



# Fire & Emergency Services Perceptions of Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction

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## **Abstract**

*This quantitative correlational research study examined if a relationship existed between perceived servant leadership behaviors of fire and emergency service leaders and employee job satisfaction in fire and emergency services personnel. The study involved  $n = 205$  participants who completed the Organizational Leadership Assessment and the data were analyzed using Spearman's correlation. The results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction in fire and emergency services personnel.*

**Keywords:** Servant Leadership, Employee Job Satisfaction, Fire and Emergency Services

Fire and emergency services is a career that becomes a part of the identity of the responder (Russell, 2014). Even though the work is dangerous, the individual responder finds meaning in navigating the tragedy and loss while in service to others; however, over time, the profession seems to have negative consequences on both the physical and mental wellbeing of some responders (Lasky, 2006; Russell, Broomé, and Prince, 2016). Often times, this negative impact does not result from the emergency scene, but rather, traversing the policy-laden managerial bureaucracy of their organization (Alexander & Sanjay, 2013; Kirschman, 2004; Russell et al., 2016). Russell (2014) argues that adopting servant leadership into the fire and emergency services can reduce the impact of bureaucratic practices by replacing them with a person-centric leadership approach that places the needs and wellbeing of people over policy.

Russell's (2014) claim is theoretical; thus, a need arises for research studies to discover whether servant leadership can have a positive impact on the fire and emergency services profession. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine if perceived servant leadership behaviors relate to job satisfaction in fire and emergency service personnel serving with a career fire department. The location for the target population was a metropolitan fire department in the western United States with an approximate total of 1,100 uniformed and sworn career fire and emergency service personnel. A total of  $n = 205$  participants took part in this study.

This research examined whether perceptions of servant leadership behaviors in leaders has a statistically significant relationship with job satisfaction among chief officers, company officers, firefighters, and administrative and ancillary staff. The participants involved in this study were invited to complete the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA), a validated research instrument developed to measure the perceptions of servant leadership and job satisfaction (Laub, 1999).

The goal of this research was two-fold. The first involved the instituting of servant leadership behaviors within the fire and emergency service profession as a possibility for improving the lives of firefighters (Carter, 2007; Russell, 2014). The results of this study may influence fire and emergency service leaders to outwardly live the characteristics of servant leadership in order to improve the job satisfaction and wellbeing of responders. Second, according to Greenleaf (1970), servant leadership holds the promise of overcoming toxic bureaucratic environments. Such environments, as Kirschman (2004) noted, have been found to negatively impact responders' mental health and job satisfaction. Kirschman (2004) argued that bureaucracy has been linked to undo stress and burnout among responders (Kirschman, 2008). Therefore, the researchers hope that the results of this study may also provide a spotlight on how servant leadership could possibly reduce such bureaucratic and toxic environments within the fire service by improving job satisfaction (Kirschman, 2004; Locke, 1976; McCann, Graves, & Cox, 2014).

The article moves on to introduce the literature that became the foundation of the study. Then the article presents the methodology and study design used to conduct the research and presents the statistical results as descriptive statistics in

table form. Finally, the article offers a discussion of the findings and addresses the study's limitations, implications, and recommends future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This need for this study resulted from a systematic review of the literature. The literature review begins by giving a snapshot of modern servant leadership as well as the development of the servant leadership Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument. It then moves on to discuss the place for servant leadership within fire and emergency services professions. The review of the literature concludes with a discussion regarding job satisfaction within the fire and emergency services as well as the potential the practice of servant leadership has in improving responder job satisfaction.

### Servant Leadership

The theory of modern servant leadership originated from an essay titled *The Servant as Leader* (Greenleaf, 1970). The theoretical work argued that a true leader is one who portrayed a desire to serve first and who ensures that other people's highest priority needs are being served first (Greenleaf, 1970). According to Greenleaf (1977/2002), the basis of servant leadership philosophy is that it,

Begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such, it will be a later choice to serve – after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them, there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. (p. 27)

In his work, Greenleaf (1970) emphasized the importance of ensuring that the servant leader is first a servant placing the virtues of serving others and meeting other people's needs as the servant leader's highest priority. The foundation of the philosophy is comprised of three pragmatic questions, the first asks, "do those served grow as persons" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)? The second question asks, "do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)? The third question asks, "what is the effect on the least privileged in society, will they benefit or at least not be further deprived" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)? These three questions come together to form what is known as Greenleaf's best test, three reflective pieces that leaders need to continuously reflect upon. Neuschel (2005) explained those who serve individuals should grow the total person, enabling individuals to produce more than they are capable of by increasing their personal satisfaction and wellbeing because they will have joy and thereby contributing more to the organization.

