



The Relationship of Servant Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, and Work-family Conflict with Employee Well-being

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to test for relationships between servant leadership, perceived organizational support, and work-family conflict on employee perception of well-being. Data collection from 132 males and 103 females occurred through Qualtrics data collection service. Servant leadership and work-family conflict showed low to medium positive correlation. Multiple hierarchical regression of the three independent variables and control variables of age and tenure with supervisor showed significance for gender, thus separate multiple hierarchical regressions were used to analyze females and males separately. A significant regression was found for males, but not for females. A qualitative study followed the quantitative study to see what participants' perceptions of servant-leaders' behaviors impacted employees' well-being; how the leaders' behaviors impacted well-being, and why employees perceived the servant-leaders' behaviors impacted employees' well-being. The study concludes with suggested future research.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, Work-family Conflict, Employees' Well-being, Regression, Mixed-Method

Greenleaf (1977), in his comparison of leader-first with servant-first said that the best test of servant leaders is:

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (Kindle Locations 351-352).

My purpose in this research study was to test for a relationship between employees' perception of their supervisors' level of servant leadership and the employees' self-report of their well-being. This research is a mixed-method approach in which after I tested for relationship using hierarchical multiple regression, I conducted a case study of employees who identified themselves as working for a servant leader. To better understand servant leadership's relationship on employee well-being I also tested the relationship of perceived organizational support and work-family conflict to see how much of an impact these additional independent variables had with the dependent variable of employee well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Well-being

Regarding the role of servant leadership and employee well-being, three of Spears' (2004), ten characteristics of servant leadership are: (a) healing, (b) commitment to growth, (c) building community that relate to employee well-being. In addition, Chen et al. (2011, 2013) showed a positive correlation between Page and Wong's measure of servant leadership and Ryff's (1989) Eudemonic Well-being Scale that contains six dimensions: (a) autonomy, (b) environmental mastery, (c) personal growth, (d) positive relations with others, (e) purpose in life, (f) and self-acceptance. Chen et al. defined Eudemonic well-being as human potential (p. 423). Chen et al.'s research relates to part of Greenleaf's test of servant leadership.

Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) reported that employee well-being (EWB) consisted of "high-levels of positive impact, low levels of negative impact, and cognitive evaluation of one's satisfaction with their life as a whole" (p. 443) and that someone with positive well-being is said to be in a state of "positive psychological functioning" (p. 443).

Taylor et al. (2003) reviewed the General Employee Well-being (GWB) scale developed by Dupuy (1978) and noted concerns about the lack of empirical testing of the dimensions and inconsistent results from factor analysis. In addition to Taylor et al.'s concerns, 14 of the 18 items were scored on a six-point rating scale, four items were scored on a 0-10 rating scale, and eight of the 18 items were reversed scored.

Modified General Employee Well-being Instrument

Noting van Sonderen et al.'s, (2013) concern about using reversed scored items and considering Wen-Chung Wang et al.'s (2015) admonition about not using mixed response ratings, Winston (2020) created a modified version of the 18-item General Employee Well-being instrument and tested the instrument using principal component analysis and scale reliability analysis. Winston (2020) modified Dupuy's GWB scale changing the wording of the negative items to positive and using a single response method, thus addressing Taylor et al.'s concerns. Winston (2020) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .96. In this current study, I used the eight-item modified employee well-being scale to measure employees' self-report of their well-being. The scale items were scored using a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 meaning 'never' and 10 meaning 'always.' Four of the eight items are shown below:

- In general, I felt great for the past two months.
- I have felt calm rather than nervous for the past two months.
- I have been in firm control of my emotions for the past two months.
- I generally felt that my life was worthwhile for the past two months.

Servant Leadership

The contemporary understanding of servant leadership began with Greenleaf's (1977) seminal work and has progressed through multiple models and instruments through the work of Page and Wong (2000), Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), Patterson (2003), Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Joseph and Winston (2005), Laub (2005) Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Hale and Fields (2007), Liden, et al. (2008), van Dierendonk and Nuijten (2011) as well as Winston and Fields (2015).

A common focus among the writers listed above is that servant leader's care about employees. Bass (2000) contrasted servant leadership with transformational leadership and noted that servant leaders focused on the employees, while transformational leaders focused on the organization. This contrast seems to align with Greenleaf's (1977) test of servant leadership. Patterson (2003), in her model of servant leadership, commented about the importance of the leader's moral love for the employees, Page and Wong (2000) included 'caring for others' in their servant leadership model, and Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) included 'emotional healing' in their servant leadership model. Jaramillo et al. (2009) concluded from their study that "it seems that the well-being of the salesperson is conducive to a variety of positive job outcomes, and a servant leadership style can play a key role in enhancing the well-being of salespeople" (p. 269).

All of these dimensions of servant leadership point to a relationship between the leader's level of servant leadership and the employees' general well-being. Yet, there is little empirical research testing Greenleaf's belief that employees are better off working with servant leaders, hence the reason for this present study.

Servant leadership instruments by Page and Wong (2000), Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), van Dierendork and Nuijten (2011), Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Hale and Fields (2007), and Liden et al. (2008) include multiple dimensions, which, according to Winston and Fields (2015), obfuscate the ability to measure that which is essentially servant leadership and not dimensions of other leadership styles.

