

The Effect of Servant Leadership on Organizational Justice in the Public Universities of the Amhara Region

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of servant leadership on organizational justice in the public universities of the Amhara region. A descriptive survey and correlational design were used. The size of the population was 2170. Of these, 705 instructors were selected using proportional stratified random sampling technique. A standard questionnaire was used to collect the data. One sample t-test, structural equation modelling, multiple regression and one-way ANOVA were employed to analyse the data. The result of one sample t-test indicated that department heads manifested servant leadership behavior in relation to emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, helping subordinates grow and succeed moderately while empowering, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically were observed to a limited extent. Similarly, distributive justice was found to some extent but procedural and interactional justice were observed to a little extent. There was a statistically significant relationship between servant leadership and organizational justice. The result of multiple regression indicated that 36.1% of the variance in organizational justice was significantly predicted by emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skill, helping subordinates grow and succeed, and behaving ethically. Significant differences were found among instructors in their perception of servant leadership and organizational justice based on the generations of universities. Thus, it is concluded that servant leadership had significant effect on organizational justice. Therefore, it is suggested to improve the current status of servant leadership and organizational justice in the universities.

Keywords: Organizational justice; Public universities; Servant leadership

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, organizations highly depend on the quality of leadership to facilitate the changes and create a conducive work environment to be effective (McEwan, 2003). This shows that organizations will not be effective without quality leadership. For leadership to be effective, it must be built on a solid foundation consisting of a clear mission, vision, specific strategies and culture instrumental for success. Effective leaders exhibit specific skills and attributes to achieve the goal of the organization through creating conducive work environment. They are also focusing on building a community of learners, sharing a decision making process, supporting professional development for employees and creating a climate of teamwork (Brewer, 2001). Most importantly, strong communication skills, self-confidence, the ability to manage others and willingness to embrace change are the qualities of good leaders. This indicates that organizations are more inclined to use appropriate leadership styles in order to achieve a competitive advantage.

Leadership is a highly complex concept to define in which most of the definitions focus on the ability of an individual person to influence others (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999), but currently many scholars have shifted their attention from self-centred and individualized forms of leadership towards follower-oriented types of leadership (Peterson and Galvin, 2012). Servant leadership is one of the theories of leadership initiated by Greenleaf in 1970 that focuses on human needs as a top priority (Ehrhart, 2004; Northouse, 2013). A servant leader begins with the natural feeling that he wants to help his/her followers first (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders have the moral obligation to consider the needs of their employees over their own safety and the objectives of the organization (Greenleaf, 1998; Russell and Stone, 2002).

Unlike traditional leadership where the needs of followers are left behind to protect the interests of the leader, servant leadership puts the needs of employees over the leader. Servant leaders can develop and empower followers to reach their highest potential (Lord, Brown and Freiberg, 1999; Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002). With the interest of subordinates, servant leaders help followers use their abilities in order to attain certain goals and objectives. This shows that a servant leadership style focuses on empowering subordinates to use their full potential in the areas of job accomplishment and future leadership abilities (Greenleaf, 1977). This can be realized by developing self-esteem, creating trust, providing human and material resources (Liden, Wayne, Zhao and Henderson, 2008).

Although some scholars criticize servant leadership as idealized which cannot be implemented in the real world (Lloyd, 1996; Eicher-Catt, 2005; Northouse, 2013), it has become a popular issue in the literature when organizations increasingly demand ethical and genuine leaders (Blanchard, 2002; Boyum, 2006; Covey, 2006). That is, organizations with servant leadership cultures tend to be healthy, efficient and leader-employee relationships are smooth and synchronized (Korkmaz, 2007; Doraiswamy, 2012). Servant leadership has the potential to provide organizations with a leadership style grounded in beliefs, moral values and developing others. Strong ethics, belief and values are seen as the core of servant leadership which brings long-term success in organizations. A servant leader can produce motivated workforce through cultivating participatory approach, empowering environments and fostering the talents of followers. A servant leadership focuses personal and professional growth of followers through encouraging self-actualization, high performance and organizational sustainability (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Organizational justice (OJ) is one of the numerous job-related attitudes concerned with employees' perception of fair treatment in the workplace (James, 1993; Fernandes and Awamleh, 2006). It is understood in terms of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Bies and Moag, 1986; Cohen and Spector, 2001). Distributive justice is viewed as workers' insight regarding the fairness of the allocation of outputs (Folger and Greenberg, 1985). It relates to equity as perceived by workers about their input and output in the organization. On the other hand, procedural justice keeps to explain the fairness of plans and processes used to determine the effects (Cakmak, 2005). When workers think that the procedures used in assigning administrative responsibilities and rewards are fair, they will be happy and more inclined to engage in OCB. Interactional justice is another dimension of OJ that

concentrates on interpersonal relationships and the fairness of communication within the organizations (Bies and Moag, 1986). Niehoff and Moorman (1993) conceived interactional justice as the quality of interpersonal relationships among employees. This shows that OJ is not only emphasizing the justice of rewards that workers receive but also the objectivity of the decision making process to decide the outcomes and the quality of social interactions among employees.

