

The Relationship between Servant Leadership, Affective Commitment, Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Team Effectiveness

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Abstract

The goal of the study was to conduct an analysis of the relationships between servant leadership, affective team commitment, OCB and team effectiveness in the South African school system. A non-probability sample made up of 288 school teachers was drawn from 38 schools in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Item analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used to analyse the data. Positive relationships were found between servant leadership and team effectiveness; servant leadership and affective team commitment, affective team commitment and team effectiveness, servant leadership and OCB; affective team commitment and OCB; and OCB and team effectiveness.

Introduction

Creating effective teams has long been one of the goals of many organisations (Afolabi, Adesina & Aigbedion, 2009). Teams help organisations keep abreast of the changes in the external environment by providing a competitive advantage, improved productivity, enhanced creativity and innovation and reducing the time taken to make important decisions (Afolabi, Adesina, & Aigbedion, 2009; Sheng & Tian, 2010). Team effectiveness, is therefore, one of the variables that need to be proactively managed to determine organisational success. Although numerous studies on team effectiveness in organisations exist, little has been done on school teacher teams in public sector organisations.

Team effectiveness is not only confined to profit-making organisations it should be a characteristic of all existing organisations including both private and public organisations. Public organisations, such as schools, still face the challenge of developing an effective strategy for achieving school team effectiveness. Effective leadership is one of the key requirements of successful schools (Bush & Heystek, 2006). It is, therefore, important to develop the leadership skills of principals to boost the quality of school management and improve educational outcomes. One of the leadership approaches that is likely to fit well in the principal-teacher service delivery school team effectiveness is servant leadership.

Principals who practice servant leadership are likely to create environments that en-

able teachers to work towards a shared vision and honour collective commitments to self and others (learners and fellow teachers) (Cerit, 2009; DuFour, 2001). A service-oriented leadership approach such as servant leadership is likely to create an environment conducive to effective school team functioning (Irving & Longbotham, 2007; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010; Transcitti, 2010). Generally, the servant leadership approach focuses on mentoring employees to reach their potential in self-leadership (self-motivation), community stewardship, task effectiveness, and future leadership capabilities (Greenleaf, 1977).

The servant leader's ability to develop and empower followers by expressing humility, authenticity, unconditional interpersonal acceptance and stewardship makes the followers feel empowered (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Previous studies show that employees, when empowered, display a higher level of self-confidence and a heightened sense of being able to positively influence their work environment (Zhu, May & Avolio, 2004). This is likely to lead to the development of positive attitudes in followers; most notably affective team commitment (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013) and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Sendjaya, Sarros & Santorra, 2008).

Organisational citizenship behaviour is important in a team context because it indicates the extent to which individual members of the organisation or team are able and willing to engage in extra-role behaviours that are beneficial to the organisation (OCBO) and other individuals within the organisation (OCBI) (Mohammad, Habib & Alias, 2011; Ren-Tao & Heung-Gil, 2009). These behaviours also promote more effective communication, knowledge sharing and increased coordination among employees (Ren-Tao & Heung-Gil, 2009).

Despite the increasing number of studies on team effectiveness and the role of servant leadership, no research was found on the relationships between servant leadership, affective team commitment; organisational citizenship behaviour and team effectiveness in an educational setting in South Africa. It is therefore important to understand team effectiveness in school settings to improve service delivery.

Aim of study

The primary goal of the study was to conduct an analysis of the relationships that exist between servant leadership, affective team commitment; organisational citizenship behaviour and school team effectiveness. The secondary goal was to validate a theoretical model explicating the structural relationships between these variables in the South African school educational system.

Conceptualising team effectiveness

Team effectiveness refers to the attainment of common goals or objectives through the coordination of team members' work activities (Irving & Longbotham, 2007). According to Piccoli, Powell and Ives (2004) school team effectiveness should measure the

performance of schools and the nature of the school team as a working unit, as well as the effect of the school team on its individual teachers. Despite the existence of numerous studies on team effectiveness, researchers face problems as far as defining the team effectiveness construct is concerned (Pina, Martinez & Martinez, 2008). Generally, two models of team effectiveness exist, namely the uni-dimensional and multidimensional perspectives. The uni-dimensional view utilises objective measures of team performance (Kolodny & Kiggundu, 1980; Shea & Guzzo, 1987) or of the degree of real productivity (Pina *et al.*, 2008). The multidimensional view posits that team effectiveness is a function of several other variables besides performance (Hackman, 1987; Nieva, Fleishman & Reick, 1978). In a school setting, team effectiveness can be defined in terms of academic performance and successful extra-mural activities.

