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The Relationship Between Trait Mindfulness and Servant Leadership

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAIT MINDFULNESS AND SERVANT
LEADERSHIP

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Harmeet Parmar

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAIT MINDFULNESS AND SERVANT
LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAIT MINDFULNESS AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

by Harmeet Parmar

In recent years, servant leadership has become a widely studied leadership style. Literature has focused on the outcomes of servant leadership, and only a few studies have looked at the antecedents of servant leadership. The purpose of this study was to examine trait mindfulness as an antecedent of eight dimensions of servant leader behaviors. It was hypothesized that trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with the servant leader dimensions humility, authenticity, and standing back. In addition, a research question was posited to see if trait mindfulness would have a relationship with the other dimensions of servant leadership including empowerment, courage, stewardship, accountability, and forgiveness. A total of 142 managers were obtained via an online survey to test the hypotheses and research question. Results showed that trait mindfulness showed a significant positive relationship with humility, authenticity, empowerment, stewardship, and courage. These results suggest that trait mindfulness is an antecedent of servant leadership behaviors. Organizations should assess leaders on their levels of trait mindfulness if they aim to hire servant leaders. In addition, organizations should look at mindfulness trainings to develop servant leaders within the company.

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Introduction

Leadership is one of the classic research topics in industrial and organizational psychology. It has been a highly sought-after and valued commodity since ancient times and across various organizations, including for-profit and non-profit businesses, military and religious organizations, academic institutions, and politics (Northouse, 2010; Truxillo et al., 2016). Leaders establish a direction for a group of people, organize their effort around a common goal, and energize and motivate them to achieve the goal (Bass, 1985; Truxillo et al., 2016). Although there are many different definitions of leadership, leadership is usually defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2010, p. 3).

There are many theories of leadership (Northouse, 2010; Truxillo et al., 2016); however, one theory that has gained considerable popularity in recent years is servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019). Servant leadership is defined as “the natural feeling one wants to serve, to serve *first*” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 7). Unlike most theories of leadership, where leaders take followers to a goal by inspiring and supporting them (Truxillo et al., 2016), servant leadership focuses on followers. A servant leader’s primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of followers (Greenleaf, 1977).

A considerable amount of research demonstrates that servant leadership is related to a wide variety of positive work-related attitudes and job behaviors (Good et al., 2016). For example, a comprehensive literature review showed that servant leadership is positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perception of meaningful work, engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and multiple levels of performance (i.e.,

individual, team, and organizational), and negatively related to emotional exhaustion and turnover intention (Eva et al., 2019).

Given that servant leadership has been found to be related to positive individual and organizational outcomes, it is important to study the antecedents of servant leadership. However, a relatively smaller number of studies have investigated the antecedents of servant leadership and they mainly focused on personality traits and gender. It has been found those who are high on agreeableness, core self-evaluation, and mindfulness, and those who are low on extraversion and narcissism display higher levels of servant leadership (Flynn et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Peterson et al., 2012; Verdorfer, 2016). However, servant leadership is a multidimensional construct and these studies have not examined how a personality trait is related to each dimension of servant leadership. One exception to this is a study by Verdorfer (2016), who studied the relationship between mindfulness and only some dimensions of servant leadership.

The present study examined trait mindfulness as an antecedent of servant leadership across eight dimensions identified by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). An examination of the relationship between mindfulness and the dimensions of servant leadership is important. In nature, trait mindfulness is dispositional. However, there are studies that link mindfulness training to an increase in dispositional mindfulness (Kiken et al., 2015; Quaglia et al., 2016). By studying trait mindfulness across the dimensions of servant leadership, organizations searching for servant leaders can assess potential leaders on their trait mindfulness. If trait mindfulness has a positive relationship with the

dimensions of servant leadership, organizations can also train their leaders on mindfulness in order to display more servant leader behaviors.

The following sections provide a definition of servant leadership, provide an overview of the dimensions of servant leadership, review the outcomes and the antecedents of servant leadership including trait mindfulness, and posit the hypotheses that are tested in the present study.

Servant Leadership

Definition

There exist several definitions of servant leadership. None, however, is more important than the definition by Robert Greenleaf, who introduced the term to academia through a series of surveys and studies. Greenleaf (1977) defined servant leadership as the desire to serve first. According to Greenleaf, the desire to lead follows the desire to serve. Servant leaders aim to serve other individuals and their highest priorities, whereas other styles of leaders are motivated by acquiring power or material possessions. Sendjaya et al. (2008) described servant leadership as not just a focus on ‘doing’ acts of service but also to be a servant. More recently, Eva et al. (2019) argued that servant leadership has been plagued with loose definitions that do not describe why, what, and how servant leaders behave towards their followers. Eva et al. (2019) critiqued the most used servant leadership definition by Greenleaf (1977), saying it is not helpful in guiding further empirical research because it lacks a clear definition.

Eva et al. (2019) defined servant leadership as “an (1) other-oriented approach to leadership, (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs

and interests, and (3) outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community” (p. 114). This definition has three main features. The first aspect is the motive: an other-oriented approach that refers to the servant as a leader. A servant leader’s main motivation to lead derives from a focus on the follower. The second feature is the mode aspect: the one-on-one prioritization of others and their individual needs. Servant leaders recognize each of their followers as individuals who have their own desires, goals, and interests. Servant leaders care about their followers’ core beliefs, values, and backgrounds in a way that transcends the boundaries between their followers’ personal and professional lives. The last component of this definition speaks to the mindset of a servant leader, which is as a trustee. The servant leader’s concern for both the follower and the organization is a commitment to the well-being of both.

Another commonly used definition which speaks directly to servant leader behaviors was provided by van Dierendonck (2011). van Dierendonck described servant leaders as those who “empower and develop people; they show humility, are authentic, accept people for who they are, provide direction, and are stewards who work for the good of the whole” (p. 1232). According to this definition, those high on servant leadership empower others and build others’ confidence in order to give them a sense of their own abilities. Servant leaders practice humility and modesty by putting others first and giving them the spotlight when it is time for recognition. Humility allows one to put their accomplishments into perspective. A servant leader’s authenticity, or the ability to show

one's true self, manifests in various ways such as sticking to promises, creating visibility in an organization, and being honest (Russell & Stone, 2002).

The ability to empathize or understand others' perspectives and feelings (George, 2000) and lay out expectations in a way that is important to both the individual and the organization (Froiland et al., 1993) are important aspects of a servant leader. Lastly, servant leaders are stewards who take responsibility for the larger organization with a focus on service instead of control. The present study adopted van Dierendonck's (2011) definition of servant leadership as it aligns with the dimensions of servant leadership this study used, as described below.

Dimensions

Because servant leadership has not been uniformly defined, different measures of the construct have been developed. These measures have different dimensions of servant leadership. For example, Sendjaya et al. (2008) used six different dimensions to measure servant leadership: voluntary subordination, transforming influence, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and authentic self. *Voluntary subordination* refers to a servant leader's willingness to serve others, irrespective of the reason behind serving others or how the servant leader feels. *Transforming influence* is a servant leader's ability to bring about collective and consistent change in others, which leads to a positive impact on the organization. An intense personal bond characterized by a sense of shared values, commitment that is open-ended, mutual trust, and a concern for the general welfare of others is a *covenantal relationship*. *Responsible morality* refers to a leader's ability to seek the outcome in a

relationship in an ethical, well-reasoned, and morally justified manner. *Transcendental spirituality* allows for a leader to be tapped into both the spiritual needs and values of others, which allows for servant leaders to serve others in the broader organization and/or the greater community. Lastly, the *authentic self* is the ability to have a secure sense of self which allows servant leaders to be accountable and vulnerable to the people they support without being defensive when they are challenged (Batten, 1998).