Essential Servant Leadership Behaviors Instrument

To clarify the measurement of servant leadership Winston and Fields (2015) created an item-pool of servant leadership behaviors from the multi-dimensional servant leadership instruments created in the studies cited above, asked a panel of experts to review the list and vote on keeping or removing each behavior, sent the resultant list of 22 items to 443 working adults and asked them to evaluate their supervisors using the 22 items. After principal component analysis and scale optimization, Winston and Fields produced a 10-item single-scale measure of essential servant leadership behaviors (ESLB) that had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96. Examples of the items in the scale include:

- Practices what he/she preaches.
- Serves people without regard to their nationality, gender, or race.
- Sees serving as a mission of responsibility to others.
- Genuinely interested in employees as people.

Subsequent research studies showed Cronbach alphas ranging from 0.88 to 0.96 (Cancino, 2019; Hargadon, 2018; Hirschy, 2012; Phillips, 2018). Participants in this current study used the ESLB to provide their perception of their supervisor's servant leadership behaviors.

Using the key terms from the ten items in the scale, servant leadership is defined as:

A servant leader is a supervisor/manager/leader who practices what he/she preaches, serves people without regard to their nationality, gender, or race. Is genuinely interested in employees as people and sees serving as an important mission of responsibility to others. A servant leader instills trust rather than fear by sacrificing to help others and being honest in communications. A servant leader transcends self-interest and self-success as part of a higher calling to serve others.

Participants in this current study used the ESLB to provide their perception of their supervisor's servant leadership behaviors.

Perceived Organizational Support

Meyers et al. (2019) defined perceived organizational support (POS) as “the extent to which employees feel actively supported by their organization to employ their unique strengths at work” (p. 1826). According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), one of the three antecedents to POS is supervisor support. The other two antecedents are fairness and rewards. Meyers et al.'s inclusion of supervisor support is a connection to servant leaders' caring for employees, which, then, may connect to EWB. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) posited that POS might assist employees to do their assigned jobs and tasks and contribute to employees' well-

being. Thus, POS aligns with Greenleaf's (1977) test of whether employees are better off because of the servant leader and the organization. To see if POS had a positive relationship with EWB, I included POS as an independent variable in this current research study.

Eisenberger et al. (1986) developed an instrument to measure POS. According to Eisenberger et al., perceived organizational support was the "breadth and consistency of the employee's beliefs concerning the organization's commitment to him or her, and the effects of such perceived organizational support, and of the employee's exchange ideology on absenteeism" (p. 501). Eisenberger et al. believed that the organization's level of concern for the employee's well-being positively correlated with the employee's actual well-being. Eisenberger et al.'s level of concern seems to align with Greenleaf's (1977) test of servant leadership. Eisenberger's focus on the organization is replaced in this current study with the leader's servant leadership behaviors with the underlying premise that the leader's values and behaviors positively impact the organization's culture, which is supported by Hambrick and Mason's (1984) upper echelon theory. Since a possible moderation may exist, this research study includes a regression analysis testing for a moderating effect by POS on the ESLB-General Well-being relationship.

Eisenberger et al. (2002) recommended an eight-item short form of Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) measure, which Dawley et al. (2010) used in a study of perceived organizational support and turnover intention. Dawley et al. found that the short form scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. Although van Sonderen et al. (2013) argued that scales should not use reversed wording, I used the eight-item short form in this current study due to Dawley et al.'s success with the scale because that was how Eisenberger created the scale. The rating scale for the POS instrument consisted of: (a) Strongly Disagree, (b) Moderately Disagree, (c) Slightly Disagree, (d) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (e) Slightly Agree, (f) Moderately Agree, and (g) Strongly Agree.

Four of the eight items are listed below. The (R) denotes that the item required reversed scoring.

- The organization values my contribution to its well-being.
- The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
- The organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
- The organization really cares about my well-being.

Work-family Conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as:

An examination of the literature on conflict between work and family roles suggests that work-family conflict exists when: (a) time devoted to the requirements of one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another, (b) strain from participation in one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another. (p. 76)

Moreno-Jiménez et al. (2009), building on the work of Kahn (1981) defined work-family conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role

pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 427). Moreno-Jimenez et al. found a moderating relationship of psychological detachment from work, caused as a result of work-family conflict. The implication that work-family conflict has a relationship with employee well-being justified the inclusion of work-family conflict in this present study.

Work-family Conflict Scale

I used Netemeyer et al.’s (1996) five-item work-family conflict scale to measure work-family conflict. The scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .88 (p. 405). The items were scored using a seven-item Likert scale from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree.’ The arrangement of the response items means that the higher the score the more work-family conflict is reported, thus H3 is worded as a negative relationship with EWB. Three of the items from Netemeyer et al.’s scale are:

- The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life.
- The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.
- Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me.