Conceptualising servant leadership

First emerging in the 1970s, the servant leadership concept has its roots in the seminal work of Robert Greenleaf, who defined the servant leadership as a leader who places the good and interest of followers above their self-interest by nurturing the growth of self-confidence in employees; acting as a role model through inspiring trust and the provision of information, feedback and the resources required to perform a task (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden, Wayne, Zhao & Henderson, 2008; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Servant leadership has been practiced by historical leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Despite the existence of a universally accepted definition of servant leadership, it generally involves: Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Servant leaders also demonstrate the qualities of altruism, humility, hope, integrity, vision, caring for other people, trustworthiness and interpersonal acceptance (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Conceptualising affective team commitment

With Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-dimensional conceptualisation of organisational commitment adapted to team commitment, the affective commitment dimension of team commitment can be identified as an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the team. Affective commitment has been the most widely studied (Sheng & Tian, 2010) as it has consistent relationships with performance, attendance and intention to quit (Afolabi *et al.*, 2009; Ferreira, 2012; Hammond, 2008). As this study focuses on the impact of servant leadership on team effectiveness, affective commitment appears to be the most appropriate component of team commitment for predictive purposes.

Conceptualising organisational citizenship behaviour

Derived from Katz's (1964) notion of extra-role behaviours, organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) have been defined as behaviours displayed by teachers are discretionary; not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system; and that,

in the aggregate, promote the effective functioning of an organisation (school). These behaviours are often internally motivated, arising from and sustained by an individual's intrinsic need for a sense of achievement, competence, belonging or affiliation (Organ, 1988).

There is no consensus in the literature on the number of dimensions of OCB. Researchers have proposed anything from two (Williams & Anderson, 1991) to seven (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). In the current study, Organ's (1988) conceptualisation of the extra-role behaviour construct is used. Organ (1988) originally proposed the following five dimensions: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. According to Organ (1988), *sportsmanship* refers to an employee's ability to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining and making problems seem bigger than they actually are; *civic virtue* indicates an employee's active interest in the life of his or her organisation; *conscientiousness* (often called *compliance*) indicates an employee's acceptance and adherence to the rules, regulations, and procedures of the organisation. *Courtesy* refers to actions aimed at the prevention of future problems, while *altruism* indicates helping behaviours aimed at specific individuals.

The relationships between servant leadership, affective team commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour and team effectiveness

Although numerous studies on the importance of leadership in team performance are available (Kuo, 2004; Gupta, Huang & Niranjana, 2010; Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010), the role that servant leadership plays in the effective functioning of school teams has not been studied extensively. The few studies conducted to date show a positive relationship between the servant leadership and team effectiveness (Hu & Liden, 2011; Irving & Longbotham, 2007; Transcitti, 2010). It was hypothesised that servant leadership has a positive effect on team effectiveness.

Little is known about the relationship between servant leadership and team commitment. In investigating the respective relationships between servant leadership, follower trust and team commitment within the South African context, Dannhauser (2007) revealed a significant positive relationship between servant leadership and team commitment. It was postulated that servant leadership has a positive impact on affective team commitment.

Given that affective commitment has been documented as consistently linked to performance, it is expected that it will foster team effectiveness. Hammond (2008) confirmed a positive relationship between affective team commitment and team effectiveness on a sample made up of participants from 44 engineering, manufacturing and sustainment teams within one of the largest companies in the United States of America. It was *postulated* that affective team commitment has a positive influence on team effectiveness.

Previous studies have documented a strong association between organisational com-

mitment and organisational citizenship type behaviour at the individual level of analysis (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992; Meyer & Allen, 1984). Organisational commitment appears to be a strong predictor of citizenship-type behaviour at the individual level of analysis. Thus, if team members are committed to the goals and values of their team and have emotional attachments to the team and its members, it seems likely that they would engage in behaviours that would be beneficial to the team. It was hypothesised that affective team commitment positively affect OCB.

Leadership behaviours have been found to be an important predictor of OCB. Despite the rising prominence of servant leadership, only a few studies have reported its influence on organisational citizenship behaviour. The small number of studies recorded to date have found a significant positive relationship between servant leadership and employee OCB (Ehrhart, 2004; Güçel & Begeç, 2012; Liden, Wayne, Zhao & Henderson, 2008; Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko & Roberts, 2008). It was hypothesised that servant leadership positively affect OCB.