There is another measure of servant leadership which includes a different set of dimensions. van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) created the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) which is comprised of eight dimensions: empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship.

Empowerment is a concept rooted in motivation and focuses on promoting personal development (Conger, 2000). Empowerment in the servant leadership style is about acknowledging, recognizing, and realizing others' abilities and potential for continuous learning (Greenleaf, 1998). *Accountability* is defined as making sure employees are responsible for their performance (Conger, 1989). Accountability allows for people to be clear on what is expected of them. *Standing back* refers to giving first priority to employees and their interests, giving them the necessary support and space, and giving them the credit for their achievements (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). *Humility* is being able to put one's accomplishments, achievements, and natural talents into perspective (Patterson, 2003). From a leadership perspective, it allows for leaders to admit that they can make mistakes (Morris et al., 2005).

Authenticity is centered around expressing the “true self” in a way that is consistent with one’s inner thoughts and feelings (Harter, 2002). This is a critical component to servant leadership. In an organizational context, authenticity can be viewed as bringing the individual first and their professional self comes second (Halpin & Croft, 1966).

Courage is the ability for an individual to accept taking risks and to try new methods to solve for old problems (Greenleaf, 1991). Greenleaf highlights that courage is what separates a servant leader from other styles of leadership. Within an organization, this can take the form of challenging the status quo of current working behaviors.

Interpersonal acceptance allows one to empathize with others and understand other individuals and their points of view (George, 2000). Interpersonal acceptance permits a servant leader to let go of negativity and wrongdoings, disassociate themselves from the situation, and not carry a grudge into another setting (McCullough et al., 2000).

Stewardship is a willingness to take responsibility for the larger organization and optimize for service which leaves behind motivations of control or self-interest (Block, 1993). Servant leaders set the right example, and in turn, encourage others to do the right thing extending outside of their own self-interest. These eight dimensions are consistent with van Dierendonck’s (2011) definition and therefore, these dimensions were used in the present study. This study also expanded on Verdorfer’s (2016) study which used van Dierendonck and Nuijten’s (2011) dimensions of servant leadership.

Outcomes of Servant Leadership

Although a great amount of research on servant leadership has been conducted at both the group and organizational level, most of the empirical studies have focused on the

influence servant leaders have on their followers and the factors underlying this relationship. Below, I capture a general overview of these relationships.

Work-Related Behaviors and Attitudes. Zhao et al. (2016) found servant leadership indirectly influenced organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) toward co-workers and turnover among their subordinates. OCBs refer to the actions an employee takes outside of their job description or going above and beyond their formal job responsibilities (Williams & Anderson, 1991). More specifically, Zhao et al. found that managers who demonstrated servant leader behaviors led to favorable outcomes, such as increasing subordinates' identification with their supervisor, reducing negative interpretation of their supervisor, and increasing their identification with the organization. These all led to increased OCB toward co-workers and reduced turnover intentions. These findings indicate that servant leaders act as role models in such a way that followers identify with their leaders and their organizations, which leads to favorable outcomes for their co-workers and the organization.

Hunter et al. (2013) examined servant leadership in retail organizations and found that servant leaders lowered employees' intent to turnover and disengage from their work. Disengagement is when employees psychologically withdraw from their work tasks, have negative attitudes towards their work, or execute tasks mechanically (Demerouti et al., 2003). According to Hunter et al., servant leaders can engage their followers and hence their followers are less likely to develop an intention to leave the organization. They also found that servant leaders at the store-level increased their followers' helping behaviors. These findings suggest that servant leaders act as role

models and their followers replicate some of their leader's behaviors and help others within the organization.

Team and Organizational Outcomes. Servant leadership has been shown to be related to increased levels of team performance and team psychological safety, which is defined as a shared belief in the team being a safe space for members to take risks (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). More specifically, Schaubroeck et al. examined affect-based trust as a mediator of the relationship between servant leadership and team psychological safety. Affect-based trust refers to an emotional bond grounded in a genuine concern for one another (McAllister, 1995). Results showed that servant leadership was positively related to affect-based trust, which then led to increased team psychological safety, which ultimately increased team performance. Servant leadership had a positive relationship with team psychological safety through the mediating role of affect-based trust. These results indicate that servant leaders have an ability to establish trust by caring for and developing an emotional bond with their subordinates, and create a psychologically safe place for their subordinates, which, in turn leads to a variety of positive team outcomes.

Servant leadership has also been found to have positive relationships at the organizational level. For example, Hunter et al. (2013) examined how servant leadership impacted helping behavior in a retail store and how service climate mediated the relationship between servant leadership and follower sales behavior. Service climate is defined as "employees' shared perceptions of the policies, practices, and procedures that are rewarded, supported, and expected concerning customer service" (Schneider et al., 2002, p. 222). Hunter et al. found that servant leaders not only increased helping behavior

among subordinates, but they also created a positive service climate which increased sales behavior. These results imply that servant leaders exhibit positive behaviors that are adopted by their followers, creating a positive working dynamic within the team which helps in achieving more broader organizational goals.

Peterson et al. (2012) studied 126 chief level executives (CEOs) in the tech industry and found servant leadership was positively related to firm performance even after controlling for transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is defined as inspiring followers to carry out a shared set of goals and vision for an organization, challenging followers to be innovative, and developing followers' leadership capabilities via mentorship and coaching (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These results indicate that servant leadership contributes more to firm performance compared to other more researched styles of leadership.

Given that servant leadership has been related to several important outcomes, it is important to identify potential antecedents of servant leadership. The section below reviews the literature on antecedents of servant leadership, focusing on gender and personality traits.

Antecedents of Servant Leadership

Gender. The gender of leaders has been examined as a predictor of servant leadership. A few studies (Beck, 2014; Fridell et al., 2009) showed female leaders were more likely to display behaviors similar to those of servant leaders than male leaders. For example, Beck (2014) found that when compared to their male counterparts, female leaders scored significantly higher on the servant leader dimensions including altruistic

calling, organizational stewardship, and emotional healing. Thus, female leaders were more likely to be seen as servant leaders when compared to male leaders.

Fridell et al. (2009) studied male and female school principals across the Midwest. They found that female principals were higher than male principals across all the items from the Servant-Leadership Styles Inventory they used to assess servant leadership in their study. Similar to Beck (2014), this study showed that female leaders identified themselves with certain servant leader behaviors more than men. Therefore, female leaders may be more likely to practice and engage in servant leadership behaviors compared to men.

Personality Traits. Several studies have investigated personality traits as antecedents of servant leadership. For example, Hunter et al. (2013) found that leaders low on extraversion and high in agreeableness displayed higher levels of servant leadership. Extraversion is defined as a tendency to be gregarious or talkative and agreeableness is defined as an empathetic concern towards others (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Thus, those who were seen as less outgoing, more reserved, and more empathetic towards others were likely to be high on servant leadership. Similar to Hunter et al. (2013), Sun and Shang (2019) found that those high on agreeableness were higher on servant leadership. Agreeable leaders have a tendency to care about their subordinates' work and general well-being without having to impose themselves on their subordinates. The results of both studies show that servant leaders tend to have an empathetic concern towards their followers and are more agreeable in nature.