The behaviors of employees in the organization are highly influenced by the justice system. This means that employees will perform their tasks effectively when they are fairly treated by their leaders in organizations. Employees want to be treated with respect, and their contributions to be matched with the outcomes they receive. Not only do workers want to be fairly compensated for their inputs, but they also choose the procedures that delegate outcomes, and the individuals associated with the delegation of outcomes to be fair. Similarly, having procedures that are consistent, unbiased and good interaction between employees and leaders are basic elements for ensuring fairness (Leventhal, 1980; Greenberg, 1993; Judge and Colquitt, 2004). However, employees with the feeling of unfair treatment are less likely to be motivated to support their organizations to be successful (Pfeffer and Langton, 1993), and they are exposed to restlessness and resentment (Greenberg, 1993).

Servant leadership plays an indispensable role in determining employees' feelings of fair treatment in organizations in which they are employed. When organizations foster a strong sense of justice in the workplace, employees will work as a team rather than individuals. According to Ehrhart (2004), servant leadership had positive relation with follower procedural justice. In an effort to relate servant leadership to organizational justice decision, we draw on the literature on justice rules. For instance, given that servant leaders are sensitive to the needs of subordinates with the goal of supporting followers grow and succeed (Graham, 1991), they will treat workers in a sensitive way, thus enhancing their feeling of justice.

In addition, servant leaders provide a chance for subordinates to voice their concerns, as a result of which it is likely that the feeling of justice will be better when an individual has a servant leader in the workplace. Since servant leaders give attention to the advancement of subordinates, they will be certain that followers are properly encouraged to refine the perception of justice. Individuals are obviously attentive to the issue of justice in their day-to-day lives across various settings (Gopanzano and Stein, 2009). Servant leaders can affect the three dimensions of justice that should convert into the general feeling of justice (Ehrhart, 2004).

Based on the discussions made so far with regard to servant leadership and organizational justice as well as their relations, the researcher developed a new conceptual framework for the study as indicated in Figure 1. The framework considered the seven dimensions of servant leadership such as emotional healing, conceptual skill, creating value for the community, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically as independent factors to explain organizational justice.

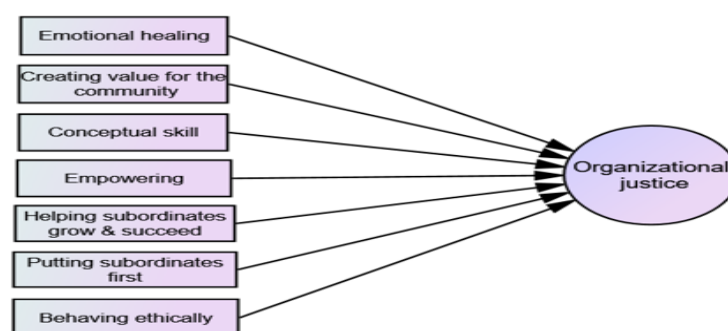


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Source: Own survey 2021

Educational institutions are now becoming more complex, dynamic, and fluid than ever before due to several forces continually changing educational settings in which leaders operate (Murphy, 2002). As a result, they tend to be unhealthy and less effective when they faced with poor leadership practices characterized by enhanced self-importance, power-driven focus, and bureaucratic and authoritative behaviors (Campbell, 2006). A range of research findings derived from empirical studies indicated that a large number of higher education institutions were led by inefficient, authoritative and undemocratic leaders who wanted to satisfy their own needs over the needs of employees and the institutions (Alamri, 2011; Satyaputra, 2013). A leadership approach that encourages the participation of employees in decision making process has paramount importance for the success of higher education institutions. In this regard, servant leadership in higher education plays key roles in initiating innovative ideas, creating conducive instructional environments and ensure better academic performances (Keith, 2010; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2015). However, limited studies have been conducted on servant leadership practices in educational institutions in general and higher educations in particular.