One of the pioneering studies on organisational citizenship behaviour and team effectiveness was carried out by Karambayya (1990), who concluded that high performance teams are made up of employees who exhibit high organisational citizenship behaviour. Organisational citizenship behaviour contributes to team effectiveness through its impact on the context in which the task is performed (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997).

On the basis of the above theoretical arguments and empirical findings, it was postulated that OCB has a positive effect on team effectiveness.

Theoretical Model

After an in-depth investigation of the literature, a theoretical model was developed. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model that depicts the specific hypothesised causal linkages between servant leadership, affective team commitment; OCB and team effectiveness.

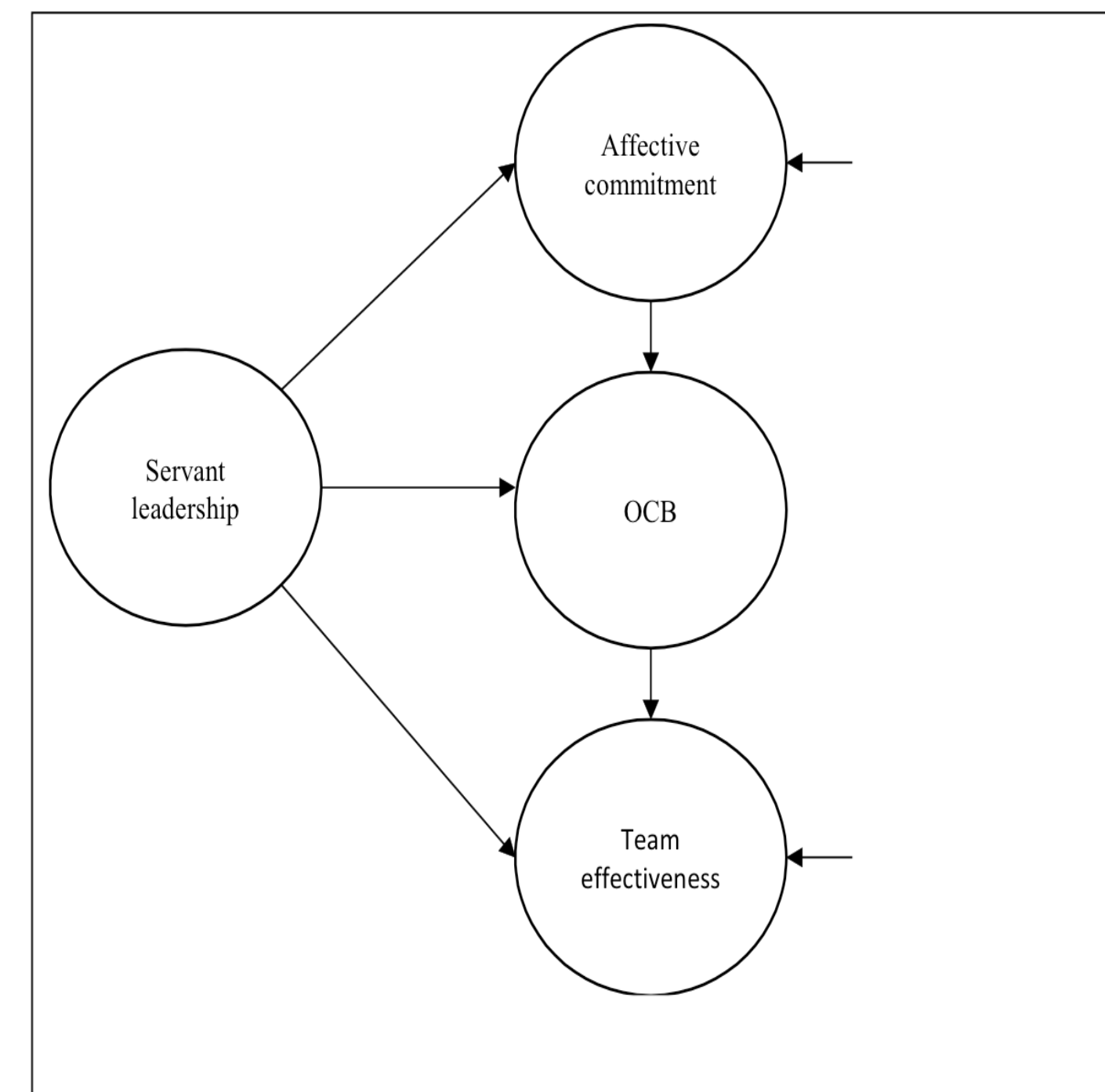


Figure 1
The Proposed Model

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

If the overarching substantive research hypothesis would be interpreted to indicate that the structural model provides an approximate account of the way in which servant leadership; affective team commitment and OCB influence team effectiveness, the substantive research hypothesis translates into the following close fit null hypothesis:

$$H01: RMSEA < .05 \quad Ha1: RMSEA > .05$$

Where RMSEA is the root mean square error of approximation.