Peterson et al. (2012) examined the relationships between CEOs' personality traits and servant leadership and found that CEOs low on narcissism displayed more servant leader behaviors. Narcissists are considered to be manipulative; they have a tendency to be egotistical and to exploit others (Hogan et al., 1990). Thus, their findings imply that organizations in need of a servant leader should avoid hiring or promoting individuals who are selfish, manipulative, and only care about their own personal gain in the organization.

One other personality trait that was studied as an antecedent of servant leadership is trait mindfulness (Verdorfer, 2016). The following sections examine mindfulness in more detail by defining it, describing the benefits of it, and reviewing literature on the relationship between mindfulness and servant leadership.

Mindfulness

Definition

There is no agreed upon or set definition of mindfulness (Good et al., 2016). However, this study uses Brown and Ryan's (2003) definition of mindfulness, which is a combination of attention and awareness, as well as being attuned to the present situation, both to external stimuli (e.g., noise, movement, reactions) and internal stimuli (e.g., thoughts, feelings). According to Brown and Ryan, mindfulness is the combination of an enhanced attention to and awareness of the present moment. Attention is a focus in which one has heightened sensitivity to a limited range of stimuli or experiences. Awareness is a constant radar of consciousness that monitors one's internal and external environment.

Mindfulness can be thought of as an enhanced attention and awareness to the current moment. For example, someone could be speaking with a friend and be so attentive to their words and tone that they may see or hear subtle differences in their friend's mood or the emotional undertone in what their friend is saying. When someone displays less mindfulness, their emotions may drive their behavior before they are even conscious of this reaction. Those who are mindful are less likely to engage in automatic responses or negative behavior patterns. Thus, it is easy to see that those who are mindful are more likely to self-regulate their behaviors and are less prone to reacting emotionally or engaging in harmful behaviors.

Mindfulness involves a form of experiential processing, and those who are high in mindfulness have an ability to attend to a stimulus just as it is without an automatic response to interpret or derive meaning from the stimulus (Brown et al., 2007; Teasdale, 1999). This form of processing is also known as decentering (Bishop et al., 2004). Decentering is attending to one's experiences and observing thoughts and reactions to those experiences just as they are without having to interpret stimuli or their resulting reactions with any implication (Brown et al., 2007). Having awareness and attention to reactions can be seen as a form of mental distancing, preventing one from interpreting thoughts, emotions, and events with personal biases (Good et al., 2016).

The definitions of mindfulness that have been introduced thus far do not separate trait from state mindfulness. The literature on this topic breaks the concept of mindfulness into both state and trait. I examine both state and trait mindfulness further below and outline why this study looks at trait mindfulness among leaders.

State Mindfulness

State mindfulness can be seen as a mode, a ‘state-like’ quality that is maintained through an intentional practice of mindfulness, or an intent to focus on one’s experiences in the present moment (Lau et al., 2006). The positive effects of state mindfulness have been shown on different regions of the brain (Hölzel et al., 2010). Their study proposed that the beneficial effects of mindfulness stem from neuroplastic changes to the brain induced from mindfulness practice. These changes improved attentional control, body awareness, and emotion regulation and were supported by longitudinal studies of mindfulness practice (Desbordes et al., 2012; Tang et al., 2012).

Meditation techniques and mindfulness practices induce a state of mindfulness, which is temporary compared to trait mindfulness. Bishop et al. (2004) proposed that mindfulness can be seen as a skill that improves with practice, and by doing so, can allow an individual to choose a mindful state more often. It is believed that anyone can obtain a state of mindfulness but there are differences in one’s ability to be mindful, which is what makes trait mindfulness different from state mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Trait Mindfulness

Definition

Trait mindfulness is defined as one’s predisposition to be mindful in their day-to-day life (Baer et al., 2006). Glomb et al. (2011) operationalize trait mindfulness as “stable individual differences in mindfulness” (p. 120). This suggests trait mindfulness focuses on individuals and their average frequency in which they experience states of

mindfulness, and that this frequency varies among individuals (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2017).

Trait mindfulness and state mindfulness differ because trait mindfulness is more dispositional and focuses on the inherent mindfulness individuals have. Trait mindfulness is more permanent and is a tendency to be mindful, whereas state mindfulness is more temporary and is something anyone can achieve through practice. State mindfulness tends to have implications in the domain of physiology and is often measured after trainings, interventions, or over longitudinal studies (Good et al., 2016). Trait mindfulness is tied to personal and professional implications in the workplace because individual differences in mindfulness have a relation to work behavior and performance on the job (Mesmer-Magnus, 2017), which is why I look to examine leaders and their trait mindfulness.

Outcomes of Trait Mindfulness

Many of the outcomes related to trait mindfulness have implications on well-being and workplace functioning (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2017). It has been shown that trait mindfulness has positive outcomes on interpersonal relationships. For example, Barnes et al. (2007) examined trait mindfulness in relationships and found that those higher in trait mindfulness showed lower emotional stress in response to conflict in a relationship and had higher relationship satisfaction. These results suggest that those who are higher in trait mindfulness are happier in their relationships because they have greater control over their emotional responses to conflict situations.

A comprehensive review of mindfulness by Good et al. (2016) concluded that trait mindfulness was related to an array of variables within an organizational context. For

example, trait mindfulness was associated with increased job performance among restaurant servers (Dane & Brummel, 2014), increased communication quality among healthcare practitioners (Beckman et al., 2012), increased job satisfaction above and beyond state mindfulness (Hülshager et al., 2013), and improved relationship quality among subordinates (Reb et al., 2014).

Reb et al. (2014) studied how a supervisor's trait mindfulness impacted employee performance and employee well-being, which is defined as the general quality of an employee's experience at work (Warr, 1987). Reb et al.'s results showed that leaders' trait mindfulness had a significant positive relationship with their subordinates' well-being and their subordinates' performance. In their first study, when looking at different facets of employee well-being, Reb et al. found the more mindful supervisors were, their subordinates experienced less emotional exhaustion, displayed less employee deviance [i.e., "Employee deviance is defined as a broad range of behaviors that violate significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556)], and experienced more work-life balance.

In Reb et al.'s (2014) second study, supervisors high on mindfulness increased their subordinates' psychological needs satisfaction, job satisfaction, and overall job performance. Psychological needs satisfaction is defined as the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness at work, which helps facilitate more work involvement and greater mental health (Deci et al., 2001). Reb et al.'s results indicated that mindful leaders were more likely to increase their subordinate's overall satisfaction with their job in a

variety of ways. Mindful leaders also had an ability to increase their employees' general performance in the job. These results imply that organizations have a clear benefit in hiring more mindful leaders.

Lange et al. (2018) studied the relationship between trait mindfulness and employee well-being and demonstrated how trait mindfulness could impact the way subordinates view their leaders. They found direct links between mindfulness and perceived leadership styles. Specifically, leaders' mindfulness had a negative relationship with perceived destructive leadership and a positive relationship with perceived transformational leadership. Destructive leadership is defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which the supervisors engage in the sustained displays of hostile verbal or non-verbal behavior, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). These results suggest that leaders high on mindfulness are less likely to engage in hostile behaviors towards their subordinates.

