



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Practice and Relationship of Servant Leadership and Trainers' Performance: The Mediating Role of Trust in Leaders in Public Technical and Vocational Education Training Colleges of Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia,

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: May 21, 2024</p> <p>Accepted: Jun 24, 2024</p>	<p>The purpose of this study was to investigate the practice and the relationship of servant leadership and trainers' performance mediated by trust in leaders at TVET colleges of Amhara regional state. Mixed approach of explanatory sequential design was employed to address the purpose stated above. 629 trainers, research participants who filled the questionnaire, were selected using a multi stage cluster sampling technique. Interview was also conducted with purposely selected department heads and college deans. A partial least squares structural equation model was used to test the hypotheses. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics whereas the qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Accordingly, the computed mean values portrayed 'moderate' implementation of servant leadership, and trainers' performance in sample Technique and Vocational Education Training colleges. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient revealed statistically significant and strong positive relationships between Servant leadership and Trainers' Performance. The R² of servant leadership showed statistically significant accounts on the variance of trainers' performance. Servant leadership showed a direct effect on trainers' performance. It was also found that trust in leaders complements the relationship between servant leadership and trainers' performance. In this regard, the findings seemed to disclose the widespread theoretical shared understanding that trust is a foundation for leadership effectiveness and thereby improved organizational performance. The findings also seemed to imply the need for cultivating a servant leadership culture which is key to boost leadership trust and thereby promote organizational productivity.</p>
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Servant leadership</p> <p>Trust in leaders</p> <p>Trainers' performance</p>	
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INTRODUCTION

According to Carter and Baghurst (2014), servant leadership is acknowledged as a leadership paradigm that addresses ethical issues. As growing field of study, servant leadership connects morals, ethics, and virtues to leadership (Parris & Peachey, 2013). It has drawn attention from researchers in the field of organizational studies in recent decades because it emphasizes the leader's duty to act as a servant, prioritizing the needs of others in order to promote beneficial organizational results

(Liu, 2019). The emphasis on helping others causes a significant shift in the focus of leadership studies from leading alone to resolving the conflict between leading and serving simultaneously. In addition to being inspirational, servant leadership comes with moral safeguards (Graham, 1991). In the workplace, these paradoxical leadership roles and servant leadership philosophies offer vital safeguards for an organization's corporate ethics while simultaneously promoting performance.

Researchers have stressed the necessity to concentrate on how the fundamental mechanisms of servant leadership affect organizational outcomes, acknowledging the contradictory relationship (van Dierendonck, 2011). According to van Dierendonck (2011), one of the key mediating mechanisms through which servant leadership influences organizational outcomes is trust. Various assessments (e.g., Parris & Peachey, 2013; van Dierendonck, 2011) have highlighted the unique function that trust plays in the relationship that exists between followers and servant leaders. In this work, the researchers explicitly look at the mediation effects of trust between performance and servant leadership.

In several circumstances, the mediating function of trust has been examined. These include job performance and the connection between transformational leadership and organizational success, such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Zhu et al., 2013; Kanval et al., 2024). Such a study on the mediating role of trust in servant leadership was advocated by Van Dierendonck (2011). Nonetheless, a systematic inquiry into the intermediary function of trust in the correlation between servant leadership and individual effectiveness remains deficient. Research has indicated that trust plays an important role in servant leadership (Politis & Politis, 2017; Rosnani, 2018), while Joseph and Winston (2005) discovered a positive correlation.

Other research (Jaramillo et al., 2015; Politis & Politis, 2017; Rosnani, 2018) that looked at the mediating role of trust treated it as a one-dimensional variable. Owing to recent developments and applications of bi-dimensional trust (cognitive and affective trust) in leadership (Zhu et al., 2013), it is now possible to better understand the underlying functional mechanism of servant leadership toward performance by distinguishing between these two dimensions of trust in servant leadership. Only the effects of this mechanism on group performance have been studied in previous studies (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). That is to say, trainers are more likely to perform for their organization if they have faith in a leader who demonstrates servant leadership. This pressing fact initiated the need for conducting a study on the practice and relationship of servant leadership and trainers' performance: The mediating role of trust in leaders in public technique and vocational education training Colleges of Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. Accordingly the study included the following basic questions:

1. How does the practice of servant leadership look like in TVET Colleges of Amhara Regional State?
2. How does the performance of trainers' look like in TVET Colleges of Amhara Regional State?
3. Is there a significant relationship between servant leadership and Trainers' performance in TVET Colleges of Amhara Regional State?
4. What is the direct effect of Servant leadership on trainers' performance in TVET Colleges of Amhara Regional State?
5. What is the direct effect of Servant leadership on trainers' Trust in leaders in TVET Colleges of Amhara Region State?
6. What is the direct effect of trainers' Trust in leaders on trainers' Performance in TVET colleges of Amhara Region?
7. What is the mediating effect of trust in leaders between servant leadership and Trainers' performance in TVET colleges of Amhara Regional State?

RELATED LITERATURES

Liden and Maslyn (1998) assert that the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) perspective is distinct from other leadership theories due to its emphasis on the dyadic connections that exist between leaders and followers. According to Liden and Maslyn's (1998) approach, leaders establish distinct forms of exchange relationships with their followers. The LMX hypothesis says nothing about leaders encouraging followers to serve the community, helping people recover personally, or helping followers grow.