In order to test the validity of the proposed relationships in the structural model, the following specific research hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: A significant positive relationship exists between servant leadership and team effectiveness.

Hypothesis 2: A significant positive relationship exists between servant leadership and affective team commitment.

Hypothesis 3: A significant positive relationship exists between affective team commitment and team effectiveness.

Hypothesis 4: A significant positive relationship exists between servant leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Hypothesis 5: A significant positive relationship exists between organisational citizenship behaviour and team effectiveness.

Hypothesis 6: A significant positive relationship exists between affective team commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Design

Research approach

The objectives set out for this research were achieved through the use of a quantitative research design. The design was necessary for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) via structural equation modelling (SEM).

Research procedure

The participants received a composite questionnaire including a covering letter, a biographical section, and the three measuring instruments. The covering letter explained the rationale for the study and instructions on completing the questionnaires, as well as the participants' ethical rights.

Method

Sample

Although the team is expected to be the unit of analysis in studies of this nature, the present study used the individual team members (teachers) as the unit of analysis; hence the hypotheses that have been discussed indicate teachers' perceptions of the different relationships in a school. A non-probability sampling strategy was used in the study. The study was conducted using primary and secondary school teachers from schools in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.

The sample consisted of 205 female (71,2%) and 83 male (28,8%) teachers. The majority (30,9%) fell within the age category of 41 to 50 years. The ethnic distribution in the sample was: Blacks (17,3%), Coloureds (39,6%) and Whites (43,1%). The home language of the majority was Afrikaans (74,9%), with a minority using Xhosa (12,9%) and English (10,4%) as their home languages. Regarding highest level of qualification, the majority of respondents had a degree or diploma (92,7%).

Measuring instruments

Three self-reporting measuring instruments were identified and used in measuring the constructs under study.

Servant leadership

The servant leadership of the principal was measured using the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The SLQ comprises five factors measured by 23 items. Reliabilities for the self and rater versions of the scale ranged from .68 to .87 and .82 to .92 respectively (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

Affective team commitment

Team commitment was assessed using a six item affective team commitment subscale adapted from the team commitment survey (TCS) developed by Bennet and

Durkin (2000). The TCS is a modification of Allen and Meyer's (1990) organisational commitment scale in which the referent of commitment is changed from the organisation to the team. A high internal reliability coefficient was found for the affective commitment scale ($\alpha = 0.98$).

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)

Podsakoff and Mackenzie's (1994) Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Scale (OCBS) was used to measure organisational citizenship behaviour. This instrument consists of 24 items measuring five subscales as conceptualised by Organ (1988), namely: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue. The reliability alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from ($\alpha = .70$) for civic virtue to ($\alpha = .85$) for altruism.

Team Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ)

An adapted eleven-item Team Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ) developed by Larson and LaFasto (2001) was used to measure school team effectiveness. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this questionnaire is ($\alpha = .85$), which also was found when Dannhauser (2007) administered the TEQ on a South African sample.

Statistical analysis

Item analyses were performed to identify any poor items (i.e. corrected-item-total correlations < 0.30) of the questionnaires used in the study using SPSS version 20. The data were analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM). Robust maximum likelihood (RML) estimation was used as the method of estimation.

Results

The use of imputation by matching in addressing the problem of missing values resulted in an effective sample size of 288 cases (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006). Two items for the Servant Leadership Questionnaire and one item for the Team Effectiveness Questionnaire were identified as problematic and excluded from the subsequent analyses. High levels of reliability were found for most of the subscales ($\alpha > 0.70$) except for most of the OCBS subscales (Nunnally, 1978). Satisfactory reliabilities were also found for the total SLQ ($\alpha = 0.97$), total OCBS ($\alpha = 0.83$) and total TEQ ($\alpha = 0.89$) (see Table 2).