Given these findings, Lange et al. (2018) suggested that there might be other leadership constructs that could be influenced by leadership mindfulness. The following section reviews the relationships between trait mindfulness and servant leadership.

Relationships Between Trait Mindfulness and Servant Leadership

Verdorfer (2016) investigated how mindfulness was related to specific leadership behaviors of a servant leader in two studies. In the first study, Verdorfer examined the relationship between trait mindfulness and general humility as well as the leader's motivation to lead. Verdorfer explained that a unique element in servant leadership is the combined motivation to lead with altruism and servant leadership has been consistently

related to the virtues of humility (Liden et al., 2014; van Dierendonck, 2011) and a non-self-centered motivation to lead (Smith et al., 2004). Verdorfer (2016) links mindfulness and humility on the theoretical rationale around re-perceiving, which is the ability to take on a detached or objective stance on one's thoughts and emotions (Shapiro et al., 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Verdorfer hypothesized this shift from a subjective to objective perspective would be likely to result in greater humility.

Verdorfer (2016) also explained that those higher in trait mindfulness were more likely to strive for intrinsic rather than extrinsic aspirations (Brown & Kasser, 2005). According to Verdorfer, mindfulness fosters a secure sense of self that is less affected by ego threats, and thus allows one to engage in activities for intrinsic satisfaction instead of external motivations. Mindfulness also helps with self-regulation (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and “fosters a motivational orientation marked by self-endorsed, noncontingent behavior and goal pursuits that reflect less egoistic functioning” (Niemiec et al., 2008, p. 112). With the associations to self-regulation and intrinsic motivations, Verdorfer hypothesized that those higher on mindfulness would be less concerned with their individual benefits when striving to be in a leadership role.

In the first study, Verdorfer (2016) studied a non-leader sample in Germany and found a positive relationship between dispositional mindfulness and both humility and non-self-centered motivation to lead. This initial study showed that mindfulness had a positive relationship with constructs similar to the genuine parts of servant leadership according to van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011).

In the second study, Verdorfer suggested that if there is indeed a positive association between trait mindfulness, humility, and a non-self-centered motivation to lead, this would have implications on actual servant leader behaviors. As a result, Verdorfer investigated trait mindfulness and its relationship with the genuine part of servant leadership, which is about “being able to be authentic and stand back, thereby allowing the employees to flourish,” (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011, p. 261). More specifically, Verdorfer posed a relationship between trait mindfulness and humility, standing back, and authenticity, which describe genuine servant leadership behaviors.

Verdorfer’s (2016) relation of mindfulness to humility, authenticity, and standing back continues to build upon on the notion of re-perceiving and self-determination theory (Shapiro et al., 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Verdorfer states the ability to detach from one’s personal reference points allows leaders to develop a sense of humbleness and acceptance. This ability to detach from one’s personal reference points allows one to develop humility and acceptance which allows for a leader to focus on their subordinates and help them stand back. Verdorfer also links mindfulness and authenticity by highlighting research showing how mindful individuals tend to act more congruent with their values and needs (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and how mindfulness has led to more authentic functioning (Lahey et al., 2008; Leroy et al., 2013). With the above arguments in mind, Verdorfer stated that trait mindfulness would be positively related to actual servant leader behaviors which included humility, authenticity, and standing back.

In the second study, Verdorfer (2016) studied 82 supervisors and 223 subordinates from Germany on their levels of mindfulness and the genuine part of servant leadership

(i.e., humility, authenticity, and standing back). Results showed positive relationships between trait mindfulness and the genuine side of servant leadership. This implies the more mindful supervisors were, the more grounded and objective they were in viewing and portraying themselves and the more likely they were to give their subordinates the support they need. These findings show initial evidence that mindfulness could be an antecedent of servant leadership.

It is interesting to note that Verdorfer (2016) examined the relationship between trait mindfulness and all eight dimensions of servant leadership defined by van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). However, Verdorfer included the other five dimensions in the study for exploratory reasons only. The reason for this was "although there might exist some arguable reasons to link leaders' mindfulness to these features, the respective theoretical underpinning seems rather vague" (Verdorfer, 2016, p. 956). The other five dimensions include empowerment, courage, accountability, stewardship, and interpersonal acceptance or forgiveness. The results showed that mindfulness was only weakly related to these five dimensions. Verdorfer mentioned a lack of propositions between mindfulness and other dimensions of servant leadership including accountability, stewardship, courage, and empowerment. He suggested future mindfulness research should evaluate the indirect and direct effects it has on specific servant leader behaviors.

Because trait mindfulness can be seen as an antecedent of servant leadership, this study aimed to further examine the strength of the relationship between mindfulness and the eight dimensions of servant leadership proposed by van Dierendonck and Nuijten

(2011). I believe that trait mindfulness may be related to other dimensions of servant leadership.

The Present Study

The relationship between trait mindfulness and servant leadership is important as empirical research has shown trait mindfulness can increase through mindfulness training (Kiken et al., 2015; Quaglia et al., 2016). If a leader undergoes training to increase their trait mindfulness, they may have the potential to increase certain servant leadership behaviors. If trait mindfulness is related to dimensions of servant leadership, organizations can hire those who are high on mindfulness and train their current managers to increase their trait mindfulness in order to display more servant leader behaviors and produce positive outcomes in their organizations.

The present study expanded Verdorfer's (2016) study by examining the relationship between trait mindfulness and all the dimensions of servant leadership. Similar to Verdorfer, this study hypothesized that trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with humility, authenticity, and standing back, which are the genuine part of servant leader behaviors. Additionally, this study posed a research question to examine trait mindfulness' relationship with the rest of the dimensions of servant leadership for exploratory reasons. This includes courage, accountability, stewardship, interpersonal acceptance, and empowerment.

Hypothesis 1: Mindfulness will have a positive relationship with humility.

Hypothesis 2: Mindfulness will have a positive relationship with authenticity.

Hypothesis 3: Mindfulness will have a positive relationship with standing back.

Research question: Is mindfulness be related to other dimensions of servant leadership (i.e., empowerment, stewardship, courage, accountability, and forgiveness)?

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through both my personal and professional networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Slack, as well as via Amazon Mechanical Turks. In order to be included in the study, participants had to be at least 18 years old, employed for six months or more at their current role, were a manager, and had at least one direct report. Participants were eliminated from the data set for further analysis if they did not meet these criteria for the study (e.g., they were not an active manager) or if they had a substantial amount of missing data. The final sample consisted of 142 participants. Among them, 22 were from my personal and professional networks, and 120 were from Amazon Mechanical Turks.

The demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1. Most respondents were male (60.6%), and most participants were in the age ranges of 25 to 34 (34.5%) and 35 to 44 (34.5%) (one participant did not respond to this item). The majority of the participants were employed full-time (97.9%). The tenure of participants employed at their current company ranged from six months to more than nine years with a majority of them being employed for 3 to 6 years (31.7%), more than 9 years (26.8%), and 1 to 3 years (21.1%) at their current company. The majority of participants identified as White (80.3%), followed by Asian (11.3%), and Black or African American (4.9%). Participants varied in the number of subordinates they managed from 2 to 4 (32.4%), 4 to 8 (29.6%), 8 to 12 (16.2%), 12 and over (12%), and 1 subordinate (9.8%). Participants came from

various industries, including computer software and electronics (27.5%), sales and retail (14.1%), and finance and insurance (12.0%).