As indicated by different studies, the challenges of leadership have been observed in Ethiopian higher education institutions. Related to this, some public universities of Ethiopia lack ethical and genuine leaders which have negative effects on organizations' health and effectiveness (Amsale, Bekele and Tafesse, 2016). These leaders showed aloofness and dissociated from their tasks lacked concern about the wellbeing of followers and were poor at showing ethical behavior (Geleta and Amsale, 2016). Yizengaw (2003) and Bitew (2018) also indicated that leader employee relationships in Ethiopian higher education institutions are authoritative and undemocratic which are responsible for employees' disengagement and turnover. In addition, Lerra (2015) showed that higher education institutions in Ethiopia lacked leaders with profound feelings of professionalism who perceived leading as the responsibility to serve staff and the community at large. Similarly, a shortage of professionally capable, motivated and committed leaders is another challenge to effective leadership in Ethiopian public universities (Kahsay, 2012). The results of these studies indicated that the leadership behaviors of most leaders in Ethiopian public universities are characterized by an autocratic in nature which led to the decline in effectiveness of the institutions. However, unlike the findings of the previous studies Bitew and Gedifew (2020) indicated that leaders in public universities of Ethiopia exhibited servant leadership behavior. They also added that leaders are good at resolving difficult issues facilitating team spirit, valuing and respecting diversity. This shows that a shortage of studies has been observed in Ethiopian higher education related to servant leadership.

Leadership and organizational justice are thought to be vital factors for the effective functioning of an organization. A range of empirical research findings indicated that unfair treatment of employees in the workplace leads to the inefficient implementation of the teaching-learning process. Thurston and McNall (2010) claimed that feelings of fairness is considered an important position in the decision making process in relation to rewards, benefits and other compensation issues. In addition, employees who feel mistreated in the workplace inclined to show deviant behavior and decrease the possibility to exert extra effort (Vardi and Wiener, 1996). These indicate that employees who are deprived of justice in the organization will be susceptible to stress and burn-out, dissatisfaction, lower level of commitment, frequent absenteeism, interpersonal conflict, distrust and aggression leading to low productivity.

While studies have been conducted on servant leadership and organizational justice, research has not been conducted on the causal relationship between these variables in the context of Ethiopian higher education institutions in general and the public universities of the Amhara region in particular. This study, therefore, examined the effect of servant leadership on organizational justice in the public universities of the Amhara region. Thus, the following objectives were formulated to:

1. To assess the perception of instructors toward servant leadership and organizational justice in the public universities of the Amhara region;

2. Examine the relationship between servant leadership and organizational justice in the public universities of the Amhara region;
3. Analyze the effect of servant leadership dimensions on organizational justice in the public universities of the Amhara region; and
4. Assess whether there are significant differences among instructors in their perception of servant leadership and organizational justice in the four generations of public universities in the Amhara region.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Research Design

Since this study aimed to assess the status of servant leadership and organizational justice as well as their relationship, both descriptive survey and correlational research designs were found appropriate. Therefore, these designs were employed mainly using quantitative methodology.

2.2. Population, sample and sampling techniques

There are 10 public universities in the Amhara region, which are categorized into four generations based on years of establishment. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select samples for this study. Initially, six universities were selected out of 10 universities in the specified strata due to manageability reasons and to make comparisons among respondents in their perception of servant leadership and organizational justice. Namely, the University of Gondar from the 1st generation, Wollo and Debre Markos Universities from the 2nd generation, Debre Tabor University from the 3rd generation, and Injibara and Debarq Universities from the 4th generation were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. This stratification allowed us to ensure the fair representation of universities from each generation.

Then, 21 colleges were randomly selected from the six universities to determine the size of the population and subpopulations of the study. Specifically, five colleges from the University of Gondar, four colleges from Wollo University, four colleges from Debre Markos University, four colleges from Debre Tabor University, two colleges from Injibara University and two colleges from Debarq University were selected randomly. Accordingly, a total of 2170 instructors in the selected universities were taken as the population of the study. Of the total population size of instructors, 731 from the 1st generation, 710 from the 2nd generation, 427 from the 3rd generation, and 302 from the 4th generation were considered as the subpopulations of the study. It is evident that the population consists of subpopulations with different characteristics for the given research problem, selecting respondents from the total population will bias the sample.

Though there is no consensus among scholars on the appropriate a sample size for structural equation modelling, Comrey and Lee (1992) suggested that the sample size of 500 and above would be good to undertake factor analysis. Based on the suggestions of Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle, (2019) and Memon *et al.* (2020), 15 cases per each estimated parameter were used as a method to determine the sample size of this study. In this case, the sample size of this study was 705 since the number of items under the dimensions of the variables in the questionnaire was 47. After determining the total sample size of the study, the sample size of each stratum was determined based on the size of their population using proportional sample allocation method developed by Pandey and Verma (2008). Hence, the sample size of each stratum was determined using Pandey and Verma's (2008) formula as given below. i.e.

$$n_k = \left(\frac{N_k}{N} \right) * n$$

Where;

n_k = Sample size of k^{th} stratum

N_k = Population size of the k^{th} stratum

N = Total population size

n = Total sample size

Of the total sample of 705 instructors, 237 from the 1st generation, 231 from the 2nd generation, 139 from the 3rd generation, and 98 from the 4th generation universities were selected using a proportional stratified random sampling technique. This helped to avoid the misrepresentation of some members of the population in the study. The summary of the population and sample of the study are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of population and sample of the study