Hence, servant leadership and LMX theory are related in that servant leadership practices support the growth and upkeep of solid interpersonal bonds between leaders and followers as well as play a key role in assisting staff members in realizing their full potential and developing a sense of self-motivation (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Instead of depending only on the financial benefits of their jobs or the power bestowed upon them by their positions, leaders cultivate these crucial habits by building social exchange connections with their followers.

Servant Leadership

While scholars view Greenleaf's essay as the origin of modern servant leadership movement, his essay doesn't clearly define servant leadership and its characteristics, or does entitle servant leadership as specific or new style of leadership, and no consensus on a definition for servant leadership exists (Paul and David, 2017). However, Spears (1998) believed Robert Greenleaf contributed birth to the term servant leadership, intentionally combining servant and leader which are commonly believed as being contrary.

Greenleaf described it this way "Servant leadership initiates with a natural sense of wanting to serve, to serve first. So a conscious choice leads to an effort to lead. This is very different from the person who is a leader first (Greenleaf 1970)". Many find it difficult to swallow the miracle of servant leadership because they do not understand how a servant can be a leader and how a leader can be a servant; that is, it appears to be an oxymoron (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

However, some servant leaders go further and consider leadership and service to be synonymous. Max, De Pree (1992) said: "Leadership is above all a position of servant. Leadership is also a debt; it is a loss of rights". What does it take to be a servant leader? Spears and Lawrence (2002) propose that servant leadership is a form of leadership that is based on teamwork that seeks to encompass others in decision-making, that is strongly established on ethical and caring actions, and which attempts to encourage the personal development of employees while improving the care and quality of facilities.

According to Patterson (2003), servant leadership is about emphasis. The leader emphasizes on the followers, which means leaders behavior and attitudes are concurrent with the emphasis of his followers. This contrasts sharply with charismatic and transformational leadership, where the leader focuses on the organization, meaning that servant leadership is isolated from this emphasis on followership.

Measurements of Servant Leadership

The servant leadership literature offers an inconsistent set of dimensions that define this construct. As a consequence, our research was designed to define and validate the dimensions that constitute servant leadership as a construct. Based on that, data on servant leadership practices were gathered for the study using the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) research instrument (Laub, 1999) with some changes, which has been known to be a helpful tool for the study's objective. Furthermore, this research tool (OLA) is known to include both service and leadership qualities of

leadership style, in contrast to the bulk of other comparable measures that often focus only on the servant part of the leadership. Following the formation of the OLA through a Delphi inquiry, Laub (1999) tested the dependability of the tool across a larger area and discovered a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.98. A five-point Likert scale was employed to allow participants to report their answers to a total of 30 questions that measured the five dimensions of leadership practice (valuing people, developing people, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership; each dimension had six items).

Theoretical Foundations of Trust

The relational definition of trust is relevant to this study because it examines the creation of confidence in leader-follower relationships in an organizational setting. The definition of trust given by Mayer (1995, p.712) is "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustee, irrespective of the ability to control that other party"; by this definition, trust entails risk and calls for the courage to take that risk.

A good relationship between a leader and followers depends on trust, which is a promising relational concept in a professional setting between two interacting individuals (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). It assists them in cooperating, managing, sharing, and facilitating mutual understanding (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). According to Barling et al. (2003), Political trust, societal trust, dyadic trust, workplace trust, organizational trust, and managers' and subordinates' trust are among the various characteristics of trust. Trust in the leader is well-thought-out to be an important precursor for performance, and leadership style and practices are linked to trust in leaders (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In this regard, Joseph and Winston (2005) said that trust is an important aspect of the leader-follower relationship.

Measurements of Trust

Although it can also be considered as a direct outcome of interactions between subordinates or team members and team or organization leaders, trust in leaders refers to an input to communication (Burke et al., 2014). To measure people's trust in a leader, the researchers used McAllister's (1995) affective and cognitive-based trust measures.

The researchers also changed the referent in several items from "We" or "both" to "I" to distinguish between "trust in leader" and "mutual trust." The researcher also changed the referent in several items from "most people" or "other work associates" to "I" to assess trust in leader of the focal person and revised the other terms accordingly. Example items include "I can freely share my ideas, feelings, and hopes with my leader," "I can talk freely to my immediate leader about difficulties I am having at work" (affective based trust with five items), "I consider my supervisor to be trustworthy," and "I see no reason to doubt my supervisor's competence and preparation for the job" (cognition-based trust with five items). Thus, Trainers rated their trust in leader on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

Employee Performance

Different academics have varied definitions of performance. The authors conclude that it's critical to distinguish between an action (i.e., behavioral) aspect and a result element when considering performance. The behavioral component of a person's performance at work relates to the actions they take, whereas the outcome component refers to the impact or effect of their actions (Sonnentag & Frese, 2005). Performance, in the words of Chang and Chen (2002), is the "transformation of inputs into outputs for accomplishing specific goals." The relation between minimal and effective cost (economy), between effective cost and realized output (efficiency), and between output and achieved outcome (effectiveness) is one of the topics covered by performance in terms of its substance

(karamat, 2013).

Berry (2003) also defined performance as anything that people do while at work that is in line with the objectives and tenets of the company. Performance is a multifaceted concept and a crucial factor in determining whether an organization succeeds or fails. Performance, according to Prasetya and Kato (2011), is the result of an employee's actions combined with their talents in a given environment. According to Pattanayak (2005), an employee's performance is defined as his or her outcome behavior on a task that can be witnessed and assessed. Employee performance, in Pattanayak's view, is a person's involvement in the achievement of corporate objectives.