Russell and Stone (2002) noted the difference between servant leadership and other leadership styles is that servant leadership begins with a desire to serve, whereas other leadership theories begin with the desire to lead. Searle and Barbuto

(2011) declared that servant leadership builds a positive environment where employees function at optimal levels because servant leadership centers on optimizing individual strengths rather than critical evaluation. Searle and Barbuto (2011) also asserted that servant leadership fosters a setting where their followers are more socially accountable and serves those in the greater community.

Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008) claimed there is a strong relationship between servant leadership and followers' organizational commitment. This commitment to the community, as Hunter et al. (2013) discovered, leads to lower employee turnover and retention. Beyond just retention, research has revealed that servant leadership contributes to a setting that is welcoming to employees, is represented by a desire for the welfare of others, encourages a collaborative environment, and promotes employee creativity and innovation (Jaramillo, Bande, & Varela, 2015; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010; Yoshida, Sendjaya, Hirst, & Cooper, 2014). Furthermore, Yoshida et al. (2014) suggested in areas where the leader is responsible in determining career development, individuals under a servant leader may not be fearful of losing opportunities due to the understanding and trust they have placed in their leader because they cultivate the follower's potential.

Greenleaf (1977) stressed the critical nature of trust when he exclaimed, "Trust is first. Nothing will move until trust is established" (p. 101). Van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, (2014) stressed the trust established by servant leaders reflects servant leadership behaviors on follower work attitudes. Studies by Huang, Iun, Liu, and Gong (2010) and Zhu, Newman, Miao, and Hooke (2013) argued that trust in the supervisor is critical because it secures the social exchange between the supervisor and follower.

The work of Neuschel (2005) expands on the idea that the servant leader is one dedicated to the growth of individuals. Neuschel (2005) argued that the servant leader helps followers grow both in stature and capacity. This growth builds individuals into more useful and satisfied followers. However, as Neuschel (2005) explained, "leadership not grounded in ethics will stifle the growth of new leaders and fail to generate a sense of trust and confidence in followers" (p. 121). Neuschel's (2005) words create a cycle that flows between growth and trust, where the follower who trusts the leader is then open to allowing that leader to help them grow.

### **Development of the Organizational Leadership Assessment Instrument**

Though inspirational, the foundational works of the servant leadership philosophy were predominately theoretical for almost thirty years after Greenleaf (1970) penned his seminal essay. Therefore, as it was with other leadership theories and philosophies, there was a need to research the impact and influence of this leadership approach. Laub (1999) conducted one of the first empirical studies leading to the development of a widely utilized quantitative servant leadership research instrument known as the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument.

Laub's (1999) research expanded upon Greenleaf's (1970) philosophy by developing an instrument for assessing the level at which leaders and workers

perceive six constructs of servant leadership within the organization as well as multiple questions regarding job satisfaction. Laub's (1999) six constructs of servant leadership include: (a) displays authenticity, (b) values people, (c) develops people, (d) builds community, (e) provides leadership, and (f) shares leadership provided the framework for defining servant leadership and measuring a healthy servant leadership driven organization. When developing this instrument, Laub (1999) stated that the research discovered servant leadership was a philosophy that: "Promotes the valuing and developing of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization (p. 81).

### **Servant Leadership in Fire and Emergency Services**

Russell (2014) asserted, "Greenleaf's explanation of the motive of the servant as leader as one's desire to serve is the same driving force that brings people to the fire and emergency services profession" (p. 53). The fire and emergency services responder begins with servant leadership in mind. Russell (2017) argued that for the responder it was not about compensation, but rather, a desire to serve others in their time of need and wanting to be a part of something much larger than self. This desire to serve others first is the most basic tenet of servant leadership philosophy, for as Greenleaf (1977/2002) argues, the servant leader as "one who desires to serve first" (p. 27).