Strata	Name of universities	Population size of each university (N_k)	Sample size of each university (n_k)
1 st generation	University of Gondar	731	237
	Wollo University	280	91
2 nd generation	Debre Markos University	430	140
3 rd generation	Debre Tabor University	427	139
	Injibara University	145	47
4 th generation	Debark University	157	51
	Total	N= 2170	n= 705

2.3. Data Gathering Instrument

A standardized questionnaire was used to collect the data to increase the accuracy of the results. The questionnaire has three parts containing close ended items. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of an item related to respondents' universities where they were working. The second part of the questionnaire assessed servant leadership in the workplace using the latest version of Liden *et al.* (2008). It was measured using 28 items organized into seven dimensions— emotional healing, conceptual skill, creating value for the community, empowering, helping subordinates to grow and succeed, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically. The third part of the questionnaire contains 19 items developed by Moorman (1991) and Niehoff and Moorman (1993) to assess respondents' perceived organizational justice in terms of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

Finally, respondents rate items using five points Likert type scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very great extent*) to measure servant leadership practice and organizational justice in the workplace.

2.4. Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The face and content validity of the questionnaire were evaluated by the educational experts of Bahir Dar University. The face validity of the questionnaire related to the feasibility, readability, consistency of style and formatting were amended based on the comments of my colleagues. The content validity of the questionnaire was also assessed by research experts. Hence, the organization of the questionnaire related to relevance, simplicity and wording of items were adjusted based on the comments obtained from the research advisors. In addition, statistical technique was also used to test the content validity of the questionnaire using content validity index formula of Lawshe (1975). A content validity index was calculated for the mean of the content validity ratio values of the retained items to be included in the final questionnaire. Thus, the content validity indices of items are (.85 and .91) for servant leadership and organizational justice respectively showing that items were valid to measure their respective dimensions.

A pilot test was conducted on 90 selected instructors at Bahir Dar University to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The distribution of sample for pilot test followed the same procedures as in the main sample of the study. Cronbach Alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency of items. The reliability coefficients of the instrument with Cronbach Alpha (α) = (.84, .86, .81, .83, .89, .85, & .82) and (.92, .87 & .94) for the dimensions of servant leadership and organizational justice respectively. This indicates that items in the respective dimensions with reliability coefficients $\geq .80$

are considered internally consistent to measure servant leadership and organizational justice constructs (George and Mallery, 2010).

2.5. Data Collection Procedures

A permission letter was sought from Bahir Dar University to collect the data from the research sites. Based on the given permission, the list of the target respondents was accessed and identified the required samples. Then, respondents were provided information about the purpose of the study before they participated in the study. Respondents were also informed about the absence of potential risks and benefits due to participation in the study. Finally, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and they were given three days to complete the questionnaire.

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis techniques were employed to analyse the data collected through the questionnaires using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and Analysis Moments of Structures (AMOS) software. That is, a one sample t-test, structural equation modelling, multiple regression and one way analysis of variances were mainly used to analyse the data.

3. Results

The results of the study are presented based on the themes of the research questions. It began with testing the construct validity of the dimensions of latent variables and measurement model fit through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

3.1. Factor Analyses

Though there is no agreement among scholars regarding the minimum factor loadings of items, items with factor loadings $\pm .33$ and above are considered to satisfy the minimum level of threshold (Ho, 2006). The result of exploratory factor analysis showed that 42 items in the respective dimensions of servant leadership and organizational justice had high factor loadings above the minimum threshold of $\pm .33$. Specifically, the factor loading values of these items ranging from .628 to .886 which predicted more than 50 % of the variance in the constructs were retained. Conversely, five items with low factor loadings were rejected from the analysis because they suppressed the accuracy of the results. As a result, the number of items in the variables were decreased from 47 to 42. The principal component analysis result also indicated that the factor loadings of servant leadership and organizational justice dimensions with eigenvalues ranging from 1.592 to 3.519 were greater than the cutoff point of 1.

Based on the results of the construct validity, the seven dimensions of servant leadership (emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skill, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically) and three dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional justices) were identified as indicators. Taking the identified dimensions of the two latent variables, the measurement model was constructed using AMOS as indicated in Figure 2.