Table 1*Demographics of Participants*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	86	60.6%
Female	56	39.4%
Age		
18-24	4	2.8%
25-34	49	34.5%
35-44	49	34.5%
45-54	23	16.2%
55-64	14	9.9%
65 years or older	2	1.4%
Employment status		
Full-time	139	97.9%
Part-time	3	2.1%
Tenure		
6 months to 1 year	7	4.9%
1-3 years	30	21.1%
3-6 years	45	31.7%
6-9 years	21	14.8%
More than 9 years	38	26.8%
Ethnicity		
White	114	80.3%
Asian	16	11.3%
Black or African American	7	4.9%
Hispanic or Latino	3	2.1%
Two or more races	1	0.7%

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Number of subordinates		
1	14	9.9%
2-4	46	32.4%
4-8	42	29.6%
8-12	23	16.2%
12+	17	12.0%
Industry		
Computer Software/Electronics	39	27.5%
Education	10	7.0%
Engineering/Architecture	13	9.2%
Entertainment, Media, Recreation	9	6.3%
Finance/Insurance	17	12.0%
Food Service	8	5.6%
Healthcare/Pharmaceutical	10	7.0%
Legal	2	1.4%
Manufacturing	10	7.0%
Real Estate	4	2.8%
Sales/Retail	20	14.1%

Note. *N* ranged from 141 to 142.

Measures

Mindfulness

Mindfulness was defined as the combination of attention and awareness used to help stay attuned to the present situation, both to external stimuli and internal stimuli (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness was measured using Walach et al.'s (2006) Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI), which contained 14 items. Example items included "I am open to the experience of the present moment," "I am able to appreciate myself," and "I accept unpleasant experiences." Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Rarely*) to 5 (*Almost always*). Responses were averaged to create overall scores for mindfulness. A higher score indicates a higher level of mindfulness. Cronbach's alpha was .68, which indicates fair reliability.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was defined as the desire to serve first and lead second (Greenleaf, 1977). van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)'s Servant Leadership Survey was used to measure the construct and consisted of 30 items. For the present study, only 21 items were used across all eight dimensions using only the three highest loaded items per dimension with the exception of courage which has only two items (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Responses were averaged to create a composite score for each dimension. Higher scores indicated higher servant leadership behaviors for the particular dimension.

Humility was defined as being able to put one's accomplishments, achievements, and natural talents into perspective (Patterson, 2003). Three items were used to measure humility. Example items included "I learn from criticism," and "If people express criticism, I try to learn from it." Cronbach's alpha was .28. Removing one item increased Cronbach's alpha to .41. Thus, humility was measured with two items.

Standing back was defined as giving first priority to employees and their interests, giving them the necessary support and space, and also giving subordinates the credit for their achievements (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Three items were used to measure standing back, including "I stay in the background and give credit to others," "I enjoy my colleague's success more than my own," and "I do not chase recognition or rewards for the things I do with others." Cronbach's alpha was .41.

Authenticity was defined as expressing the true self in a way that is consistent with one's inner thoughts and feelings (Harter 2002). Three items were used to measure this dimension. Example items included "I'm open about my limitations and weaknesses," and "I show my true feelings to my staff." Cronbach's alpha was .35. Taking one item out increased the Cronbach's alpha to .43. Thus, authenticity was measured with only two items.

Empowerment was defined as a concept rooted in motivation and focusing on promoting personal development (Conger, 2000). Empowerment was measured with two items which included "I encourage my staff to come up with new ideas," and "I give my subordinates the authority to make decisions which make work easier for them." Cronbach's alpha was .35.

Accountability was defined as making sure employees are responsible for their performance they control (Conger, 1989). Accountability was measured with three items which included “I hold my subordinates responsible for the way they handle a job,” “I hold my subordinates responsible for their performance,” and “I hold subordinates responsible for the work they carry out.” Cronbach’s alpha was .57.

Forgiveness was defined as the ability to empathize with others and understand other individuals and their points of view (George, 2000). Forgiveness was measured with three items. Among them, the items included in this dimension were reverse coded and examples included “I maintain a hard attitude towards people who have offended me at work,” and “I criticize my subordinates for the mistakes they have made in their work.” Cronbach’s alpha was .65.

Courage was defined as the ability for an individual to accept taking risks and to try new methods to solve for old problems (Greenleaf, 1991). This dimension included two items: “I need to take risks and do what needs to be done in my view” and “I take risks even when I’m not certain of the support from my own manager.” Cronbach’s alpha was .54.

Stewardship was defined as a willingness to take responsibility for the larger organization and optimize for service, which leaves behind motivations of control or self-interest (Block, 1993). Among the three items used to measure stewardship, example items included were “I have a long-term vision,” and “I emphasize the societal responsibility of our work.” Cronbach’s alpha was .28.

Demographic Information

Participants responded to eight items regarding their demographic information. These items included employment status, managerial status, number of subordinates, age, job tenure, industry type, gender, and ethnicity.

Procedure

Participants were invited to participate in the study through my personal and professional networks and came from various social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Slack) and through email. A description of the study was posted on social media and via email which included the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, an estimated time duration for the study, and an anonymous link to the survey.

Participants who clicked on the link were prompted to review a consent notice which informed them of the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, and their rights as a participant. The consent form also informed respondents that there was no compensation for completing the survey.

Participants who clicked “I agree” in the consent form were prompted to respond to the questionnaires which contained items on mindfulness, servant leadership, and demographic information. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, be employed for six months or more, be an active manager, and have at least one subordinate in order to qualify for the study. Participants who did not meet the criteria were taken to the end of the survey. Participants were able to start and stop in the survey whenever they wanted. Once respondents completed the survey, they were prompted to a

thank you note for their participation. Those who were recruited from Amazon Mechanicals Turks were paid \$2 for their participation.

Participants who clicked the “I disagree” option in the consent form were directed to the end of the survey and exited from the questionnaire. All responses were logged anonymously into Qualtrics. After the data collection was complete, the Statistical Packing for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 27) was used for statistical analyses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the measured variables. Participants reported generally moderate levels of trait mindfulness ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .52$), which means that overall, the participants were often mindful in their day-to-day lives. When examining each dimension of servant leadership, the means ranged from a low of 4.17 (forgiveness) to a high of 5.08 (empowerment). Participants had relatively high levels of empowerment ($M = 5.08$, $SD = .69$), accountability ($M = 5.06$, $SD = .72$) and humility ($M = 5.03$, $SD = .81$). These results showed that participants saw themselves promoting personal development, holding their subordinates responsible for their performance, and being humble leaders. Respondents also reported moderately high levels of stewardship ($M = 4.89$, $SD = .81$), authenticity ($M = 4.86$, $SD = .99$), and standing back ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.07$). These results showed that participants agreed that they optimized for service, remained true to their inner feelings when in the workplace, and gave first priority to their employees' interests. Means were somewhat lower for the dimensions of courage ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.31$) and forgiveness ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.48$). These results showed that respondents felt neutral on their ability to take on risks and empathize with their subordinates' points of view.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations Among Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	--	--	--										
2. Gender	--	--	.23**	--									
3. Mindfulness	3.34	.52	-.02	-.07	(.68)								
4. Humility	5.03	.81	.02	-.02	.17*	(.41)							
5. Authenticity	4.86	.99	-.02	.05	.19*	.14	(.43)						
6. Standing back	4.68	1.07	.26**	.28**	.01	.10	.08	(.41)					
7. Courage	4.39	1.31	.03	-.02	.29**	.00	.14	.13	(.54)				
8. Forgiveness	4.17	1.48	.18*	.14	.09	.07	-.01	.13	-.07	(.65)			
9. Stewardship	4.89	.81	.17*	.14	.17*	-.00	.19*	.15	.14	.03	(.28)		
10. Accountability	5.06	.72	.23**	.05	.01	-.01	.19*	.10	.04	-.07	.27**	(.57)	
11. Empowerment	5.08	.69	.01	-.01	.21*	.10	.35**	.01	.25**	.20*	.31**	.32**	(.35)