The desire and love to serve others in the fire and emergency services career field is founded on traditions and passions that were passed down over generations (Fleming, 2010; Lasky, 2006; Smeby, 2005). Russell et al. (2016) stressed these traditions and passions are what drive individuals to become part of something much larger than their individual self by becoming part of a community of responders. Russell et al. (2016) suggested this community of emergency service personnel is established on relationships where responders work 24 to 48 hour shifts, working, training, preparing and eating meals; living with one another in a quasi-family-like community. These communities are not established on the conventional peer-to-peer relationship, but surpass the conventional relationships and include a relationship of a brotherhood and sisterhood (Salka & Neville, 2004; Sargent, 2006; Seigal, 2006; Smith, 1972; Smoke, 2010).

The traditions and passions that comprise the fire and emergency services must navigate a bureaucratic environment that is encumbered with policies and procedures that are intended to mitigate any future problem that may develop (May, 1991; Mills, 1959; Perez, Jones, Englert, & Sachau, 2010; Weber, 1978). The bureaucracy is a system that has become narrow, rigid, and formal, depends on precedent, and lacks initiative and resourcefulness (Greenleaf, 1977/2002). The bureaucratic structure that exists in the fire and emergency service organizations conflict with the family-like community because, as Mills (1959) penned, "Bureaucrats are among the humanistically impoverished, living with reference to values that exclude any arising from a respect for human reason" (p. 106).

The bureaucracy becomes a problem with responders within the bureaucratic environment because they must navigate the cumbersome policies instead of performing their role as servant-minded professionals (Russell, 2017). Kirschman (2004) asserted this even though bureaucracy is a common practice within fire and emergency service organizations; it becomes a caustic organizational model that harms responders. The problem seemingly exists between the ridged structure of the rulebook and the inner-desire of the responder to want to help others in their time of need (Russell et al., 2016).

Because of the family-like community that exists and the gratification that comes with serving as a fire and emergency service responder, their profession becomes who they are as individuals (Jensen, 2005). Moreover, being a professional firefighter becomes part of the identity of the individual (Russell et al., 2016). The benefits of servant leadership within fire and emergency services are parallel to the values of the emergency service responder and include those who often have a direct impact on individuals, families, organizations, and society (Reed, 2015, p. 77).

### **Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction in Fire and Emergency Services**

A study by Khatiban, Hosseini, Bikmoradi, Roshanaei, and Karampourian (2015) stressed there are many factors that contribute to both job satisfaction and burnout in the emergency services career fields. The research of Khatiban et al. (2015) discovered that there are positive and negative factors within the professions that impact the wellbeing of responders. A key finding in the study shows a correlation between a responder's lack of job satisfaction and burnout (Khatiban, et al., 2015).

The research of Airila, Hakanen, Luukkonen, Lusa, and Punakallio (2013) found that because fire and emergency service professionals are exposed to extreme mental and physical demands, they are vulnerable to unhealthy health risks resulting in negative impacts on the responder. Airila et al. (2013) discovered that responders need a positive community-like environment away from the tragedy and chaos where they can let down their guard and heal. It is the responsibility of emergency service leaders to build and foster this community (Russell, 2017).

Edwards (2010) offered specific characteristics fire and emergency service leaders can harness to create a positive environment that motivates and helps individuals reach their best self. They are fairness, respect, trust, flexibility and sensitivity (Edwards, 2010). Compton (2015) suggested that in order for fire and emergency service organizations to “survive and thrive”, leaders must be able to coach, mentor, and teach others. Seemingly, these claims and characteristics are aligned with the constructs of servant leadership. Bringing servant leadership into the fire and emergency services seems to hold promise for building a healthy community of responders and thus improving the job satisfaction that comes from this type of work (Russell, 2017). This possibility forms the central question of this study, which asks is there a correlation between servant leadership behaviors of leaders and job satisfaction among fire and emergency service personnel?