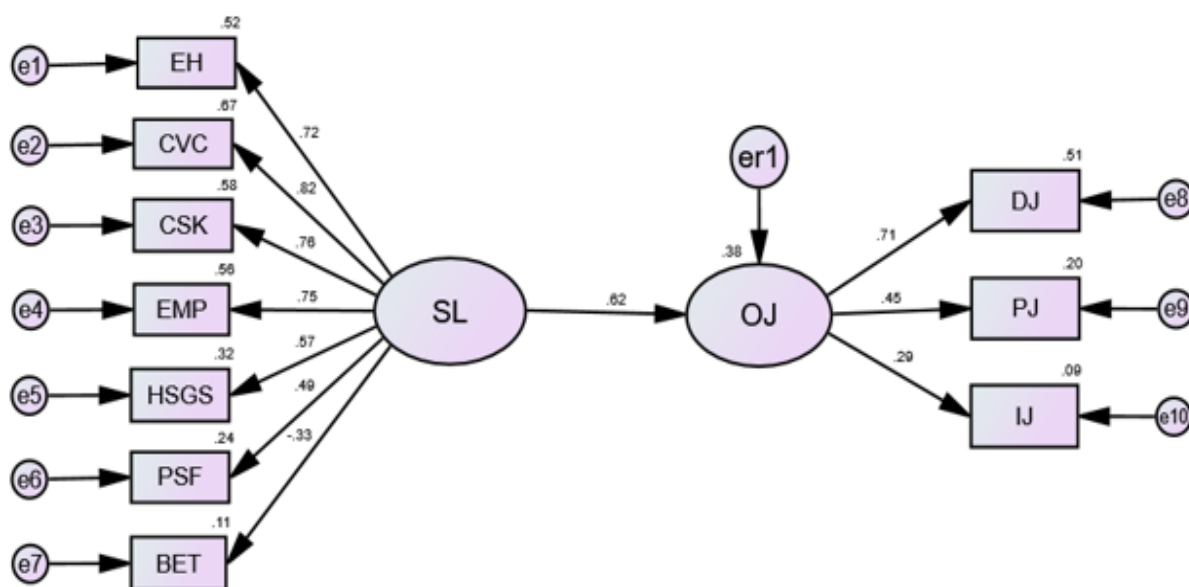


Figure 2. The measurement model of the study

After testing the construct validity, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out with the respective dimensions of servant leadership and organizational justice to assess the parameter estimates and the overall fit of the measurement model. Though there is little agreement among scholars on the type of fit indices and their cutoff points as to what constitutes a good fit, the researcher used relative chi-square (CMIN/DF), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) to assess the degree to which the measurement model fits to the data using AMOS. The goodness of fit indices employed to test the measurement model fit are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. AMOS outputs on the fitness indices against the criteria of the measurement model

Criteria	Obtained values	Threshold
Relative chi-square (CMIN/DF)	5.807	<5
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	.990	>.90
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	.950	>.90
Normed fit index (NFI)	.956	>.90
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.967	>.90
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	.901	>.90
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.966	>.90
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.046	<.05

Though the measurement model did not fit to the observed variance–covariance matrix well by the CMIN/DF (5.807), the fit indices of GFI (.990), AGFI (.950), NFI (.956), IFI (.967), TLI (.967) and CFI (.966) were higher than the threshold of .90, and RMSEA (.046) was lower than the cutoff point of .05 with $p < .001$. This indicates that the possible improvement of the measurement model ranges from .010 to .050. The maximum likelihood estimates of unstandardized and standardized regression weights also confirmed that all path coefficients in the model are significant at $p < .05$ as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Unstandardized and standardized regression estimates of the measurement model

Parameters/dimensions			Unstandardized				Standardized
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate
Emotional healing	<---	SL	1.000				.723
Creating value	<---	SL	1.159	.058	20.110	***	.821
Conceptual skill	<---	SL	1.133	.060	18.856	***	.764
Empowering	<---	SL	.998	.054	18.524	***	.749
Helping subordinates	<---	SL	.848	.060	14.119	***	.569
Putting subordinates first	<---	SL	.719	.059	12.272	***	.494
Behaving ethically	<---	SL	-.465	.056	-8.317	***	-.335
Distributed justice	<---	OJ	1.000				.711
Procedural justice	<---	OJ	.559	.072	7.739	***	.448
Interactional justice	<---	OJ	.446	.078	5.721	***	.292

SL = Servant leadership; OJ = Organizational justice

As indicated in Table 3, the unstandardized regression weights of all the dimensions of servant leadership and organizational justice are found significant with the critical ratio test higher than ± 1.96 at $p < .05$. The standardized regression estimates of the 10 dimensions in the measurement model were significantly represented by their respective latent variables. Specifically, the standardized regression weights of the observed variables in the measurement model range from .292 (interactional justice) to .821 (creating value for the community). The squared multiple correlations indicate that the observed variables explain the respective latent constructs range from 8.5 % (interactional justice) to 67.4 % (creating value for the community). This shows that all dimensions in the measurement model were internally consistent and structurally valid to measure the respective latent variables of servant leadership and organizational justice.