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationships among the independent and dependent variables:

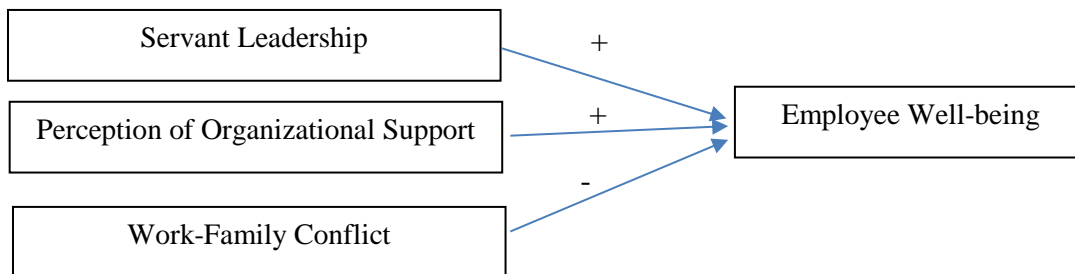


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

Hypotheses

- H1: Servant leadership has a positive relationship with employee well-being while controlling for Age, Gender, and tenure with the supervisor.
- H2: Perception has a positive relationship with employee well-being while controlling for Age, Gender, and tenure with the supervisor.
- H3: Work-family conflict has a negative relationship with employee well-being while controlling for Age, Gender, and tenure with the supervisor

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com/research-services/online-sample/>) secured a sample of participants matching the selection criteria of: (a) 18 years of age, or over, (b) employed for a minimum of three years, and (c) having family members at home (spouse, children, parents, and/or roommate), Qualtrics collected the data over three working days. I used SPSS Version 27 for the statistical analysis. I reviewed the 257 completed surveys, of which 22 were outliers with age and tenure with supervisor being at the maximum values of 100 years and 60 years respectfully, leaving 235 useable surveys.

The number of participants exceeds the minimum correlation analysis sample size of 102 using effect size of 0.6, $\alpha = .05$, and Power $(1-b) = 0.90$ according to GPower3 (<http://gpower.hhu.de>). The number of participants also exceeds the minimum regression sample size of 146 for six predictor variables (age, number of family members, tenure with supervisor, ESLB, POS, and WFC according to GPower 3 using effect size of 0.15, $\alpha = 0.05$, Power $(1-b) = 0.95$ and Hair et al.'s rule of 15-20 participants per predictor variable that would require 120 participants.

Quantitative Results

This section presents the demographics of the sample, the descriptives of the continuous variables, tests of difference between male and female for EWB, and regression models for male participants. Table 1 presents the demographics of the sample, Table 2 presents the descriptives of the continuous variables, and Table 3 shows the correlations of the continuous variables.

According to Jakobsen and Rasmus, (2015) common method variance is of concern in quantitative research where participants self-report information about themselves. In this current study participants provided self-reports of their WFC and EWB. Jakobsen and Rasmus suggested Harman's Single-Factor Test to see if common method variance occurred in our data. In this test, all of the items for factors that might demonstrate common method variance are included in a principal component analysis to see if one factor emerges. If a single factor does not emerge, then common method variance is most likely not present. I loaded the items for WFC and EWB into one principal component analysis and found two distinct factors. Factor 1 (Eigenvalue of 6.02 explaining 48.3% of the variance) contained all of the items for WFC and factor 2 (Eigenvalue of 3.83 explaining 29.49 of the variance) contained all of the items for EWB. Thus, I concluded that common method variance was not a concern in our data.

Table 1
Demographics of the Sample

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Male	132	52.6
Female	103	47.4
Family		
Child	27	10.3
Parent and Child	15	4.7
Roommate and Child	3	0.5
Roommate and Spouse	2	0.9
Roommate, Spouse, Parent, Grandparent, and Child	2	0.9
Spouse	45	20.7
Spouse and Child	130	56.8
Spouse, Child, and Other	2	0.9
Spouse and Other	1	0.5
Spouse, Parent, and Child	5	2.3
Spouse, Parent, Grandparent, and Child	1	0.5
Spouse, Parent, and Other	2	0.9

Note. N = 235

Table 2
Descriptives of the Continuous Variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Alpha
Age	47.3	18.65	
Tenure_Leader	12.6	16.43	
SL_AVG	4.0	0.76	0.93
POS_AVG	4.6	1.15	0.73
WFC_AVG	4.5	1.82	0.96
EWB_AVG	7.1	1.88	0.93

Note. N = 235

SL_AVG = essential servant leadership behaviors average

POS_AVG = perceived organizational support average

WFC_AVG = work-family conflict average

EWB_AVG = employee well-being average

Alpha = Cronbach's Alpha

Table 3
Correlations of the Continuous Variables

	Age	Tenure	SL_AVG	POS_AVG	WFC_AVG	EWB_AVG
Age	—					
Tenure	0.69**	—				
SL_AVG	0.13	0.129*	—			
POS_AVG	-0.14*	-0.17**	0.27**	—		
WFC_AVG	0.26**	0.32**	0.24**	-0.48**	—	
EWB_AVG	0.25**	0.32**	0.30**	0.04	0.20**	—

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Note. $N = 235$

Tenure = length of tenure in years with the supervisor

SL_AVG = essential servant leadership behaviors average

POS_AVG = perceived organizational support average

WFC_AVG = work-family conflict average

EWB_AVG = employee well-being average

Table 4
Regression of Age, Tenure, Gender, SL-AVG, POS-AVG, on SL-AVG on EWB-AVG

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	3.93	0.85			4.645	0.000
Age	0.00	0.01	0.02		0.28	0.783
Gender(1=Female,0=Male)	-0.64	0.24	-0.17		-2.61	0.010
Tenure_Leader	0.03	0.01	0.23		2.80	0.006
SL_AVG	0.53	0.17	0.21		3.08	0.002
POS_AVG	0.14	0.13	0.08		1.07	0.285
WFC_AVG	0.05	0.08	0.05		0.64	0.526

Note. Dependent Variable: EWB_AVG

SL-AVG = Essential Servant Leadership Behavior average

POS-AVG = Perceived Organizational Support average

WFC-AVG = Work-Family Conflict average

$N = 235$

Age, Gender, and Tenure with the supervisor were selected as control variables. The first model of the regression analysis included the control variables as the independent variables and EWB as the dependent variable. The regression is significant ($F(6, 228) = 27.92$ $p = .000$) and $R^2 = .18$. Table 4 shows the results

for the first regression model for all participants. Because gender showed significant predictive abilities with EWB. The significance for gender led me to conduct t-tests to see if there were significant differences in EWB for Female/Male that might require separate regression analyses.