Note: Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) are in parentheses along the diagonal. $N = 142$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

1 = Male, 2 = Female

Pearson Correlations

Pearson correlations were calculated to measure the extent to which the measured variables were related to each other and test the present study's hypotheses. The Pearson correlations are represented in Table 2. Age was positively related to standing back, $r(140) = .26$, $p < .01$, forgiveness, $r(140) = .18$, $p < .05$, stewardship, $r(140) = .17$, $p < .05$, and accountability, $r(140) = .23$, $p < .01$. These results showed that as managers got older, they were more likely to give their subordinates first priority and credit for their achievements, understand their subordinates' point of view, take responsibility for the larger organization, and hold their subordinates responsible for their performance. Gender was positively related to standing back, $r(140) = .28$, $p < .01$ which showed that female managers were more likely to give their subordinates first priority and give credit to their subordinates for their achievements than were male managers.

Trait mindfulness had a significantly positive relationship with the dimensions of humility, $r(140) = .17$, $p < .05$, authenticity, $r(140) = .19$, $p < .05$, courage, $r(140) = .29$, $p < .01$, stewardship, $r(140) = .17$, $p < .05$, and empowerment, $r(140) = .21$, $p < .05$. These results showed that managers who were more mindful were more likely to be humble, remain true to their inner thoughts and feelings at work, take on risks, take responsibility for the larger organization, and were more likely to promote the personal development of their subordinates.

Among the dimensions of servant leadership, empowerment was related to many dimensions of servant leadership including authenticity, $r(140) = .35$, $p < .01$, courage, $r(140) = .25$, $p < .01$, forgiveness, $r(140) = .20$, $p < .05$, stewardship, $r(140) = .31$, $p <$

.01, and accountability, $r(140) = .32, p < .01$. These results showed that managers who promoted personal development more than others were also more likely to display their true thoughts and feelings, take on risks, empathize with others, take greater responsibility for the organization, and hold their subordinates responsible for their performance. Stewardship was also related to authenticity, $r(140) = .19, p < .05$, accountability, $r(140) = .27, p < .01$, and empowerment, $r(140) = .31, p < .01$. These results showed that managers who optimized for service were more likely to display their true thoughts and feelings, hold their subordinates responsible for their performance, and promote their subordinate's personal development.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with humility. The results of the relationship between trait mindfulness and humility was significantly positive, $r(140) = .17, p < .05$. This means the more mindful managers were, the more humble they were. This result shows support for the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 stated trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with authenticity. The results of the relationship between trait mindfulness and authenticity was significantly positive, $r(140) = .19, p < .05$. This means the more mindful managers were, the more grounded in their own inner thoughts and feelings. This result shows support for the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 stated trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with standing back. The results of the relationship between trait mindfulness and standing back were not significantly related, $r(140) = .01, p > .05$. This means managers who were more

mindful had no relationship with giving subordinates the necessary support, space, and credit for their achievements. This result showed no support for the hypothesis.

Test of the Research Question

The research question posited was whether mindfulness would be related to the other dimensions of servant leadership, including empowerment, stewardship, courage, accountability, and forgiveness. The results showed that trait mindfulness had a significant positive relationship with courage, $r(140) = .29, p < .01$, stewardship, $r(140) = .17, p < .05$, and empowerment, $r(140) = .21, p < .05$. These results showed that the more mindful managers were, the more likely they were to take risks, optimize for service, and encourage their subordinate's personal development. Trait mindfulness did not have a significant relationship with forgiveness, $r(140) = .09, p > .05$ and accountability, $r(140) = .01, p > .05$. This means that managers who were more mindful had no relationship with letting go of mistreatment and holding subordinates responsible for their performance.

Additional Analysis

This study also explored whether a relationship between trait mindfulness and each dimension of servant leadership would be moderated by gender. This implies that relationships between trait mindfulness and the dimensions of servant leadership change as a function of the gender of participants. To test this, a hierarchical multiple regression (MRC) analysis was conducted using two steps. In the first step, gender and mindfulness were entered to see if they had a significant relationship with each dimension of servant

leadership. In the second step, the cross-product of gender and mindfulness was entered to test for a moderating effect. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Gender and Mindfulness Predicting Each Dimension of Servant Leadership*

Predictor	Humility			Authenticity			Standing Back			Courage		
	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R ²	ΔR ²	β
Step 1	.02	.		.042	.		.081**	.		.086**	.	
Gender			-.01			.06						.28**
Mindfulness			.17*			.20*						.03
Step 2	.03	.002		.055	.013		.084**	.003		.103**	.017	
Gender x Mindfulness			.25			.80						.40
												.89

Note: N = 142, *p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 3 (continued)

Predictor	Forgiveness			Stewardship			Accountability			Empowerment		
	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R ²	ΔR ²	β
Step 1	.029	.		.052*	.		.002	.		.046*	.	
Gender			.14			.15			.05			-.001
Mindfulness			.10			.18*			.01			.21*
Step 2	.031	.002		.066**	.014		.003	.000		.046*	.000	
Gender x Mindfulness			-.32			.82			.09			-.08

Note: $N = 142$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As can be seen in Table 3, gender did not moderate the relationship between trait mindfulness and any dimension of servant leadership. Gender had a significant contribution to the prediction of the dimension standing back, ($\beta = .28, p < .01$) such that female managers reported higher on this dimension when compared to male managers. Trait mindfulness had a significant contribution to the prediction of the dimensions of humility ($\beta = .18, p < .05$), authenticity ($\beta = .20, p < .05$), courage ($\beta = .29, p < .001$), stewardship ($\beta = .18, p < .05$), and empowerment ($\beta = .21, p < .05$). These results indicated that the more mindful managers were, the more likely they were to be humble, stay true to their feelings, take on more risks, take responsibility for the greater organization, and promote their subordinates' personal development.

In sum, the results of this study show support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 and answered the research question that trait mindfulness was also related to dimensions of courage, stewardship, and empowerment. Thus, trait mindfulness was related to five of the eight dimensions of servant leadership. Gender did not moderate the relationship between trait mindfulness and any dimension of servant leadership.