3.2. Status of Servant Leadership and Organizational Justice

Table 4. A one sample t-test for the dimensions of servant leadership and organizational justice

Dimensions	Mean	Std.	Test value	Mean difference	t-value	Sig.(2-tailed)
Servant leadership						
Emotional healing	11.03	2.203	9	2.031	24.479	.000
Creating value for the community	14.25	3.221	12	2.252	18.569	.000
Conceptual skills	13.49	3.914	12	1.489	10.105	.000
Empowering	11.45	3.262	12	-.548	-4.457	.000
Helping subordinates grow and succeed	10.60	2.155	9	1.596	19.660	.000
Putting subordinates first	10.81	3.779	12	-1.189	-8.352	.000
Behaving ethically	10.50	2.133	12	-1.498	-18.648	.000
Organizational justice						
Distributive justice	13.51	2.831	12	1.508	14.117	.000
Procedural justice	10.83	3.950	15	-4.173	-28.048	.000
Interactional justice	19.45	4.051	21	-1.553	-10.081	.000

N=705, df = 704, *Sig. <.05

The results in Table 4 indicated that the mean scores of emotional healing (11.03), creating value for the community (14.25), conceptual skill (13.49) and helping subordinates grow and succeed (10.60) were higher than the respective test values at ($t = 24.479$), ($t = 18.569$), ($t = 10.105$) and ($t = 19.660$) respectively. The positive mean differences and t-values also ensure that the obtained mean scores were significantly greater than the test values at $p < .05$, $df = 704$. This implies that department heads manifested servant leadership behavior moderately in relation to emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skill and helping subordinates grow and succeed. Conversely, the mean scores of empowering (11.45), putting subordinates first (10.81) and behaving ethically (10.50) were less than the respective test values at ($t = -4.457$), ($t = -8.352$) and ($t = -18.648$) respectively. The respective positive mean differences and t values of these dimensions prove that the observed mean scores were significantly lower than the test values at $p < .05$, $df = 704$. This means that department heads showed servant leadership behavior to a little extent through empowering subordinates, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically.

With regard to organizational justice, the result of one sample t-test revealed that the mean score of distributive justice (13.51) was greater than the test value at ($t = 14.117$). The positive mean difference and t-value also confirms that the observed mean score was significantly higher than the test value at $p < .05$, $df = 704$. This means that instructors fairly perceived the state of distributive justice in the workplace. On the other hand, the mean scores of procedural justice (10.83) and interactional justice (19.45) were less than the respective test values at ($t = -28.048$) and ($t = -10.181$) respectively. The respective negative mean differences and t values of these dimensions ensure that the obtained mean scores were significantly lower than the test values at $p < .05$, $df = 704$. This indicates that instructors perceived procedural and interactional justice to a little extent in the workplace.

3.3. The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Justice

Table 5. Standardized Correlation Coefficient of Servant Leadership and Organizational Justice

Latent variables in the structural model			Unstandardized			Standardized	
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate
Servant leadership	<-->	Organizational justice	.433	.044	9.838	***	.624

As can be seen from Table 5, positive and statistically significant relationship was observed between servant leadership and perceived organizational justice with a standardized correlation coefficient ($r = .624$) by the critical ratio test greater than ± 1.96 at $p < .05$. This implies that the practice of servant leadership in the workplace caused to increase in employees' feelings of justice.

3.4. The Effect of Servant Leadership on Organizational Justice

Table 6. Regression of Organizational Justice on Servant Leadership dimensions

Dimensions of OJ	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
			B	S.E.	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant			2.969	.747		3.975	.000
Emotional healing			.296	.040	.244	7.367	.000
Creating value			.157	.025	.216	6.284	.000
Conceptual skill	.367	.361	.260	.028	.319	9.239	.000
Empowering			-.003	.033	-.004	-.096	.924
Helping subordinates			.134	.038	.120	3.545	.000
Putting subordinates first			.008	.023	.012	.349	.727

Behaving ethically	.080	.026	.114	3.045	.002
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As indicated in Table 6, the result of multiple regression indicated that 36.1 % of the variance in organizational justice is predicted by the seven dimensions of servant leadership with a significant model at $F(7, 697) = 54.650$, $p = .000$. The regression coefficients of the dimensions of servant leadership are found as (.244, .216, .319, .120, & .144, at $p < .05$) for emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skill, helping subordinates and behaving ethically respectively. This indicates that organizational justice was significantly predicted by these dimensions. However, empowering and putting subordinates first were not found to be significant to predict organizational justice.