T-Tests between males and females for EWB and for SL-AVG

There were 132 males and 103 females. The variances were assumed to be the same ($F=1.186, p = 0.277$). There was a significant difference in EWB for males ($M = 7.38, SD = 1.73$) and females ($M = 6.53, SD = 1.94$) conditions; $t(211) = 3.37, p = .001$. The significant difference in EWB for males and females led me to run separate regression analyses for males and females. The T-test results between males and females for SL-AVG show no difference in the participants’ perception of their supervisor’s SL-AVG.

Male-only regression with age, tenure, SL-AVG, POS-AVG, WFC-AVG on EWB-AVG

According to Hair et al. (2010) there should be 15-20 participants for each predictor variable, thus for five predictor variables (age, tenure ESLB, POS, and WFC) there should be a minimum sample size of 75-100. Since there were 132 males, the sample size is appropriate for a male-only regression. Male-only regression with age, tenure ESLB, POS, and WFC showed significance for, tenure and SL-AVG POS, or WFC. Table 4 shows the final regression model for males only ($F(5, 126) = 6.52, p = .000$). The regression for females only with SL was not significant ($F(1, 99) = 2.04, p = .156$)

Table 5
Male-only Regression of Age, Tenure, SL-AVG, POS-AVG, on SL-AVG on EWB-AVG

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	3.73	1.06		3.52	0.001
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.09	-0.76	0.451
Tenure_Leader	0.03	0.01	0.31	2.57	0.011
SL_AVG	0.79	0.22	0.35	3.55	0.001
POS_AVG	0.09	0.18	0.05	0.48	0.630
WFC_AVG	0.02	0.10	0.02	0.18	0.860

Note. Dependent Variable: EWB_AVG
SL-AVG = Essential Servant Leadership Behavior average
POS-AVG = Perceived Organizational Support average
WFC-AVG = Work-Family Conflict average
N= 132

Summary of the Results

The results support accepting H1 and rejecting H2 and H3. Regression of SL with EWB for females showed no significant impact.

Qualitative Study

This section includes the methods, procedures, data, and results from the qualitative study. Ince et al.'s (September 25-27, 2015) statement that there are few qualitative studies on leadership and employee well-being was a catalyst to explore, in more depth, the 'what' and 'how' of servant leadership's impact on employees' perception of well-being. Due to the significant difference in self-reported EWB between males and females, I decided to interview both males and females to see if a difference was detected in the responses between males and females.

Participant Selection

I selected males and females who self-reported that they currently worked for, or had worked for a servant leader and that the servant leader fit the following definition stated earlier:

A servant leader is a supervisor/manager/leader who practices what he/she preaches, serves people without regard to their nationality, gender, or race. Is genuinely interested in employees as people and sees serving as an important mission of responsibility to others. A servant leader instills trust rather than fear, by sacrificing to help others and being honest in communications. A servant leader transcends self-interest and self-success as part of a higher calling to serve others.

In addition, participants had to have other people in the home – spouse, children, parents, roommate, etc. And the participants must understand the definition of employee well-being as:

- Feeling calm rather than anxious,
- feeling good physically,
- in firm control of my emotions,
- feeling like my life is worthwhile,
- feeling rested,
- feeling upbeat, and,
- feeling that my life is full of things that are interesting to me (taken from the employee well-being scale developed by Winston (2020)).

Five males and five females responded to the 'request to participate' message posted in Facebook and LinkedIn.

Data Collection

To gain greater insight into the impact of servant leadership on employee well-being I asked participants the following three interview questions:

- Tell me what your servant leader did that impacted your sense of well-being.

- Tell me how your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being.
- Tell me why your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being.

I used Zoom meeting software to interview participants. I recorded audio only and I used Zoom's transcription feature. The recordings will be kept on my computer in a password protected sub-directory for five years and then deleted. One of the male participant's interview did not record, thus, there is no transcript. I analyzed four interviews from male participants and all five of the female participants.

Interview Transcripts and Coding

This section presents each of the three interview questions and excerpts of the transcripts with codes inserted as parenthetical comments. The interview questions are related to each other; thus, sometimes, the participants' responses overlapped with another question; thus, there are more excerpts in response to interview question 1 than interview questions 2 and 3. I hand-coded the excerpts. Where the participant left out words in the response, I added pertinent text in brackets. The excerpts are shown as bulleted lists of long quotes. Clusters of codes representing themes follow each of the three interview questions.