Discussion

Leadership is one of the most studied topics in industrial and organizational psychology, because its importance has been noted since ancient times and across organizations (Northhouse, 2010; Truxillo et al., 2016). There are various theories of leadership; however, servant leadership has recently gained considerable popularity (Eva et al., 2019; Northhouse, 2010; Truxillo et al., 2016). Research has shown a variety of positive workplace outcomes associated with servant leadership, including employee well-being, job performance, OCB, and professional relationships (Good et al., 2016). However, little research has focused on the antecedents of servant leadership, especially personality traits (Flynn et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Peterson et al., 2013; Sun & Shang, 2019; Verdorfer, 2016).

Among the few who have looked at personality traits as antecedents of servant leadership, Verdorfer (2016) examined trait mindfulness as an antecedent but looked at only three of the eight dimensions of servant leadership identified by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). Therefore, this study expanded Verdorfer's (2016) study by examining the relationship between trait mindfulness and the eight dimensions of servant leadership.

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis 1 stated that trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with humility. Results showed a significant positive relationship between trait mindfulness and humility such that those high in trait mindfulness were more likely to be humble, admit to their limitations, and seek out others to overcome limitations (van Dierendonck &

Nuijten, 2011). These results showed support for the hypothesis and are consistent with Verdorfer (2016) who also found a positive relationship between trait mindfulness and humility. A potential explanation for this relationship is that mindfulness helps to create an objective shift in one's perspective known as re-perceiving (Shapiro et al., 2006), and this shift from subjective to an objective perspective helps to explain the relationship with humility. If managers are more mindful and thus more objective in their day-to-day work, they are more likely to judge themselves in objective ways, acknowledge their limitations, and display more humility.

Hypothesis 2 stated that trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with authenticity. Results showed a significant positive relationship between trait mindfulness and authenticity such that those high in trait mindfulness were more likely to be grounded in their inner thoughts and feelings. These results showed support for the hypothesis, and they are consistent with Verdorfer (2016) who also found a positive relationship between trait mindfulness and authenticity. These results suggest that the more mindful managers are, the more likely they are able to represent themselves as an individual first and as a professional second (Halpin & Croft, 1966). Because those who are mindful are more aligned with their values and needs (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and tend to display more authentic behaviors (Lakey et al., 2008; Leroy et al., 2013), they are more likely to align to their true thoughts and feelings in each moment and be authentic.

Hypothesis 3 stated that trait mindfulness would have a positive relationship with standing back. Results did not show support for the hypothesis as there was no relationship between trait mindfulness and standing back. These results indicate that the

managers' levels of trait mindfulness did not have any relationship with their ability to give their followers support and credit for their accomplishments (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). These results are inconsistent with Verdorfer (2016) who found a positive relationship between trait mindfulness and standing back.

The lack of support for the relationship between trait mindfulness and standing back might stem from the age of the managers in this study. Age had a positive relationship with standing back such that the older managers were, the more likely they were to give their subordinates the support they needed and credit for their achievements. Over 70% of the participants in this study were under the age of 44 years old. Birkinshaw et al. (2019) found that younger managers tended to assert themselves and take on a self-centered approach to management in comparison to managers in their 50s and 60s who adopted an inclusive approach to management. Because younger managers seem to favor a self-centered approach, it is less likely they would give priority to others and adopt the standing back aspect of servant leadership, irrespective of their levels of mindfulness. However, this interpretation is speculative.

A research question was also posited to explore if there are relationships between trait mindfulness and the other five dimensions of servant leadership, including empowerment, stewardship, courage, accountability, and forgiveness. The relationships between trait mindfulness and empowerment, stewardship, and courage were significant and positive. These findings indicate that those high in trait mindfulness were more likely to enable others to be self-confident and promote personal development, take

responsibility for the greater organization, and take on more risks or try new methods to solve old problems.

Courage is essential for innovation and facilitates pro-active behaviors (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). To promote this pro-active behavior, one must have strong values that help govern one's actions (Russell & Stone, 2002). Naturally, those high in trait mindfulness are likely to strive for intrinsic rather than extrinsic aspirations (Brown & Kasser, 2005), which may help explain the relationship between trait mindfulness and courage. In addition, empowerment also focuses on promoting a pro-active attitude amongst followers and believing in their intrinsic value (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Because those high in trait mindfulness strive for intrinsic aspirations, it makes sense that they also believe in their subordinates' intrinsic values in effort to empower them to explore new ideas (Konczack et al., 2000) and help build their self-confidence.

Stewardship involves taking responsibility for the larger organization and aiming for service rather than control (Block, 1993). Servant leaders are less likely to be narcissistic and exploit others (Hogan et al., 1990; Peterson et al., 2013). Managers in this study who were high in trait mindfulness were likely to aim for service rather than self-control because those high in trait mindfulness were not motivated to lead for selfish reasons (Verdorfer, 2016).

Trait mindfulness did not have a significant relationship with forgiveness and accountability in this study. Forgiveness focuses on empathizing with others and letting go of wrong doings (George, 2000; McCullough et al., 2000) and accountability involves

holding others responsible for their performance (Conger, 1989). In theory, these two constructs do not appear to be related to trait mindfulness. Trait mindfulness has to do with an individual's inherent ability to pay attention and be aware of stimuli in the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003). One could be aware that they need to hold someone accountable in the present moment but not to act on it. In the same vein, one can be aware that they need to forgive someone for what they have done but still not to act on it until they are finally able to let go of the wrongdoing. Because one is more in tune with the present moment does not necessarily mean they will forgive someone in that exact moment or at all.

In addition to the research question posed, additional analyses were conducted to examine the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between trait mindfulness and the dimensions of servant leadership. Results showed that gender did not moderate any of the relationships between trait mindfulness and the dimensions of servant leadership. These results indicate the gender of managers did not strengthen or weaken the relationship between trait mindfulness and each dimension of servant leadership.

Theoretical Implications

Findings that trait mindfulness had positive relationships with humility and authenticity are consistent with Verdorfer (2016) who found that managers high in trait mindfulness were not only more humble and authentic, but their intentions to lead were less likely to be self-centered. These relationships make sense because trait mindfulness focuses on re-perceiving or an ability to take on a more objective stance on one's thoughts and emotions (Shapiro et al., 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The objective nature of trait

mindfulness can help a manager to be honest with what they as a leader can and cannot do and with a leader's ability to be their true-self free from extrinsic motivations. Thus, managers high in trait mindfulness take on an objective stance which helps to display more humility and authenticity.

These findings are also similar to those in Heppner and Kennis (2007) who predicted that mindfulness would be related to authenticity because both constructs involved low levels of ego. However, they did not show direct evidence of the relationship between the two. This study, along with Verdorfer (2016), established the connection that mindfulness and authenticity indeed were related. Individuals who are more likely to be present in their day-to-day are more objective with their thoughts and emotions (Shapiro et al., 2006), thus making them more likely to be in tune with their internal dialogue and display authenticity.

The finding that trait mindfulness did not have a positive relationship with standing back is contrary to Verdorfer's (2016) finding where there was a significant relationship between the two. The lack of relationship between the two might stem from a variety of factors. For example, this study was conducted during COVID-19 where employees worked in a remote environment. The remote environment might have prevented managers from giving first priority to their subordinates or giving them the support they need (Hastwell, 2020). Because managers lacked the opportunities to give support and recognition in a physical setting, this might explain why there was no relationship between trait mindfulness and standing back. Regardless of one's levels of mindfulness,

managers might have found it hard to adjust to a remote environment and display the standing back dimension of servant leadership to their subordinates.