## METHOD

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine if and to what extent there is a relationship between perceived servant leadership behaviors and job satisfaction among fire and emergency services personnel? The central research question guiding this quantitative study asked is there a statistically significant relationship between leader's servant leadership behavior of (1) *displays authenticity*, (2) *values people*, (3) *develops people*, (4) *builds community*, (5) *provides leadership*, (6) *shares leadership* and job satisfaction in fire and emergency services personnel (Laub, 1999)? To conduct the study, the researchers obtained permission from and employed Laub's (1999) Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) tool to measure both the degree of servant leadership behaviors in the fire and emergency services organization and employee job satisfaction. The participants of the study completed the OLA survey and provided the following demographic variables: gender, race/ethnicity, years of employment, level of education, and position within the fire and emergency services organization.

### **Instrumentation Validity and Reliability**

James Laub (1999) developed the OLA instrument to measure organizational servant leadership behaviors through a self-reported survey. The researchers chose Laub's (1999) OLA instrument based on the strong processes and qualities of measuring organizational servant leadership behaviors. Laub's field-test of the OLA instrument included 41 participating organizations that involved 828 usable instruments and achieved an estimated validity using the Cronbach-Alpha coefficient of .98 (Laub, 1999).

The OLA possesses sound psychometric properties with regard to accurately and reliably for measuring leaders, managers, and front-line personnel in the characteristics of a servant leadership-minded organization as well as job satisfaction (Laub, 2019). According to Laub (2019), "the OLA has been used in more than 75 doctoral dissertations," as well as multiple Masters theses, academic research, and corporate consulting. In addition, the OLA achieved a reliability score of .9802 utilizing the Cronbach-Alpha coefficient. Furthermore, Horsman (2001), Thompson (2002) and Ledbetter (2003) also conducted reliability tests on the OLA showing scores equal or higher verifying OLA reliability.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place in an online environment. Each participant received an email with a link to access the OLA survey instrument. The link had a unique organizational access code and PIN to access the OLA survey that was specific to the metropolitan organization. This code was specific to the metropolitan organization, but each participant could have accessed the survey multiple times from a single IP address. This ensured that each participant had equal access to the survey and, in case of disruption due to an emergency call; the participant could have accessed the survey again. The survey was not considered complete and was not accounted for until the participant had selected the submit button at the bottom

of the survey. The OLA was provided to participants through an online survey and the response was a 19% survey return rate.

**Sample Size and Demographics**

To determine the required sample size, a power analysis utilizing Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, and Lang (2009) G\*Power 3.1.9.2 was conducted. Because there are six variables and a medium effect of .30, a minimum sample size of 84 was required to reach a statistical power of .80. The sample originated from a metropolitan department and included N = 1,100 employees, of the N = 1,100 members, n = 205 participated in this study; see Table 1.

**Demographic Data**

The study participants were asked to respond to demographic questions, which included gender, race/ethnicity, years of employment, level of education, and position within the fire and emergency services organization. Because the OLA was accessed by a unique organizational code and PIN, each participant’s confidentiality and anonymity were maintained and were not able to be identified.

Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics from n = 205 respondents in the metropolitan fire and emergency services organization. The breakdown of respondents was as follows: 11.7% chief officers, 27.3% company officers, and 61% firefighters and ancillary staff. The chief officers included battalion chiefs, deputy chiefs, and assistant chiefs. Company officers comprised of captains. Firefighters and ancillary staff included firefighter, firefighter/paramedic, engineer, and any administrative staff that supported the metropolitan fire and emergency services organization.

Table 1  
*Participant Demographic Characteristics (n = 205)*

Variable	Attribute	Participant	
		Number	Percentage
Role	Chief Officers	24	11.7
	Company Officers	56	27.3
	Firefighters/Ancillary Staff	125	61.0
	Total	205	100
Gender Identity	Male	193	94.1
	Female	9	4.4
	Prefer not to respond	3	1.5
	Total	205	100
Race	African American	2	1.00
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.5
	Hispanic/Latino	9	4.4
	Multiracial	4	2.0
	White	182	88.8