Tell me what your servant leader did that impacted your sense of well-being

Female participant 1 responded:

would say it leads to listening, extending empathy, and active listening (codes: listening and empathy)

Being able to talk and have my words received by them in a way that it wasn't really like a competition (code: egalitarian approach)

when I handed my resignation, and she cried for joy for me because I was moving on to something that I wanted, it wasn't a competition. It wasn't a personal thing where she felt that I was abandoning or leaving her really my success because we had spent so much time talking about it, and she really listened and was involved in my process along the way (codes: supportive, other-focused)

I think the listening and communication between us really was the epitome of my well-being (codes: listening, other-focused) (this response also applies to interview question 2)

Her ability to kind of block out time. . . .She was a very busy person, and she could carve out the time and give . . . attention. (code: other-focused)

She would focus on what we were talking about, right. So, again, that empathetic listening and really being able to kind of take in and digest

what I was saying and put what was best for me to the front of the conversation (code: other-focused)

Female participant 2 responded:

I was in a transitional period of my life is when my late husband was diagnosed with cancer. So that cascades throughout the personal life to the first professional life, and I was also an academic and active student at the so that leader. I'm going to use the term radical in the positive sense in that the leader's servant leadership behaviors were not just directed towards me. They were also directed towards the rest of the team, and the team was quite numerous locally and in the field. He was not only able to introduce my predicament to the rest of the team. So, I was actually able to receive servant leadership care, not only from him but also from the rest of the team.

I want to use the term radical consistency using the pillars of servant leadership; that's what happened next, like every time I needed something and always needed something. He was there, and the team members were there because the team was cohesive with radical compassion. I'm not sure whether that makes sense. (codes: attentive, cooperative, and supportive)

Female participant 3 responded:

My current supervisor has taken many moves to ensure my sense of well-being. She understands what I'm going through with teaching full-time and in a Ph.D. program full time. I also had a child that's now one year old during this process leading up to my comprehensive exams that start tomorrow. (code: supportive)

She protected my time during the few weeks leading up. I also experienced COVID-19 infection. (code: other-focused)

The President of the school that I teach at asked me to be on a special projects team that is a complete honor and privilege. However, I did not have the time and capacity to experience COVID=19, finishing the semester, and preparing for exams. Whenever I felt like I could reach out to her because she was bypassed in the process of asking me to be on this team. And I told her so. She took the necessary steps, communicated with the provost, and went up the chain of command to make sure that I was cared for. I didn't have to take away time precious study time to do well on these exams. (codes: other-focused, supportive, advocate)

Female participant 4 responded:

I had surgery, and he bought brought food over. He told me to take as much time as I needed. That made me want to work harder for him and for the organization. (codes: felt secure, peace of mind)

We would go to a lunch meeting and he would pay for the meals, not only me but my colleagues (codes: other-focused)

He would ask us what he could do to help us do our jobs better and ask what he could do to help us do our job, essentially (code: supportive)

Female participant 5 responded:

I'm going to give an extreme example, my husband passed away, and it was a surprise. And this servant leader is a high-ranking government official. He came to the viewing and waited over an hour in line to provide encouragement. (codes: concern, empathy, encouragement)

He definitely gave me encouragement when I was out and encouraged me to stay out longer. It was apparent that he was concerned about my well-being. That there have been many other instances, for instance, when he coaches me as my supervisor. (codes: other-focused, encouragement, supportive)

He rewards me for a job well done when he feels like I should get an extra reward. He definitely encouraged me to pursue options for education, both the formal education that I'm currently pursuing and opportunities that come up within our system. He took the time to ensure that my applications for those programs were well done and that they had appropriate recommendations from him. So he took extra time. He did not have to do that. So that made me feel like a valued employee and like he would give me feedback to help me improve it and with their situations that I need to improve (codes: other-focused, supportive, valued others)

Male participant 1 responded:

. . . he certainly put my sense of well-being first (code: well-being, other-focused)

We always had something to talk about as far as work was concerned; however, before engaging in that work. There was always this: how was I doing, and truly felt as if he was sincere in that (code: other-focused). Second most of the follow up that this person used to do was really about my well-being, as opposed

And again, I don't necessarily think that this person would ever say that he was a servant leader. However, I felt happy and pleased that I was taken care of as an employee. This made me want my job output, and my deliverables to be of high quality and on time. (codes: supported, cared for)

The level of attention to me as an individual (code: other-focused).
The second one that comes to mind is a sense of the leader's humility. (code: leader's humility)

That sense of humility allowed him to defer to my knowledge in a group setting. (codes: leader's humility, other-focused)

The other thing obviously alongside that was a lot of self-deprecating humor. I think it was a way to soften the blow, sometimes, but also make their point (code: leader's humility)

Male participant 2 responded:

He was my mentor. Every time he spent time with me, he really listened to me and understood the problem before telling you what he advised. I experienced his caring and listening really feel made me feel that I'm being treasured. I'm being honored, and I'm also feeling that I can understand the issues that I'm facing with this in my business, impacting my sense of well-being. (codes: cared for, honored, deep listening) (relates to interview-question 2 as well)

Male participant 3 responded: (the participant covered all three questions in this part of the interview)

The thing that really blessed me, was that he had confidence in me. He trusted me, and he showed it. (codes: trust, confidence)

If I needed a day off. He always went to bat for me. I would sometimes need for him to fill in for me. And he would fill in if I needed the day. If he couldn't fill in. He let me like work a day and a half before and then a day and a half after, and he would still let me have the day, um, any time I needed. If I'm asked to do things with my family. He would fill in for me. We homeschooled, but we took co-op classes. He knew that my children mean the world to me, he would let me work and then took time off during the day, and I would be with to my children's exercises or, you know if they were in a play. I would go see the play. My son plays the violin. He would sometimes perform with the Virginia Symphony even, and I would go and watch that. When I finished, I went back to work and made my own hours, which really blessed my family life. (codes for interview questions 1, 2, and 3: other-focused, accommodating, reduced work-family conflict)