Dimension and Measurement of Performance

According to Porter (2003), an organization's performance is judged by factors including productivity, job satisfaction, turnover, and absenteeism. These factors include customer satisfaction, efficiency, and improvements to work flows and processes. Moreover, measurement of performance is defined as "Processes involving managers, individuals, and teams based on shared understanding, which define performance and contribution expectations, assess performance against those expectations, provide for regular and constructive feedback, and inform agreed-upon plans for performance improvement, learning, and personal development" (Armstrong & Murlis 2004:8). However, the present research focused on Performance management or measurement of the ongoing processes by which efficiency of work, creativity & innovation, planning the work and making effort are used, together with a variety of tools (Tabouli et al., 2016).

As a result, using data from earlier studies, the researchers adapted questionnaires to assess how trainers are perceived and to evaluate trainers' performance (Tabouli et al., 2016). The first dimension, efficiency of the work, has four items. The second, planning the work, has four items. The third, creativity and innovation, has five items. The fourth, making efforts, has four items. After validating the questionnaire's external validity through expert opinion, a total of 17 items were utilized to measure employee performance. These items are graded on a five-point likert scale, from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

Servant Leadership and Performance

Sonnentag & Frese (2005) discovered that servant leaders foster their employees' independence and self-reliance, which results in greater levels of performance. This shows that the performance of tasks is indirectly impacted by servant leadership. Other studies have discovered a positive effect of servant leadership on group performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011), company performance (Peterson et al., 2012; Jam et al., 2014), financial performance of businesses (Ruschman, 2002), and individual outcome (Jaramillo et al., 2015). The belief of servant leaders is that they have a stewardship duty. They prioritize helping others and especially their followers, and they are people-oriented.

Servant leaders treat each employee with dignity and respect because they have faith in their potential. Employee output was discovered to be correlated with employees' favorable perceptions of their managers (Bass, 1990). A significant and positive correlation between servant leadership and salesperson work performance was found by Jaramillo et al. (2015). Performance can be linked to leadership when a leader's main objective is to support their subordinates (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Due to a servant leader's high levels of engagement and loyalty, this may increase productivity as leader conduct influences subordinate performance (Hess, 2013). Hurriyet (2021), in his investigation into servant leadership and job satisfaction, found that not all of its traits are connected to job satisfaction. He added that more research was required to confirm the validity of the findings because it appears that there is no impact on job satisfaction.

The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Trust

According to Bük et al. (2017), a leader's behavior plays a role in fostering trust, and a subordinate's faith in a leader is influenced by that behavior. Findings from Senjaya (2010) indicated that subordinates' perception of their leaders' trustworthiness was positively related to subordinate performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction. Servant leadership is more likely to increase followers' trust in their leaders because servant leaders can be personal examples, building shared values, openness, and commitment to the well-being of their followers. The researchers concluded that workers will put in more effort, go above and beyond what is required of them, and be happier in their jobs when they feel trusted. Many different religions have preached servant leadership.

According to research by Kashyap (2016), employees' trust in their leaders cannot be directly impacted by merely practicing servant leadership. According to Abid et al. (2015), trust, servant leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior correlate positively. According to further research, group cohesion acted as a moderator and trust as a mediator. When workers are engaged in their work and treated as colleagues in their organizations, they feel trusted (Henkin and Moye, 2006, as quoted by Berraies et al., 2014). According to Dirks and Ferrin (2002), one of the key relational constructs in the workplace is trust. Fairness in the workplace fosters trust between management and staff, giving them a sense of ownership over organizational activities. Belief in the leader can improve the harmony between superiors and subordinates and inspire subordinates to work together to accomplish organizational objectives. These qualities must be applied in both theory and practice.

The Relationship between Trust and Employee Performance

People prefer to engage in performance and other desired behaviors in high-quality leader-follower interactions where leaders show regard and care, such as devoting extra time or effort to necessary activities (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2004). According to the social exchange theory, staff members who have a high level of confidence in their leaders may view his or her actions favorably, making them more likely to accept vulnerability to management.

Additionally, workers who don't trust management—i.e., who are reluctant to submit to management—waste cognitive resources on unproductive activities and engage in self-protective behaviors that divert focus from the task at hand and lower performance (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). The arguments made above suggest that factors like social interaction and mental capacity could indirectly affect performance results by virtue of trust. Trust has been described as a crucial modulator of performance because it controls how employees attribute and interpret boss behavior. This is because trust modifies followers' perceptions of the intentions of leaders (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Building trustworthy connections involving leaders and followers has been suggested as a way to enhance organizational performance through improving organizational functioning and effectiveness. A team can perform better when there is high mutual trust because it fosters more interdependence, hopeful efforts, and positive relationships (Carter, D., & Baghurst, T. (2014).

Thus, individuals who feel more emotionally connected to and committed to the organization are more inclined to engage in extra-role actions and make independent efforts to achieve professional responsibilities (Tremblay et al., 2010). Conversely, a lack of trust towards the business can result in dysfunctional outcomes that are harmful to both individual and organizational performance, such as employee disparagement, low motivation, and low commitment (Gould-Williams, 2003). Based on these concepts, it was assumed in the current study that trust would have a favorable and considerable impact on employee performance.