Goodness-of-Fit: The measurement and structural models

In terms of the Goodness-of-Fit indices (of the SLQ, AFFTC, OCBS and TEQ) (see Table 1), the χ^2/df ratio for the measurement models fell in the 2 to 5 range that is indicative of acceptable fit (Kelloway, 1998). The RMSEA indeed suggested that the measurement and structural models fit the obtained data adequately (.039 to .083), as values $< .08$ represent good model fit. The standardised RMR values of .02 to .06 are indicative of good model fit ($< .05$) although the value for the OCBS marginally misses the

.05 level. The GFI values for the TEQ measurement and the structural models are close to 1,0 (.90 to .99), indicating that the values show good fit, as each scale is > .90, the level required to indicate good fit. However, for the SLQ and the OCBS measurement models, the GFI value of .82 and .87 respectively fell marginally below the good fit level.

The NFI, NNFI, CFI, IFI and RFI indices are greater than 0,90, which represents good fit (Hair *et al.*, 2006; Kelloway, 1998).

Table 1
Goodness-Of-Fit Indices Obtained For The Refined Slq, Afftc And Teq Measurement Models, As Well As Structural Model

	χ^2/df	RMSEA	$p_{close\ fit}$	SRMR	GFI	NNFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
SLQ	2.45	.060	.061	.049	.82	.99	.98	.99	.99	.97
TCS	4.85	.039	.51	.041	.95	.94	.97	.99	.99	.98
OCB	2.15	.048	.65	.06	.87	.94	.97	.97	.97	.93
TEQ	3.20	.083	.01	.05	.90	.96	.97	.98	.98	.95
SMODEL	2.59	.052	.42	.02	.98	.99	.99	.995	.995	.98

Measurement models: Factor loadings

Table 2 presents a summary of the completely standardised factor loadings obtained for each of the refined measurement models. Except for two items, the completely standardised factor loading for the rest of the items comprising the measurement model exceeded the > 0.50 level (Hair *et al.*, 2006). This means that the items, in general, appeared to significantly reflect the dimension they were designed to represent.

Table 2
Refined Measurement Scales: Factor Loadings and Reliability

SCALE	NO OF ITEMS	FACTOR LOADINGS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA (α)
SERVANT LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE (SLQ)			
Altruistic Calling	4	.78 - .91	0.81
Emotional Healing	4	.74 - .90	0.91
Wisdom	5	.78 - .89	0.88
Persuasive Mapping	4	.72 - .83	0.87
Organisational Stewardship	5	.78 - .91	0.90
Total SLQ	22		0.97
AFFECTIVE TEAM COMMITMENT SURVEY (TCS)			
	5	.68 - .84	0.76
ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR (OCBS)			
Altruism	5	.44 - .76	0.77
Sportsmanship	5	.42 - .69	0.69
Civic virtue	4	.37 - .57	0.55
Conscientiousness	5	.51 - .68	0.67
Courtesy	5	.41 - .58	0.58
Total OCBS	24		.83
TEAM EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE (TEQ)			
Team Member Effectiveness	6	.47 - .79	0.80
Team Leader Effectiveness	4	.80 - .86	0.90
Total TEQ	10		0.89

The relationship between servant leadership and team effectiveness. The purpose of evaluating the structural model through SEM was to determine whether the theoretical relationships specified at the conceptualisation stage were substantiated by the data. A positive relationship was found between servant leadership and team effectiveness ($t = 8.95, p < .05$) (See Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Table 3
The Completely Standardised Gamma and Beta Matrix of Path Coefficients for the Structural Model

	SERVANT LEADERSHIP	AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	OCB	TEAM EFFECTIVENESS
AFFECTIVE TEAM COMMITMENT	0.60 (0.06) 10.15*			
OCB	-0.02 (0.08) -0.31	0.57 (0.099) 5.72*		
TEAM EFFECTIVENESS	0.57 (0.06) 8.95*	0.255 (0.074) 3.46*	0.09 (0.06) 1.43	

Note: Completely standardised path coefficients in bold; standard error estimates in brackets, t-values $\geq |1.96|$ indicate significant parameter estimates ($p < 0.05$)*

The relationship between servant leadership and affective team commitment. A positive relationship was found between servant leadership and affective team commitment and consequently, Hypothesis 2 was supported (see Table 3).

The relationship between affective team commitment and team effectiveness. A positive relationship was found between affective commitment and team effectiveness (See Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

The Relationship between servant leadership and OCB. There is no significant relationship between servant leadership and OCB ($t = -.31, p < .05$). Consequently, Hypothesis 4 was not supported (see Table 3).