When my wife was carrying the two children. I made every single doctor's visit with her, and it helped out tremendously. And the thing that really blessed me was if ever we even had like a little family mishap, I was able to come home, and my wife and I could take care of it. And then when we solved the issue. I went back to work, and it really tremendously enhanced my family life in that respect. (codes for interview questions 1, 2, and 3: other-focused, reduced work-family conflict)

One other thing he did for me when I was younger. We don't always make the best decisions, and I made a decision one day, and the

manager wasn't fond of it. He was just going to let me go. I heard that the supervisor who was my servant leader went to bat for me without knowing about this. He came back, and he told me what took place, and he let me know that you know he's pretty much saved my job and was confident in his servant leadership and also his leadership. (codes for interview questions 1, 2, and 3: protective, other-focused)

It made me feel connected with my job. It made me feel highly creative. It made me feel highly productive on my job. and as it gave me job satisfaction, and I really, really appreciated his leadership there. (codes for interview questions 1, 2, and 3: affective commitment, job satisfaction, supervisor-employee fit)

Male participant 4 responded: (his comments extended into Interview question 2)

Okay, good question. So, this would be my current supervisor. I work for a defense contractor in text redacted as the recruiting manager for this company. He is the Vice President and Director of Human Resources. In past roles and when I was in between full-time work, so to speak. He reached out to me and asked to interview for a job with him, so we interviewed, and I went to work there, and I've been there almost four years. So, I would say, you know, as for my sense of well-being and family, you know, it was his outreach to me, which I also think was, you know, a godly thing as well too. It made me feel wanted and gave me a home. (code: actions made me feel wanted and welcomed)

He gave me total autonomy. He wanted a senior guy. Being an army veteran, I was a good fit because our business primarily is with Navy contracts. What better than to have a career Navy type who knows the Navy in and out. And, who knows this market here in text redacted. So, he basically gave me recruiting, and he hasn't had to worry about it at all. He can worry about all the other aspects of HR, which are, you know, considerable, but so he gave me the autonomy, you know, I set up my workday. I just meet my objectives and get positions filled. I really liked that feeling of autonomy and my previous job, which was a staff position, where I had tremendous autonomy there. So, I think for a veteran sort of worker, having a lot of autonomy is a good thing instead of being micromanaged. (codes: autonomy, trusted)

He leads by example. He's a Christian man, but the organization is not known for Christian Leadership. We both feel like God called us there to shine a light, and it's been a tough road. Business-wise, which, you know, I could fill up hours telling you about that, but to have a, you know, Christian brother, so to speak. He can pray for each other, support each other, hold each other accountable to God, you know, all these things. So, he's made me a better Christian. I like to think, you know, vice versa, we actually talked to last night for about 45 minutes

about these very things that he's going through with the company. The company's executives don't treat him very well. (codes: supervisor-employee fit, values-alignment)

Tell me how your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being

Female participant 1 responded:

The action of focus. I guess that would be how I would really relate a direct action to it. (code: focus)

Female participant 2 responded:

The emotional framework like if the emotions are balanced and there is emotional maturity. From there, we can focus on conceptualizing what is ahead of us throughout the day. Just knowing that whatever came up in my personal life, whether that would be a doctor's appointment with my late husband or whatever I needed to do or stop by the hospital before work. I could be late. I could be absent unexpectedly, or I could be just working on flexible hours from home just as long as I got the job done. So, knowing that I have his support and the whole team's support was beneficial. In having that platform from which I could then use my other gifts to service my late husband and serve as my family. (codes: flexibility, lenient when necessary, security)

Female participant 3 responded:

The word that keeps coming back from this question is just, it was a safe psychological environment for me to even ask for help. (codes: supportive, other-focused)

I knew that I could go to her, and I know this because in other environments that I've been in it has it's been the opposite. It's just more work, more work, and more work. They don't care about your well-being. She is so careful about protecting her people, not only me but others. My perception of her leadership, along with her consistent actions, creates a psychologically safe environment for me to go and ask without the feeling of letting them down or guilt in not participating and being able to set that boundary and take care of myself. (codes: other-focused, considerate, peace of mind, safety, trust)

Female participant 4 responded:

It actually helped me in my current position and my development toward an assistant dean position to possibly take on his job later. This made me feel appreciated. (codes: appreciated, other-focused, developed for possible promotion)

Female participant 5 responded:

He communicates more than any other leader in this position I've had. I've probably had five other different leaders in this position in the nine years I've been here. They had various levels of communication with us, but he forwards a lot of information to us. First, I remember being overwhelmed. Wow. Do I have to read all this stuff because you don't always, of course, have time? But what I learned was he was simply trying to communicate and make sure that we all are on the same page and that feels pretty freeing. Often, you have to figure out what's going on and try to understand what you're supposed to do. And there's nothing like that in this situation where he communicates so well, so I guess it I guess in a way you can actually relax more when you're having more to read (codes: other-focused, egalitarian approach, freeing, relaxing)

Male participant 1 responded:

