the non-existence of either right or wrong answers for the items in questionnaire.

The sample area forms another limitation with only the states of South India been taken into consideration for conducting research. To improve the generalizability, further studies should focus more on extremely diversified sample across organizations and locations of the country.

### Directions for Future Research

This study can be extended to other parts of the country and sectors to get generalized conclusions on servant leadership. The present study contributes to the study of leadership predictors of team effectiveness and additional work is needed to advance this line of inquiry. *Firstly*, the present study is limited to the Indian IT sector; similar investigations and analyses should be extended to other sectors such as business, education, military, and government. *Secondly*, leadership predictors of team commitment should be measured utilizing complementary instrumentation. While the OLA provides a well-established measure of servant leadership, the inclusion of additional servant leadership measures would help to corroborate the present findings. *Finally*, while this study provides a model for the effect of servant leadership on team effectiveness, job satisfaction and team commitment, it did not explicitly explore the qualitatively-oriented question of why this effect exists.

In light of this, qualitatively-oriented research could advance the field by better addressing the dynamics that make a servant leadership approach within organizations especially effective in team-based contexts. While not exhaustive, these recommendations provide a basis for future research in servant leadership studies.

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# Опосредующая роль доверия в отношениях между лидерством-служением и приверженностью команде среди сотрудников ИТ-сектора в южной Индии

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**Аннотация.** *Цель.* Лидерство-служение — концепция, о которой много говорят, — это новая область исследований в понимании лидерства в организациях. Лидерство-служение приобретает всё большее значение во всех отраслях по всему миру. Термин «лидерство-служение», введённый Робертом К. Гринлифом, намекает на служение в высоком смысле, помощь подчинённым, а не на лидерство-руководство в традиционном смысле. Целью данного исследования является изучение существования лидерства-служения в индийской ИТ-индустрии, а также определение степени, в которой отношение сотрудников к работе, а именно удовлетворённость работой, приверженность команды и эффективность команды, связаны с восприятием лидерства-служения в ИТ-отраслях Юга Индии. Индия живёт в психологическом климате, называемом доверием к лидеру. Лидерство-служение, будучи анекдотичным по своей природе, не имеет прочной теоретической основы и эмпирических доказательств. Литература проливает свет на историческое развитие лидерства-служения, ключевые характеристики и контраст между наиболее популярными стилями лидерства и лидерством-служением в современную бизнес-эру. *Методология.* В исследовании предпринимается попытка найти эмпирические доказательства взаимосвязи между лидерством-служением, доверием и отношением к работе. Для сбора данных были применены: 1) Инструмент Джеймса Аллана Лауба (1999) для оценки организационного лидерства-служения (SOLA), модифицированный Шэрон Дьюри в 2004 г.; 2) Опросник приверженности команде (TCS) Хайдна Беннетта (2000). Для определения уровня связи между переменными использовался медиаторный анализ. *Выводы.* Выборка из 568 респондентов даёт эмпирические доказательства лидерства-служения в индийском контексте с соответствием модели лидерства-служения наряду с отношением последователей к своей работе и опосредующей ролью доверия к лидеру в улучшении связи между переменными. *Ценность результатов.* В исследовании сделан вывод о поддержке со стороны лидеров-слуг в повышении уровня приверженности команды в отрасли.

**Ключевые слова:** ИТ-индустрия; лидерство; лидерство-служение; командная приверженность; доверие.