The Mediating Role of Trust in Leaders on Servant Leadership and Employee Performance

Existing empirical studies in various sector settings suggest that employee attitudes and leadership behaviors are mediated by employee trust in leaders (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). According to previous investigation (Hunter et al., 2013), there is an indirect relationship between Servant Leadership and Employees' Performance. Organizational justice and service climate are two factors that have been suggested to mediate the influence of servant leadership (SL) on employee performance (EP) (Hunter et al., 2013).

Accordingly, the findings of the meta-analysis performed by Bambale (2014) suggested that future research might take the trust variable into account as a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership (SL) and employee performance (EP). This is due to the fact that prior study did not prioritize examining the part trust plays in how Servant Leadership affects Employee Performance. It has also been suggested by other Servant Leadership researcher (Ehrhart, 2004) that future studies should focus on the crucial role that trust plays in how Servant Leadership affects Employee Performance.

Although the aforementioned explanation explains trust in leaders (TIL) support as a mediator in the effect of Servant Leader on Employee Performance, there are viewpoints from academics who do not accept it. Trust in Leader and Servant Leader variables have a good association, according to research by Reinke (2004), hence it is feared that both of them explain the same idea. Additionally, as Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) noted, one of the Servant Leader qualities is trust.

Development of Hypotheses

After reviewing the related literature, the researcher chose the following variables for this study: trainers' performance as the dependent variable, servant leadership and its dimensions as the independent variable, and trust in leaders as the mediating factor. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model of the research, which was developed based on a number of theoretical studies and indicated the relationship between the trainers' performance and the dimensions of servant leadership, with trust in leaders acting as a mediating factor.

Hypothesis

- H₁**. There is positive significant relationship among servant leadership, Trainers' performance and Trust in leaders.
- H₂**. There is positive significant direct effect of servant leadership on trainers' performance.
- H₃**- There is positive significant direct effect of servant leadership on Trust in Leaders.
- H₄**- There is positive significant direct effect of Trust in Leaders on trainers' Performance.
- H₅**- Trust in Leaders mediates the relationship between servant leadership and trainers' performance.

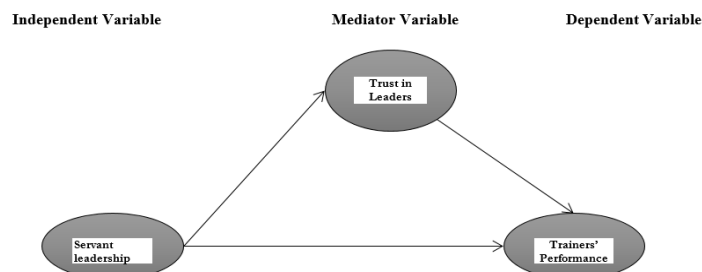


Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed a pragmatic paradigm with mixed approach and an explanatory sequential design. Because the present research is both quantitative and qualitative, the sampling technique employed is a blend of probability and nonprobability sampling techniques. Trainers of ten TVET Collages from four different zones were selected using a multi-stage cluster probability sampling techniques. As a result, 694 participants were taken in to consideration. On the other hand, non-probability (Purposive) sampling technique was employed for interview purpose. Thus, 10 deans and 10 department heads (two from each college) were chosen purposefully from those allocated colleges.

Both primary & secondary data sources were used in order to get a picture of the present situations regarding servant leadership, trust in leaders and Trainers' Performance at TVET colleges of Amhara Regional State. Close-ended questionnaire, with a five point likert-Scale, was employed to collect the essential data from respondents. Responses went into one of the five categories: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). In this regard, both descriptive and inferential statistical data analysis techniques were used. The descriptive data analysis was used to analyze the respondents' background information whereas inferential statistics were used to analyze the perceived scores of servant leadership and trainers' performance in the study area, and involved measurement and structural models using PLS-SEM method and with smart pls 4.0 software.

Pilot test was conducted using 75 participants. Accordingly, the reliability coefficients calculated were found to be 0.89, 0.84, and 0.80 for servant leadership, trust, and trainers' performance respectively. As the calculated values in all the three research variable were found almost close to 1.00, which perhaps shoed the questionnaires had high reliability values, there was no need to make any amendments on the items which were thus distributed as there were designed for.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Characteristics

Six hundred twenty-nine survey responses (90.6%) were received, out of a total of 694 that were sent out. From the distributed questionnaires, 65 (9.36%) were not returned. Among the received questionnaires, 11(1.7%) were removed from analysis due to their incompleteness. As a result, 618 (89%) of it was valid and used for the analysis.

As shown in Table 1 bellow, 480 (77.6%) respondents are males and the rest 138 (22.3%) are females. Moreover, participants have different age categories. Regarding this, 35%of the respondents are found under the age category of <30 years. The remaining (65%) of the respondents are lied in between 30-40 years of age. Concerning on their service year, the respondents also categorized as follows. The greatest number of participants has work experience in between 6-10 years. This group of respondents constitutes (51.3%) of them. Respondents who have less than 5 years' work experience contains (30.1%) of the entirety. While, participants who have 11-15 years and greater than 15 years' work experience comprises the remaining (17.6%) and (1%) respectively. Again, in case of their education, the majority have first Degree (80.9%). The rest (11.3%) and (7.7%) of participants have Diploma and second degree & above in order.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics

Item	Category	Frequency	%
Sex	Male	481	77.8

	Female	137	22.2
Age	<30 years	210	34.0
	30-40	408	66.0
Level of Education	Diploma	70	11.3
	First Degree	500	80.9
	Second Degree	48	7.8
Service in year	< 6 year	186	30.1
	6-10	317	51.3
	11-15	109	17.6
	>15	6	1.0

Descriptive Analysis of Servant Leadership

In this section, a descriptive analysis of servant leadership using measures of central tendency and dispersion was presented. It addresses research question 1: To what extent does SL is frequently practice by leaders of TVET colleges in Amhara region? The mean score is interpreted in accordance with the Sadeghi & Phihie, (2013) mean scores degree (low=1.00 to 2.33, moderate = 2.34 to 3.67 and high = 3.68 to 5.00).