Well, so let's say let's sort of skip to the humility. So, I feel that humility from that person. I felt that we were in a sort of a peer-to-peer relationship. So, the hierarchy flattened if you will. The words in the conversations were different than say if you were in a hierarchical meeting. You felt as if you had to mind your P's and Q's, and you have to understand what you know where you belong and potentially things that might be derogatory and an idea, right. Sometimes they'll say, 'Well, what do you think about this idea.' they sometimes don't want to really know what you think of this idea. They may be soothing or trying to play the part. However, this particular person because of that humility. I felt as if I could state my views in a safe environment that I wouldn't have repercussions. That was one of the leaders and, of course, the 'How' was how I felt, which changed how I communicated about a particular topic. Be more transparent, more honest, more candid, but whatever the terminology is there. So, my sense of well-being felt as if I were safe. (codes: valued, included, transparency, honest)

There was a situation where I needed to report back a very sensitive topic to senior management. I was more comfortable having at least the initial conversation with my servant leader, where I let down my hair. Sometimes, I would get coached when he would say, 'I understand what you're saying. However, you realize that that's not going to go get you very far. If you report it that way. How about if we take this tack. Or how about if we do it this way. I'm not disregarding what you said because we'll address it some other way. But this is probably not the time and place to do that.' I felt as if I was not only being heard but also being coached being developed. (codes: considered, coached, developed)

And all of those things that arguably an employee wants to be better at doing it and that situation. If I ever come back again. I felt more comfortable with what I needed to do because I was coached in that safe environment. (codes: comfortable, coached, safe)

Male participant 2 responded:

I guess it's not only that when I make a request to have a meeting with him. He often sends me messages or gives me a phone call reacting to the request that really gave me a sense of well-being (codes: other-focused, concerned)

Male participant 3 responded:

(see interview 1 response)

Male participant 4 responded:

(see interview 1 response)

Tell me why your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being.

Female participant 1 responded:

I think it was because she was a female. So, I had, worked mainly for men. Until that point, and she was kind of the first breakaway that I took to somebody who wanted better for everybody, right, for all of her people. She wanted better. (codes: other-focused, focused on employee's well-being)

But I feel like she was really the first woman to take an interest in me and where I want it to be and how she could help me get there, which was a completely different situation than I had ever been in up until that point. (code: other-focused)

I think a big, big piece of that she taught me was the idea of forgiveness. When we talked, I would tell her things that I was going through at work or home or wherever I wanted to be and build up my career path. You know, as a woman in my young 30s. And then she taught me a very valuable lesson: that I need to, as much as I want to give and be a servant to other people, I need to extend the same graces to myself, which kind of forced me to take an introspective look at a lot of things of where I was going. And so I think that's a big piece that was missing and didn't click for me until after the fact. But now being, you know, years further down the road, I can see the importance of the lesson she taught me that I didn't really get at the time. (code: love oneself first and then love others)

Female participant 2 responded:

I'm once again being humbled by that person's ability to actually exhibit a wide range of compassion in its numerous expressions. (code: compassion)

there was also a massive layoff event at the same time due to the company's relocation, so there were many instabilities along the way.

That particular servant leader will always stand out to me as a person of large physical stature, but the most humble and with the most compassionate heart. (codes: humility, compassion, peace of mind in stressful situations)

Female participant 3 responded:

I mean, honestly, I could go into tears. Just the fact that she is willing to stick up for me and my well-being in this season of life. Going back to why it would put me in tears and very emotional because I have experienced the opposite so many times. She is willing to put the needs of her people over even the needs of the organization. (codes: protective, supportive, safety)

Female participant 4 responded:

So, it's actually helped me keep my optimism. (Code: optimistic)

Female participant 5 responded:

Looking back to the personal challenges with my husband's passing, the reason that made me feel cared for is that he went out of his way. So, he doesn't have spare time. And he lives an hour away through traffic, and he still stayed and waited an hour in line. So, I guess that makes me feel valued and cared for because of the impacts of his actions on himself. Does that answer your question? (codes: valued)

I guess that is why you can feel more confident, and you feel more like part of the team just getting to that at all. (code: confident)

Yeah, so, so the whole inclusion idea. Fortunately, where, where I work. I've never faced any kind of exclusion, as far as I know, being female have, you know, any kind of problems like that. I live in a world where it's a lot of scientists and engineers. There aren't that many females, but I've never felt excluded or treated differently because of that. And this leader, just like the others, has never made me feel, I don't know, just different because I'm female, possibly because of the environment I'm in. The military works pretty hard to make sure they don't single people out for being male or female or something like that. Let me just have to. It's just there's a trust there that he's also given us. And so when someone trusts you to give you additional information.

I guess that is why you can feel more confident, and you feel more like part of the team just getting to that at all. (codes: included, confident, part of a team)

Male participant 1 responded:

It's for me specifically to get what I believe is accurate and earning my wage in a company that pays me to be true is very important. And I said earlier about sometimes when people ask you questions. The reality is they don't really want to know the answer. To provide what I believe is the correct answer, because as a knowledge worker. That's my job. And that created conflict within myself when I knew something in yet. I felt like I wasn't either allowed to say it. Or, you know, it wouldn't have been helpful. I felt having somebody as a servant leader was arguably a buffer. That situation made me less stressed. The conflict would drop because I didn't have to get all worked up before starting that conversation with somebody else.
(codes: less stress, relaxed)

Male participant 2 responded:

Well, I guess my leader treats me as a human being, not just a task. He's really concerned about the problem that I'm facing. He really wants to help me get out of those problems by giving me advice, and so this is why those actions impact my well-being.