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	Prefer not to respond	7	3.4
	Total	205	100
Years Employed	0-5 years	23	11.2
	6-10 years	58	28.3
	11-15 years	58	28.3
	16-20 years	27	13.2
	20 and above	39	19.0
	Total	205	100
Education Level	High School Graduate	32	15.6
	Associate Degree	92	44.9
	Bachelor's Degree	73	35.6
	Master's Degree	6	2.9
	Doctoral Degree	2	1.0
	Total	205	100
Position	Staff Member	14	6.8
	Firefighter	12	5.9
	Firefighter/ Paramedic	80	39.0
	Engineer	19	9.3
	Captain	51	24.9
	Battalion Chief	23	11.2
	Other	6	2.9
	Total	205	100

### Data Analysis

The data analysis for this quantitative study utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software program (version 24.0) to produce the statistical analysis on data that was gathered from the completed OLA surveys. Once the participants responded to the survey, this data was then deposited in Dr. Laub's server because of the process Dr. Laub used for the OLA survey tool. Dr. Laub then sent data to the researchers via an Excel file. The researchers then imported the Excel data file into SPSS for analysis and cleaned and checked the dataset for missing data and values that were out of range. Because the data collected through the OLA instrument were not normally distributed, the researchers employed a Spearman's rho correlation that examined the correlation between each of the six servant leadership constructs and employee job satisfaction to determine if there were any statistically significant relationships between the six servant leadership behaviors and employee job satisfaction. The researchers used a *p*-value of .05 to set the significance level.

### Results

This section presents the data collected and the analyses employed to answer the variables within the study's central research question. The research

question that directed the study and helped establish to what extent, if any, a relationship exists between the leader’s servant leadership behaviors and job satisfaction in fire and emergency services personnel. This section presents the descriptive statistics of the  $n = 205$  participants as tables; see Tables 2 & 3. Each section displays the statistical findings associated with the perception of servant leadership as well as the job satisfaction for the metropolitan fire department.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics for the OLA Constructs of Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction for Metropolitan Fire Department (n=205)*

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis		
Servant Leadership Construct								Std. Error	Std. Error
Displays Authenticity	1.00	5.00	3.76	4.00	1.17	- .170	- .338	0.792	0.499
Values People	1.00	5.00	3.85	4.00	1.01	- .170	- .338	0.871	0.132
Develops People	1.00	5.00	3.75	4.00	1.16	- .170	- .338	0.798	0.528
Builds Community	1.20	5.00	3.94	4.00	.933	- .170	0.045	0.795	.338
Provides Leadership	1.00	5.00	3.78	4.00	1.05	- .170	- .338	0.854	0.319
Shares Leadership	1.00	5.00	3.71	4.00	1.16	- .170	- .338	0.804	0.483
Job Satisfaction	1.33	5.00	4.24	4.50	.752	- .170	1.372	1.226	.338

Table 3  
*Job Satisfaction Descriptive Statistics for Metropolitan Fire Department (n=205)*

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis		
Question								Std. Error	Std. Error
I am working at a high level of productivity	1.00	5.00	4.26	4.00	.773	2.631	.170	2.631	.338
I feel good about my contribution to the organization	1.00	5.00	4.33	5.00	.827	2.128	.170	2.128	.338
My job is important to the success of this organization	1.00	5.00	4.37	5.00	.828	1.642	.170	1.642	.338
I enjoy working in this organization	1.00	5.00	4.40	5.00	.958	2.602	.170	2.062	.338
I am able to be creative in my job	1.00	5.00	4.03	4.00	1.029	0.478	.170	0.478	.338

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I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job	1.00	5.00	4.05	4.00	1.147	.578	.170	0.578	.338
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## DISCUSSION

The data collected from the  $n = 205$  participants were entered into SPSS v. 24 and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's rho correlation coefficient. The results obtained from the analysis of the collected data revealed a statistically significant correlation between employee's perceptions of the six constructs of servant leadership and job satisfaction. There was a statistically significant relationship between each leader's servant leader behaviors of displays authenticity, values people, develops people, builds community, provides leadership and shares leadership and job satisfaction. Table 4 presents a summary of results of the correlations between perceived servant leadership behaviors and job satisfaction for all research questions.