The mean and SD were calculated to determine how much servant leadership behaviors are exhibited by TVET colleges leaders. Table 2 below indicates the perceived scores provided by trainers for servant leadership. The outcome shown that leaders who exercise servant leadership behaviors fall at moderate range and the weighted mean value is (M=3.29, and SD =.552). It is feasible to conclude from the survey's results that leaders at the sample TVET colleges display servant leadership behaviors partially.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Servant Leadership Style

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Sharing leadership	1.33	4.67	3.1793	.64467
Value people	1.43	4.71	3.3178	.64678
Displaying authenticity	1.50	4.67	3.3730	.67659
Developing leadership	1.17	4.83	3.1815	.73808
Providing leadership	1.83	4.67	3.3139	.58037
Servant leadership style (Grand M)	1.80	4.40	3.2931	.55223

Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum; SD = Standard Deviation; M=Mean

The findings showed that when taking into account each dimensions of servant leadership, all aspects of it were rated as having a moderate level indicating a partial practice in all the study contexts. However, the attribute of authenticity received slightly higher mean scores than others (M=3.37). The mean scores for the other servant leadership qualities such as: valuing people, providing leadership, developing leadership, and sharing leadership were 3.31, 3.31, 3.18, and 3.17 respectively. In contrast to other servant leadership aspects, the survey results revealed leaders' less commitment to providing leadership to trainers and giving them the freedom to conduct leadership on their own.

Descriptive Analysis of Trainers' Performance

In this section a descriptive analysis of trainers' perceived performance using measures of central tendency and dispersion was presented. It addresses research question 2: What is the degree of perceived trainers' performance in TVET colleges of ANRS? Trainers' performance was seen in the notion of efficiency, planning, creativity, and making efforts. The purpose of presenting this kind of data was to record how trainers rated themselves on their performance, given the different aspects of performance presented to them in the instrument. Mean perceived performance of the respondents in TVET colleges is shown in Table 6 Below

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Trainers' Perceived Performance

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Efficiency of the work	1.75	4.75	3.5449	.59040
Planning of the work	1.00	7.00	3.6100	.73329
Creativity and innovation	1.80	5.00	3.5417	.57419
Making Efforts	1.50	4.75	3.4102	.71666
Employees' performance (Grand M)	1.76	4.65	3.5267	.49841

Min = minimum; Max = maximum; SD = standard deviation; M=mean

The aggregate mean for all dimensions prepared on this section is 3.53, which indicates a moderate performance of trainers in their colleges, consistent with the threshold 2.34 to 3.67 (Sadeghi, & Phihie, 2013). Again, the mean of trainers' performance is concurrent with this study's servant leadership out put that is (M= 3.30). This may be due to the respondents' (trainers') inability to obtain the best and/or most distinctive servant leadership qualities in their colleges or due to other performance-related factors, such as the performance appraisal system, training, remuneration, organizational culture, and career mobility, which may have an impact on their present performance results. Moreover, the mean of each dimension of performance- efficiency of the work, planning the work, creativity and innovation, and making efforts is 3.45, 3.61, 3.45 and 3.41 respectively. They are all consistent with the current research servant leadership qualities which are attributable with leaders' leadership behaviors.

Evaluation of the Variables' Relationship based on Pearson's Correlation

H₁- Stated about the relationship between Servant Leadership, trainers' trust in leader and Trainers' performance. Based on this hypothesis, a bivariate correlation analysis has been done between the variables to see whether they are related or not. The analysis also presents the type and strength of the relationships among the variables. According to McMillan (2010), the correlation coefficient was between -1 and +1. In the current study, all the correlations are positive and significant at $p < 0.01$ level, and they are all in the anticipated direction (i.e., positive). The correlations findings are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Relationship of Variables based on Pearson Correlation

		SL	TIL	TP
Servant leadership style	Pearson Correlation	1	.625**	.569**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
Trainers' Trust in Leaders	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1	.569**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
Trainers' performance	Pearson Correlation	.569**	.569**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

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

Therefore, based on the correlation results, as leaders apply servant leadership style in their daily leadership practice in TVET colleges, trust in leaders may increase significantly and they may attain improved trainers' performance in their colleges. Taken together, these findings might be considered as primary evidence to support the hypotheses of the study.

Testing the Measurement Model Using PLS-SEM Approach

Prior to any model examination or hypotheses testing, the validity of the measurement model needs to be ascertained. This section will discuss in detail the techniques used to validate this study using established procedures, as described by several scholars (Hair et al., 2011).