Male participant 3 responded:

(see interview 1 responses)

Male participant 4 responded:

You know, I really feel it was God-ordained. We're both almost four years working together. Now we don't know what the future holds, but we both have trust that God is in control. You know, I owe him my very livelihood. (Codes: loyalty, allegiance)

Summary of codes

This section summarizes the codes for females and males for each of the three interview questions. The bifurcation of summaries is due to the quantitative findings of a significant difference in scores of perceived supervisor's essential servant leadership behaviors between females and males. All participants reported working with a servant leader, but the quantitative results did not clarify the what, how, or why. The numbers in parentheses in the lists below are the frequency of the reports (the number of occurrences exceeds the number of participants in that some participants mentioned something coded the same way more than once. The bullet-point items are listed in descending frequency order. Since participants talked about the three interview questions in the first and second interviews, the summaries of the codes below come from the participants' responses to all three interview questions.

What your servant leader did that impacted your sense of well-being

Females reported the following codes for 'what your servant leader did:

- Was other-focused (14)

- Was supportive (6)
- Was humble (2)
- Showed empathy (2)
- Listened
- Showed compassion
- Treated others with an egalitarian approach
- Was attentive
- Was cooperative
- Was an advocate

Males reported the following codes for ‘what your servant leader did:

- Other-focused (8)
- Was humble (3)
- Trusted me (2)
- Listened
- Demonstrated confidence in me
- Accommodated me
- I felt protected
- Was honest with me
- Gave me autonomy
- Trusted me
- Showed concern for me

How your servant leader’s actions impacted your sense of well-being

Females reported the following codes for ‘how your servant leader’s actions impacted your sense of well-being:

- Felt encouraged (2)
- Felt secure
- Had piece of mind
- Felt valued
- Helped me focus
- The flexibility gave me a sense of protection
- I felt secure
- I felt supported

Males reported the following codes for: ‘how’ your servant leader’s actions impacted your sense of well-being:

- Felt taken care of (2)
- Reduced work-family conflict (2)
- Felt an increase in well-being
- Felt honored
- I felt trusted
- Felt affective commitment
- Increased my job satisfaction
- Increase my sense of supervisor-employee fit
- Made me feel welcomed

- Made me feel wanted
- Considered me
- Coached me

Why your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being.

Females reported the following codes for 'why' your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being:

- Felt secure/safe (3)
- Had piece of mind (3)
- Felt encouraged (2)
- Felt valued (2)
- I felt confident (2)
- I felt relaxed
- I felt better about being in the workplace
- I felt included
- I felt optimistic
- I felt like I was part of the team

Males reported the following codes for 'why' your servant leader's actions impacted your sense of well-being:

- Felt an increase in well-being
- I felt like I 'fit' with the supervisor
- I felt like my values aligned with the supervisor's values
- I felt comfortable in my role
- I felt safe in the workplace
- I felt relaxed
- I felt less stress
- I felt loyalty to the firm
- I felt allegiance to the firm

DISCUSSION

This section includes an overall analysis of the findings, relevance of the findings to existing literature, and suggested future research studies.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative results found a significant relationship between servant leadership and employees' well-being, similar to Winston's (2020) working paper. This current study found a significant difference between female and male scores on employee well-being that led to conducting separate regression analysis for females and males.

The positive correlation between the participants' supervisors' servant leadership and employees' self-report of employees' well-being is curious because the higher the score in the well-being scale means a more negative condition while the higher the score in perceived supervisors' servant leadership means a more positive condition. The qualitative results from participants with

servant leaders, described below, describes what, how, and why servant leaders impact employees' well-being, which might imply that lower levels of well-being is not a main cause for reduced perception of employees' well-being.

Comparison of Female's and Male's Qualitative Comments

Both females and males included 'other-focused,' 'humble,' and 'listened,' but females included 'showing empathy' more than males. The 'other-focus' aligns with Bass' (2000) contrast of servant leaders to transformation leaders by positing that servant leaders focus more on the needs of the employees than on the needs of the organization. 'Listened to' aligns with Augsburg's (1982) quote, "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable" (<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/288161-being-heard-is-so-close-to-being-loved-that-for>). The codes for response to the question of what your supervisor did that impacted your well-being could all be summarized as the supervisor's demonstrating concern for the employee.

Both females' and males' responses to the question of 'how' the leader's behaviors impacted the employees' well-being continued with the overall sense of being cared for, being considered, feeling valued, wanted, secure, and safe. These responses align with the responses to the first question about supervisors demonstrating concern for the employees. Also, these responses align with Greenleaf's (1977) elements of his best test of a servant leader:

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (Kindle Locations 351-352).

Regarding the third interview question of 'why' the supervisor's actions increased the employees' sense of well-being, female participants listed secure/safe, peace of mind, felt encouraged, felt valued, felt confident, more often than did the male participants. Male participants shared the 'why' code/theme with the female participants but included codes/themes of values-alignment, loyalty, and allegiance.

Future Research Recommendations

Additional research might be useful to understand further the role of employees' perception of their supervisors' servant leadership and the employees' sense of well-being. Perhaps there are other causes other than the leaders that impact employees' well-being. Additional research might be useful to understand why males and females scored differently on employee well-being and on servant leadership. Perhaps a replication study with a different sample or another qualitative study would be useful. In this study, I followed Eisenberger et al.'s (2002) instructions to reverse-score the negatively worded items but considering Taylor et al.'s (2003) admonition not to use negatively worded items, it might be worthwhile to conduct a study using principle-component analysis and structured equation modeling to test the items, after reverse scoring, to see if the single factor reported by Eisenberger et al. is supported.

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