3.5. One Way ANOVA for University Generations

Table 7. One way ANOVA on differences in perception of servant leadership and organizational justice among instructors in the four generations of universities

Variables	Generations of university	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Servant leadership	Between groups	115.167	3	38.389	31.727	.000
	Within groups	848.208	701	1.210		
	Total	963.375	704			
Organizational justice	Between groups	157.514	3	52.505	44.071	.000
	Within groups	835.144	701	1.191		
	Total	992.658	704			

*Significance level at .05

As shown in Table 7, the result of one way ANOVA indicated that there were statistically significant differences among instructors in their perception of servant leadership at $F(3, 701) = 31.727$, $p = .000$ and organizational justice at $F(3, 701) = 44.071$, $p < .001$ in the four generations of universities. This indicated that instructors in the four generation universities had different perceptions regarding the status of servant leadership and organizational justice.

Though significant differences were found among instructors in their perception of servant leadership and organizational justice in the four generations of universities, the locations of these differences were not identified. As a result, post hoc analysis was conducted to identify which generation universities differed from other at .05 level of significance using Scheffé test as presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Post hoc tests of multiple comparisons among instructors in perception of Servant Leadership and Organizational Justice

Variables	(I) Generations of universities	(J) Generations of universities	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Servant leadership	1 st generation	2 nd generation	-.18033	.1091	.435	-.4860	.1254
		3 rd generation	-.95704*	.1101	.000	-1.2657	-.6484
		4 th generation	.14523	.1228	.706	-.1990	.4894
	2 nd generation	1 st generation	.18033	.1091	.435	-.1254	.4860
		3 rd generation	-.77670*	.1221	.000	-1.1187	-.4347
		4 th generation	.32556	.1336	.116	-.0489	.7000
	3 rd generation	1 st generation	.95704*	.1101	.000	.6484	1.2657
		2 nd generation	.77670*	.1221	.000	.4347	1.1187
		4 th generation	1.10226*	.1345	.000	.7254	1.4791
	4 th generation	1 st generation	-.14523	.1229	.706	-.4894	.1990
		2 nd generation	-.32556	.1336	.116	-.7000	.0489
		3 rd generation	-1.10226*	.1345	.000	-1.4791	-.7254
Organizational justice	1 st generation	2 nd generation	-.11332	.1082	.778	-.4166	.1900
		3 rd generation	-1.13302*	.1093	.000	-1.4392	-.8268
		4 th generation	.09089	.1219	.906	-.2507	.4324
	2 nd generation	1 st generation	.11332	.1082	.778	-.1900	.4166
		3 rd generation	-1.01970*	.1211	.000	-1.3591	-.6803
		4 th generation	.20422	.1326	.499	-.1673	.5758
	3 rd generation	1 st generation	1.13302*	.1093	.000	.8268	1.4392
		2 nd generation	1.01970*	.1211	.000	.6803	1.3591
		4 th generation	1.22391*	.1334	.000	.8500	1.5978
	4 th generation	1 st generation	-.09089	.1219	.906	-.4324	.2507
		2 nd generation	-.20422	.1326	.499	-.5758	.1673
		3 rd generation	-1.22391*	.1334	.000	-1.5978	-.8500

The results of the Scheffé test indicated that instructors in the 1st generation universities were significantly different from instructors in the 3rd generation universities in perception of servant leadership but did not differ from instructors in the 2nd and 4th generation universities. Significant differences were observed between instructors in the 2nd and 3rd as well as between the 3rd and 4th generation universities in their perception of servant leadership. On the contrary, instructors in the 2nd generation universities did not differ from instructors in the 4th generation universities in their perception of servant leadership.

With regard to organizational justice, the results of the Scheffé test revealed that instructors in the 1st generation universities are significantly different from instructors in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation universities in their perception of organizational justice. Significant differences are also observed between instructors in the 2nd and 3rd as well as in the 3rd and 4th generation universities in perception of organizational justice. However, significant difference were not found between instructors in the 2nd and 4th generation universities in their perception of organizational justice.

4. Discussions

4.1. Status of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is an important approach grounded in values, ethics and morals that gives high emphasis to the wellbeing of employees over the interests of the leaders (Laub, 2004). The findings of this study showed that servant leadership was moderately implemented in the public universities of the Amhara region as perceived by instructors. Specifically, instructors perceived that department heads exhibited emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills and helped subordinates grow and succeed to some extent, while they empowered, put subordinates first, and behaved ethically to some extent. This result is consistent with the work of Bitew and Gedifew (2020) that shows servant leadership was fairly exercised in the public universities of the Amhara region. They added that the leaders in the sample universities exercised servant leadership at different levels. It is obvious that employees will be committed to serve their institutions if the leaders manifest servant leadership behavior. Lobago (2017) also reported on the successful implementation of servant leadership in Compassion International organization worked in Ethiopia, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Similarly, Boume (2016) found servant leadership as an important approach to facilitate the performance of higher education institutions.