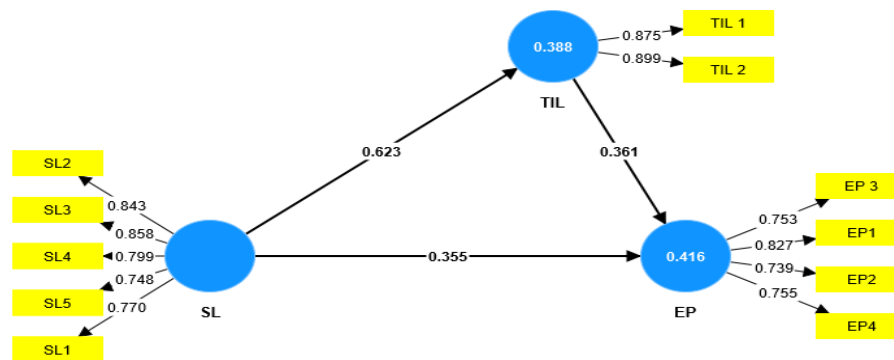


Figure 2: Measurement Model

Source: Smartpls 4.0 processing result (2022)

Convergent Validity

The value of the result of the loading factor of each indicator towards the construct is an indicator of convergent validity. In respect to this, writers suggest that factor loading greater than 0.5 is valid enough to explain for the latent construct (Hair et al, 2010; Jam et al., 2013). Hence, this study accepts a minimum loading factor of 0.5 and requires an AVE score above 0.5 for all constructs (Ghozali, 2014). Figure 2 above illustrates the research's model fit or viability. As a result, the prerequisites for this study model's convergent validity have been met. In addition to the figure presented in the above, the loading factors, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE for each construct are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Items, Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Servant Leadership	SL1	0.770	0.864	0.875	0.648
	SL2	0.843			
	SL3	0.858			
	SL4	0.799			
	SL5	0.748			
	TIL1	0.875			

Employees' Trust in Lead	TIL2	0.899	0.729	0.735	0.787
Employee Performance	TP1	0.827	0.772	0.792	0.592
	TP2	0.739			
	TP3	0.753			
	TP4	0.755			

Note- SL- Servant leadership, TIL-Trust in leaders, TP- Trainers' performance

Discriminant Validity

Scholars can check the discriminant validity of the reflective constructs through the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), the HTMT ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015), and cross-loadings evaluation. In this study, the discriminant validity of each indicator associated with each latent variable is examined by using Fornell-Larcker criterion to make sure that they are all in contrast to one another.

Table 6: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	Trainers' Performance	Servant Leadership	Trust in Leaders
Trainers' Performance	0.769		
Servant Leadership	0.580	0.805	
Trust in Leaders	0.582	0.623	0.887

If the quadratic value of AVE in each exogenous construct (value on the diagonal) is higher than the correlation between the construct and the other construct (value below the diagonal), the model exhibits discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In discriminant validity research, the quadratic value of AVE is determined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion value. In accordance with the data presented in Table 6 above, the discriminant validity test result of the construct met the criteria of the study.

Structural Model Evaluation using PLS-SEM Approach

After the measurement model validation, the researchers move forward to test the proposed hypotheses. Thus, the study used the technique suggested by Hair et al. (2014) to examine the proposed mediation model in order to be able to determine the different effects. According to Henseler et al. (2016), the significance of the beta coefficients for each association would be evaluated to assess the structural model. As to Benitez and Ray (2012) beta coefficients should be significant at 95% level to be statistically significant.

Thus, in the study, a path coefficient (direct and indirect effect) is required to ascertain the servant leadership impact on trainers' performance using trust in leaders as a mediator variable. In the PLS-SEM, the direct impact test is done by using T-Statistic test with the help of Smartpls 4.0 software. If the critical ratio (CR) value >1.96 or P-value < 0.05, we can concluded that there is a significant effect. Accordingly, the suggested research hypotheses have tested as follows.

H₂- As shown in Table 7 below, servant leadership has positive significant direct effect on trainers' performance ($\beta= 0.355$; $t= 9.806$; $P < 0.001$).

H₃- Servant leadership also has positive and significant direct effect on Trust in leaders at ($\beta = 0.623$; $t = 21.911$; $P < 0.001$).

Table 7: Path coefficients (Direct effects, indirect effect), T- values, p-values

Hypothesis	Direct/Indirect effect	Beta coefficient	T-statistics	P- values	Conclusion
Direct effect					
H2	SL -> EP	0.355	9.806	0.000	Accepted
H3	SL -> TIL	0.623	21.911	0.000	Accepted
H4	TIL -> EP	0.361	9.311	0.000	Accepted
Indirect effect					
H5	SL -> TIL -> EP	0.225	9.487	0.000	Accepted

H₄-Trust in leaders has a positive significant direct effect on trainers' performance at ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 9.311$; $P < 0.001$) which provide support for the proposed model. Though this, servant leadership has lower direct effect on trainers' performance at ($\beta = 0.355$) and it has greater direct effect on Trust in leaders ($\beta = 0.623$).

H₅- stated that Trust in Leaders mediates the association between servant leadership and Trainers' performance. As revealed in Table 6 above, servant leadership has positive significant indirect impacts on trainers' performance via trust in leaders as a mediator at ($\beta = 0.225$; $t = 9.487$; $P < 0.001$), which support the proposed model. Overall, trust in leaders is a complement of (partially mediated) the relationship of servant leadership and trainers' performance at TVET colleges of Amhara region.

Variance Explained (R²)

The coefficient of determinant (R²) is a statistical measure in a model that determines the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable. In this respect, Cohen (1992) proposed a cutoff for R-square value. That means the value of R² less than 0.12 indicates low, between 0.13 to 0.25 values indicate medium, 0.26 and above value indicates a high effect. Hence, in the current study, the two endogenous variables (trust in leaders and trainers' performance) have R² values of 0.388 and 0.416 respectively.