The relationship between OCB and team effectiveness. The SEM path between OCB and team effectiveness was not found to be significant and Hypothesis 5 was therefore not confirmed ($t = 1.43, p > .05$) (See Table 3).

The relationship between affective team commitment and OCB. A positive relationship was found between affective commitment and team effectiveness (See Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was confirmed.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to validate a theoretical model explicating the structural relationships between servant leadership, affective team commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and team effectiveness. The specific aims were to develop a structural model that explains the way in which servant leadership, affective team commitment and OCB influence school team effectiveness; to test the model's fit with data; and to evaluate the significance of the hypothesised paths in the model. The potential contribution of the study relates to the essential role played by the principal's servant leadership

in affecting school team (teachers) behaviour.

Regarding the fit of the model, the goodness-of-fit indices indicated that both the re-fined measurement and structural models produced good to reasonable fit. The results suggest that the items measured the latent variables as postulated, and also supported the theoretical model underlying the postulated relationships between the latent variables.

Servant leadership was found to have a positive effect on team effectiveness (Hypothesis 1; $t = 8.95; p < 0.05$). Servant leaders build a working climate that generates feelings of employee empowerment (Liden *et al.*, 2008). This finding is consistent with results obtained by Hu and Liden (2011), Irving and Longbotham (2007) and Transcitti (2010) that reported a positive relationship between servant leadership and team effectiveness.

The relationship between servant leadership and affective team commitment. A positive relationship was found between servant leadership and affective team commitment and consequently, Hypothesis 2 was supported (see Table 3).

The relationship between affective team commitment and team effectiveness. A positive relationship was found between affective commitment and team effectiveness (See Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

There is no significant relationship between servant leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour (Hypothesis 4; $t = -0.31; p < 0.05$). This is not consistent with findings in previous studies that documented the positive influence of supportive and value-based leadership styles on citizenship behaviour (*e.g.* Alizadeh, Darvishi, Nazari & Emami, 2012; Davoudi, 2012; LePine, Erez & Johnson, 2002; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000).

The relationship between organisational citizenship behaviour and team effectiveness (Hypothesis 5) was not supported ($t = 1.43; p < 0.05$).

The relationship between affective team commitment and OCB. A positive relationship was found between affective commitment and team effectiveness (See Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was confirmed.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One of the limitations of the study relates to the comparability of a service-oriented context to a business-oriented setting. The study was conducted in a school setting, which is usually service-oriented, while business settings are revenue-generating. Thus, future studies should examine whether service-oriented and revenue teams are comparable. Additionally, the treatment of each school as comprising a team had its own limitation. A typical school team of teachers is composed of the foundation phase, intermediate and senior phase teams. The functioning of these sub-teams may be different from how the broader school team operates; foundation phase teachers might work together much more efficiently than those in the intermediate phase.

Future studies should attempt to draw probability samples from other schools in order to increase the demographic representativeness of the teacher population in the Western Cape and South Africa.

Future research should expand the theoretical model by incorporating other latent variables such as trust, emotional intelligence, organisational justice, and psychological empowerment, to explain additional variance in team effectiveness.

Managerial Implications

The current study reported positive relationships between servant leadership and team effectiveness; servant leadership and affective team commitment; and OCB and affective team commitment and affective team commitment and team effectiveness. On the basis of these results, principals in schools should focus on increasing school team effectiveness through the development and enactment of empowering and people-oriented leadership styles such as servant leadership. Servant leadership is one of the value-based leadership styles that foster teacher development while having a significant influence on school team effectiveness when teachers feel emotionally committed to their schools. Principals should implement interventions that hinge on tap on teachers' affective team commitment as it appears to be related to both all the variables in the model. In view of the heterogeneous nature of the South African population, workplace teams are likely to be made up of teachers from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, culture, language and, in some cases, nationality. Failure to understand individual differences is likely to have negative repercussions for the school. The principal as servant leader is likely to provide some coaching, co-ordination and development to the teachers to increase their understanding of individual differences.

Conclusion

Successful school teams need teachers who display affective commitment. Through the development of affective team commitment, teachers are able to go beyond their usual job duties and provide academic performance that is beyond expectations. In order to reach this ideal, school teams need leaders who place greater emphasis on teacher development and are more inclined to serve, empower and recognise the talents of others than to advance their own needs. Successful servant leaders should therefore develop or nurture employees' affective commitment.

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