Table 4  
Nonparametric Correlations for Research Questions 1-6 for Metropolitan Fire Department ( $n = 205$ )

Servant Leadership Construct		X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7
Displays Authenticity (X1)	Correlation Coefficient		.952**	.953**	.948**	.933**	.951**	.862**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.000	<.000	<.000	<.000	<.000	<.000
Values People (X2)	Correlation Coefficient			.941**	.962**	.914**	.943**	.879**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			<.000	<.000	<.000	<.000	<.000
Develops People (X3)	Correlation Coefficient				.933**	.931**	.958**	.885**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				<.000	<.000	<.000	<.000
Builds Community (X4)	Correlation Coefficient					.906**	.922**	.873**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					<.000	<.000	<.000
Provides Leadership (X5)	Correlation Coefficient						.942**	.837**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						<.000	<.000
Shares Leadership (X6)	Correlation Coefficient							.867**
	Sig. (2-tailed)							<.000
Job Satisfaction (X7)	Correlation Coefficient							1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)							

Note. \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

All the variables were found to have a strong statistically significant, correlation at the 0.01 level in the metropolitan fire department indicating there were statistically significant positive relationships between the six constructs of servant leadership and employee job satisfaction. The Spearman's correlations between the individual six construct variables and job satisfaction were, (1) *displays authenticity* ( $r_s = .862; p = <.001$ ), (2) *values people* ( $r_s = .879, p = <.001$ ), (3) *develops people* ( $r_s = .885, p = <.001$ ), (4) *builds community* ( $r_s = .873, p = <.001$ ), (5) *provides leadership* ( $r_s = .837, p = <.001$ ), and (6) *shares leadership* ( $r_s = .867, p = <.001$ ).

## CONCLUSION

Fire and emergency services organizations may improve the overall employee job satisfaction by employing servant leadership philosophies into their leadership practices, thus focusing on the community of responders and serving the needs of the people (Russell, 2017). The practice of servant leadership has the possibility for overcoming toxic and bureaucratic work environments. In addition, a servant leadership-led organization can foster the community of responders, creating a space where leaders can remove or reduce bureaucratic stumbling blocks. In doing so, fire and emergency services leaders can create healthy work environments where leaders strengthen individual responders, thus improving the overall health, safety, and well-being of fire and emergency service personnel (Airila et al. 2013; Carter, 2007; Russell, 2017).

There has been much research completed the last several decades examining the relationship between servant leadership constructs and employee job satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the servant leadership constructs and employee job satisfaction within a career metropolitan fire department. The implication of increasing the research of the servant leadership constructs to include fire and emergency service organizations has created a broader understanding of these concepts to a new setting. This study offered results that supported the concept that a statistically significant relationship existed between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction. This study and its findings also established a positive correlation between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction. In addition, this study helped support findings of previous studies and reinforced the value of employing servant leadership within fire and emergency service organizations. Furthermore, that servant leadership seems to be naturally occurring within the fire and emergency services and therefore can be fostered and honed through training and education (Russell, Russell, Broomé, 2018).

## Limitations

The response rate for this study was 19% ( $n = 205$ ); this was more than adequate to offer a level of statistical power ( $>.80$ ) that was used for all analyses to investigate each of the research questions (Faul et al., 2009). Because this study only utilized a metropolitan fire department in one region of one state, data and findings cannot be generalized across different states. For this study, the findings

can only be generalized to the one metropolitan fire department that offered their time to complete online surveys, thus creating a limitation in the research.

A second limitation was the participant's level of interaction with leaders may have influenced how participants perceived servant leadership behaviors within their organization. These perceptions and interactions with leaders could potentially influence how the participants understood the survey questions. The researchers acknowledge that an individual participant's knowledge of a specific leadership practice or behavior could have influenced bias in the way they answered the questions.

### **Future Research**

Because of the limitations of this quantitative study, future research is needed. The researchers recommend conducting a qualitative study to explore the relationship between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction that would identify themes and explain and describe why variables are affecting job satisfaction. In addition, future research is needed to replicate this study on a larger scale in fire and emergency service departments. This would provide valuable information to help determine if, and to what extent, the perception of servant leadership behaviors contribute to employee job satisfaction. Replicating the research on a much larger scale might also provide information that could offer differing perceptions of servant leadership and its correlation to employee job satisfaction on a larger scale.

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