Table 8: Variance Explained (R-square)

Dependent Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Employee Performance	0.416	0.414
Trust In Leaders	0.388	0.387

As revealed in Table 8 above, the R-Square value of Trust in leaders described by the Servant leadership accounted for 38.8%, which means the remaining 61.2% of the variation were being explained by additional factors that are not covered by this study. On the other hand, 41.6% of trainers' performance was explained by both servant leadership and trust-in-leader, with the remaining 58.4% of the difference being explained by other factors not included in this study.

Qualitative Analysis of Servant Leadership

Top leader participants stated that they did not adopt the style of servant leadership as it was deemed useful in their colleges and it is not an established leadership culture of the colleges. However, very few senior leaders supposed that servant leadership style is well practiced in their colleges and it is a well-recognized culture of their colleges. Indeed, all of them believe that servant leadership style is an appropriate and effective leadership style for accomplishing the college's

intended goal and mission. They warmly suggested other organizations, especially those that focus on service and development, to employ the approach of servant leadership.

When asked what they believed to be the common traits or attributes of servant leader, the greater respondents identified the following traits as examples of servant leadership. They explained qualities of active listening to others, modeling the way, selflessness and Sacrifice for the welfare of others, serving the right needs of others, consistency in action and character, earnest love and care for others, being people oriented, comparing oneself to others, empathy and emotionally connected with others. The traits of servant leadership found in the current study are consistent with those of servant Leader as defined or described by a number of scholars. From this, one can conclude that both higher and middle level leaders of those colleges have sufficient knowledge about servant leadership attributes. According to Greenleaf (1970), the core of servant leadership is the principle of service. Serving the desires of subordinates is a top focus for servant leaders. The writer added that empowerment, mutual trust, cooperation, the moral exercise of power, and the worth of serving their followers are the top priorities for servant leaders in an organization.

In contrast, the participants affirmed that servant leadership provides significant advantages to the leader, staff, and college. Among the mentioned benefits of practicing servant leadership include experiencing internal and deep satisfaction because of serving the desires of others, having healthy and conducive working environment, acceptance and building trust, better sense of achievement in serving the wants of others, enhanced worker participation and increased productivity, increased employee motivation and creativity, improved team building and trust. The researchers fully shares with these characteristics of servant leader and various literatures on servant leadership are congruent with it (e.g. Green Leaf, 1977; Spears, 2004 and Laub, 1999).

The respondents also stated their view of the major challenges and costs of practicing servant leadership based on their long years of leadership experiences. The commonly mentioned challenges and/or costs of practicing servant leadership as to the interviewees include possibility of misunderstanding and abuse of leadership humility by some people, fear of possible disrespect by some people, failure of discharge of roles and duties by some irresponsible people, slow decision making, it demands to walk together, costs more time and resource for nurturing and cultivating others, requires more tolerance and understanding of others and sacrificing self-interest, and giving priority to some other people.

In order to diminish the likelihood of particular problems, such as servant leaders' misperception and abuse of humility, disrespect, and failure to fulfill their commitments or responsibilities, it is crucial to emphasize providing leadership. The key principle to servant leadership is to acquire a thorough understanding of their followers. Maxwell (2000) acknowledges that it takes genuine effort and compassion to touch someone's heart, and they must do so before asking for help. The oil of intimacy and relationships is what keeps friction at bay and enables the organization to operate smoothly. Servant leaders are acutely aware of human nature and adopt a nurturing teaching style that cultivates self-assurance. Brewer et al. (2010) concluded that serving leaders identify the advantage of meeting institutional objectives by ensuring that both people and organizations are served together.

DISCUSSION

Many scholars agreed that the effectiveness of an organization and employee performance is all seen to be significantly impacted by the leadership of the institutions. According to (Luftman, 2004), good leaders inspire and support their teams' competitiveness. As per wang et al. (2010), different leadership philosophies may be positively or negatively correlated with the outcome of employee. In order to encourage high standards in the professional growth of the organization's members, the leader must employ successful leadership style(s).

According to the present research, Servant Leadership and Trainers' Performance are positively and significantly related. This is to mean that servant leadership influences trainers' performance because of the fact that leaders in TVET colleges, believe in people serving other's needs before their own, receptive, and non-judgmental listeners. They provide opportunities for learning and growth, model appropriate behavior, and building up others through encouragement and affirmation. Leaders in the study colleges exhibit behaviors of being open and accountable to others, willingness to learn from others and maintaining integrity and trust. They exercise visualizing the future, taking initiatives and clarifying goals of the TVET colleges. Moreover, leaders in the study area exhibit features of serving others, for example, facilitating a shared vision, sharing power, releasing control, sharing status and promoting others.

This is supported by Sonnentag and Frese (2005) who found that servant leaders foster their employees' independence and self-reliance, which results in higher degree of performance. This demonstrates how employee performance is affected indirectly by Servant Leadership Style. Other investigations have shown that servant leaders affect positively on business success (Ruschman, 2002); organizational performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011); individual performance (Jaramillo et al., 2015) and firm performance (Peterson, 2012). Thus, servant leaders consider themselves to be in a stewardship role. They are people-oriented and place a high priority on assisting others, particularly their followers.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the current research was to evaluate the practices and relationships between servant leadership and Trainers' performance with the mediating effect of trainers trust in leaders at TVET colleges of ANRS. Hence, based on the data findings, we can recap that:

The result of Pearson's correlation of servant leadership, trust in leaders and trainers' performance revealed statistically positive and significant relationship i.e., servant leadership, trust in leaders and trainers' performance share many attributes in common and an increase in a single independent quality and an increase trainers' trust in leaders may add values for an increment of dependent variable (trainers performance).