The results of several studies showed that leaders who exercise servant leadership intensified personal honesty, credibility, and trustworthiness, with special focus on followers and enhanced morality has positive relationships with greater and sustainable organizational performance (Blanchard and Hodges, 2003; Irving, 2004). This shows that leaders in higher education institutions are exercising a servant leadership style that brings long-term commitment to increase effectiveness because it can create servant leaders who care about the wellbeing of employees and organizations (Satyapuitra, 2013). On the contrary, the results of other studies indicated that many higher education institutions were led by unethical, authoritative, bureaucratic leaders who want to satisfy their own needs over the needs of their followers (Alamri, 2011; Lerra, 2015; Amsale *et al.*, 2016). They augmented that self-important and autocratic leadership cultures were manifested commonly by the leaders in higher education institutions. The results of these studies are different from the results of the current study. This leads to the feeling of mistreatment or injustice among staff members that demoralizes them from supporting their colleagues and institutions as well.

4.2. Status of Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is another job related variable concerned with staff's feelings of fair treatment in the organizations. The result of this study revealed that organizational justice was observed in the public universities in the Amhara region. Specially, distributive justice was observed in the universities to some extent, while procedural and interactional justice were exhibited to a little extent in the universities. When individuals perceive the outputs of their estimations to be just, they will be happy to support their organizations that goes beyond their responsibility (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993). Similarly, employees who are satisfied with the justice system of their organizations perform much higher than those employees who are less satisfied (Greenberg, 1990). However, employees with the feeling of unfair treatment in the organizations will decrease their performance, quality of work, and degree of cooperation among workers (Pfeffer and Langton, 1993). This idea is also supported by Greenberg (1993) in that organizations that do not treat their employees fairly are subjected to dissatisfaction and frustration. In this regard, the findings of this study are inconsistent with the findings of Vardi and Wiener (1996), Cohen and Spector (2001), Spector and Fox (2002) and Kennedy, Homant, and Homant (2004), and in that employees are exposed to stress, turnover, dissatisfaction, low commitment, distrust and violence leading to low productivity due to a lack of fair treatment in organizations.

4.3. The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Justice

The result of this study indicated that servant leadership had a positive and significant relationship with organizational justice. Similar to this result, Ehrhart (2004) found a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership and organizational justice. Cropanzano, Prehar, and Chen (2002) also reported that servant leadership was significantly related to organizational justice similar to the finding of this study. In the same way, the work of other researchers agreed on the existence of a significant relationship between servant leadership behavior of leaders and perceived OJ of employees (Zehiria, Akyuzb, Eren and Turhand, 2013). Servant leaders offer an opportunity for subordinates to explain their interest, is probably that organizational justice will be more encouraging when an employee has a servant leader.

4.4. The Effect of Servant Leadership on Organizational Justice

The findings of this study also indicated that organizational justice was significantly predicted by servant leadership. This result is congruent with the work of Oner (2008) that servant leadership significantly predicted employees' feelings of justice. A study conducted by Subramaniam (2011) also indicated that servant leadership had positive effect on organizational justice. Similarly, the finding of this study is consistent with the works of other researchers as servant leadership had significant influence on employees' perceived justice (Cohen, 1988; Shamir, 1995; Niehoff and Moorman, 1996). It is suggested that servant leadership should be considered by the leaders in the organization (Blanchard, 2002; Covey, 2006), indicating that servant leaders positively affect the workplace and a mutual feeling of justice. It is evident that servant leaders can affect the perceptions of all the dimensions of justice which should be interpret into a general sense of justice. This indicates that servant leadership is considered as a vital component of job that determines employees' feelings of justice in organizations.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of servant leadership on organizational justice in public universities in the Amhara region. The results of the study indicated that servant leadership dimensions such as emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills and helping subordinates grow were found to some extent, while empowering, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically were observed in the workplace to a little extent. With regard to organizational justice, distributive justice was found to some extent but procedural justice and interactional justice were observed to a little extent as perceived by instructors. There was a positive and statistically significant relationship between servant leadership and organizational justice with a standardized correlation coefficient. Organizational justice was significantly predicted by the five dimensions of servant leadership. Significant differences were observed among instructors in the four generations of universities in their perception of servant leadership and organizational justice. Therefore, it is concluded that servant leadership had a significant effect on organizational justice.

5.2. Recommendations

Although servant leadership had a significant effect on organizational justice, it needs to improve the current status of servant leadership and organizational justice meaningfully through the following ways.

Universities need to develop a culture that values servant leadership in order to serve their employees in the workplace.

Academic leaders need to empower subordinates, put subordinates first and behave ethically through implementing servant leadership.

Academic leaders need to improve the current status of procedural and interactional justice through validating the fairness of procedures and interpersonal treatment in the workplace.

The concerned bodies of the universities need to collect accurate and complete information before making decisions about instructors to ensure justice.

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