The combined effect of servant leadership and trust in leaders on trainers' performance in TVET colleges was found to be statistically positive and significant ($R^2 = 0.416$). Thus, about 41.6% of the variances for trainers' performance could be determined by the combined effects of servant leadership and trust in leaders at TVET colleges in the region i.e., 58.4% of the variance is explained by other variables that are not encompassed in this study.

Trust in leaders has positive significant mediation role between the relationship of servant leadership and trainers' performance, i.e., trainers' trust in leaders' complements (partially mediates) the effect of servant leadership on trainers' performance at TVET colleges of the study area.

In a nutshell, the result indicated that servant leadership is soundly demonstrated by leaders in TVET college of ANRS. This was also true for the dimensions used to measure each variable. These results reveal promise for servant leadership as a benchmark for understanding how leaders influence their immediate followers, and ultimately the culture of the colleges and the larger community in which the organization is embedded. The presence of a favorable work environment in the TVET colleges is able to encourage trainers to produce high performance. Finally, we can recap that trust in leader is a complement of (partially mediator) to the connection between servant leadership and trainers' performance in TVET colleges of ANRS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the current study has some theoretical and practical ramifications. Theoretically, it addresses calls from certain scholars for more research into the mechanisms by which servant leadership impact on trainers' performance, using trust in leaders as a mediator between these variables. As a result, it reinforces the literature by offering substantial evidence about the mediating role that trust in leader's plays in the interaction between servant leadership and the performance of trainers, in TVET colleges of Amhara National Regional State.

Second, in the future, leaders should be trained on the servant leadership and application of its attributes. This will aid them to know when and where to apply a particular attribute that could stimulate the best outcome from their trainers. The job and training bureau of ANRS needs to invest in leadership development programs specifically designed for TVET colleges. This will enable leaders to have relevant leadership skills and competencies which will promote best practices.

Training leaders will enhance a good working relationship between them, trainers, trainees and other staff members of the TVET colleges. This will improve leaders' attitude to provide the relevant support to their trainers, thereby, making them happy to perform well on the job. Furthermore, it will be good for the leadership development program to include capacity building in servant leadership at TVET colleges' practice. This will produce a new generation of leaders for the future who will understand which servant leadership attributes to employ and when or under what circumstances to do so.

It should be known that trainers are the most important asset in TVET colleges, and their performance mostly depends on leadership. Organizations with good leadership capability will further improve performance. Therefore, serious attention should be given to make leadership a higher priority. However, the leaders should find out for other factors that hinder the performance of their trainers. Leaders may apply the right leadership styles but without the necessary resources or inputs, the trainers cannot do much. Hence, other external factors like the environment and culture could possibly be considered.

The research's scope is the subject of the last piece of advice. The conclusions of this study are not comprehensive because only ten TVET colleges under ANRS were included. Researchers are advised to conduct comparable research projects across TVET colleges on a nationwide scale in order to produce comprehensive and superior findings. Therefore, the results can be scaled up and implemented to the wider context. Consequently, other regions and institutions may learn from the advantages and success stories brought by implementing these variables effectively.

IMPLICATIONS

The cumulative importance of servant leadership and trust in leaders on trainers' performance in TVET colleges of Amhara region cannot be overemphasized. In particular, the efficacy of these colleges might be difficult to achieve without the correct leadership style. The current study was an attempt to undertake a research in the aspect of leadership style – servant leadership. Therefore, it is anticipated that both academics and practitioners will benefit from the outcomes of this empirical study.

On the practitioners' side, the importance of the effects of servant leadership on trainers' performance in line with the influential role of trust in leaders to the college is highlighted. This study's result, therefore, entails that leaders of different colleges should consider adopting leadership style (like servant leadership) in leading teams in order to obtain trainers' performance to their colleges.

On the academic side, this study makes a significant contribution to the leadership literature by exploring the impact of leadership style (servant leadership) on trainers' performance based on the mediating role of trust in leaders in line with different organizations. In particular, the current study

findings provide support to the proposition that the study's explanatory variables should be recognized as significant antecedents and tools to foster trust in the leader and trainers' performance to the TVET colleges in the region.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Despite the study of the connections between the several leadership philosophies (servant leadership) and performance of the trainers with the mediating effect of trust plays an important role in leadership practice and to the theoretical and practical implications, it also has the following drawbacks.

First, since only ten TVET colleges in Amhara Region were used to select the samples for this study, there could be a limitation to the diversity and size of the samples.

Secondly, because the data to the three variables (servant leadership, trust in leaders, and trainers' performance) are taken from the same survey, common-source bias may limit the credibility of the results.

On the basis of the limitations listed above and since this study is the first attempt in TVET colleges of Amhara region to examine the effects of servant leadership behaviors on trainers' performance through a mediated process of trust in leaders setting, other researchers are encouraged to further validate and extend the models tested in this study. Furthermore, future research can build on the conceptual framework of the current study by examining the results of diverse setting. As this study was employed a cross sectional survey, conducting a research using longitudinal trends within the TVET colleges of the region, or out of region at national level may help to further triangulate the findings of this research. Moreover, comparative studies can also be conducted in other organizational settings around the world.

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