Results also showed that trait mindfulness was related to empowerment, stewardship, and courage, but not with accountability and forgiveness. Empowerment and courage may work together to explain their relationship with trait mindfulness. Empowerment involves a form of innovative coaching, which includes the promotion of risk taking and trying new ideas (Konczack et al., 2000). Given this study found those high in trait mindfulness were more likely to take on risks and display courage, this may help managers promote this behavior and encourage others to do the same as well. An explanation for the relationship between trait mindfulness and stewardship may be due to the fact that trait mindfulness is linked to a motivation to lead that is non-self-centered (Verdorfer, 2016). Given stewardship centers around taking responsibility for service rather than control (Block, 1993), those who were high on trait mindfulness were motivated to lead for unselfish reasons and thus could explain why participants in this study aimed for service when taking responsibility for the larger organization.

Similar to Verdorfer (2016), this study did not find a significant relationship between trait mindfulness and accountability and forgiveness. Accountability is seen as a tool to provide boundaries to help a subordinate achieve their goals (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). At the core, accountability focuses on setting boundaries and following up on progress to ensure that goals are achieved. Regardless of the levels of trait mindfulness, a manager is responsible for making sure their subordinates are meeting

their goals. Perhaps, this dimension of servant leadership is not related to trait mindfulness.

The lack of a significant relationship between trait mindfulness and forgiveness is contrary to the findings of Hunter et al. (2013) and Sun and Shang (2019). Both studies found that leaders tended to care about their subordinates' work and thus were more empathetic towards their subordinates. As noted previously, individuals high in trait mindfulness are more attentive and aware in the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003) but that does not necessarily suggest that one is more forgiving or empathetic. Because a manager high in trait mindfulness is more attentive and aware, perhaps they have difficulty in completely letting go of a wrongdoing over time. Like accountability, perhaps trait mindfulness is not related to every dimension of servant leadership including forgiveness.

The findings from the research question of this study expanded on the literature of servant leadership by showing significant relationships between trait mindfulness and empowerment, stewardship, and courage. Verdorfer (2016) focused on trait mindfulness and its relationship with only three dimensions of servant leadership instead of all eight dimensions. Verdorfer conducted an exploratory analysis between trait mindfulness and the other five dimensions of servant leadership but found no significant results. The present study found that trait mindfulness was related to many dimensions of servant leadership.

In sum, consistent with Verdorfer's (2016) findings, the results of the present study showed the relationship between trait mindfulness and humility and authenticity. The

results of the present study extend Verdorfer by showing that trait mindfulness was also related to empowerment, stewardship, and courage. Results of the present study also did not find that gender moderated the relationship between trait mindfulness and each dimension of servant leadership.

Practical Implications

There are several practical implications of the present study. The findings that trait mindfulness had a significant positive relationship with several dimensions of servant leadership suggest that trait mindfulness is one additional antecedent of servant leadership. Thus, if organizations are seeking for servant leaders, they might consider hiring those who are high in trait mindfulness. For companies who look to hire servant leaders, they can use trait mindfulness as a selection method in their hiring process to gauge for servant leadership behaviors.

In addition to external hiring, organizations looking to grow and develop servant leaders internally can also benefit from the findings in this study. Organizations can use mindfulness trainings to enhance the levels of trait mindfulness in their current leadership to display servant leader behaviors. In fact, multiple studies have supported that trait mindfulness can be increased via mindfulness training (Kiken et al., 2015; Quaglia et al., 2016). Because this study linked trait mindfulness to five out of the eight dimensions of servant leadership, one can expect to see an increase in servant leader behaviors by increasing individual's levels of trait mindfulness via mindfulness trainings. Due to the benefits servant leaders bring to an organization, and in some cases above and beyond

other styles of leadership (Peterson et al., 2012), organizations are likely to benefit from developing mindful leaders through mindfulness trainings.

Because this study did not find a relationship between trait mindfulness and standing back, accountability, and forgiveness, organizations may want to assess current and potential leaders on these dimensions in ways other than trait mindfulness. Instead, organizations might want to look at their current environment to see if there are factors that do not help facilitate accountability (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). For example, Wikhamn and Hall (2014) found that organizations that do not have strong perceived organizational support (POS) decreases accountability. POS is defined as the degree to which an individual perceives their organizations are supportive of them and care about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Results showed that when POS was high, the relationship between accountability and job satisfaction was stronger in both the American and Swedish samples. However, when POS was low, the relationship between accountability and job satisfaction was weaker in both samples. That is, the more subordinates were held accountable the more they were satisfied with their job when POS was high, but when POS was low, the more subordinates were held accountable the less satisfied they were with their job. This implies that organizational factors do affect how people perceive accountability in negative circumstances, and there is only so much a leader can do to hold others accountable.

Organizations should also look at how recognition is encouraged in their workplace if they want to increase the standing back aspect of servant leadership. Because many companies have adapted to a remote work environment due to the Covid-19 pandemic,

they lack their traditional methods to give first priority to their employees and recognition at physical events or amid face-to-face time at work (Hastwell, 2020). Employers must adapt to the change in working environment and create more channels to give recognition. For example, companies can use virtual companywide meetings to recognize the work of their employees. Additionally, companies can hold meetings to allow for employees to show off the projects they are working on. If managers do not have the proper channels to give recognition to their subordinates, it makes no difference whether they are more mindful or not.

Additionally, organizations should assess future and current leaders on their levels of empathy if they want to increase forgiveness in their organization. One way to accomplish this for leaders internally is to implement a diversity training focusing on taking in different perspectives to help boost positive attitudes towards others, specifically non-English speaking adults (Madera et al., 2011). As the U.S. workplace becomes increasingly diverse (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), organizations would benefit from management trainings that teach the importance of taking in different perspectives to better understand others.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

One strength of the current study is that it was the first study to examine trait mindfulness as a predictor of all eight dimensions of servant leadership. Even though the results of this study did not fully support trait mindfulness' relationship with all the dimensions, future research should continue to examine the direct and long-term effects of leader mindfulness on specific servant leader behaviors via longitudinal studies

(Verdorfer, 2016). As to why future research should look at longitudinal studies, it may take time to see the impact of leader mindfulness in an organization (Verdorfer, 2016). Thus, with longitudinal studies the long-term effects of mindfulness can be properly examined to understand its effects on servant leader behaviors.

Although there are strengths from this research, there are also limitations that might have impacted this study. This study used the method of self-reporting on servant leadership behaviors whereas the original survey by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) was meant for subordinates to assess their manager's leadership behaviors. In Verdorfer's (2016) study, managers forwarded the servant leadership survey to their subordinates so that these subordinates reported on their manager's levels of servant leadership behavior, thus reducing social desirability that may affect the results. Future studies should look to have managers' self-report on their levels of mindfulness and have their subordinates report on their manager's levels of servant leadership to reduce social desirability.

Another limitation of this study is that the Cronbach's alpha for each dimension of servant leadership was very low. The low levels of reliability could stem from the fact that most of the participants who participated in the survey were from Amazon Mechanical Turks (84%). This could pose a problem, because there is the potential for people on Amazon Mechanical Turks to use software applications that simulate as humans to complete mundane tasks, fake their location, and take a survey multiple times to earn more money. Future studies would benefit from having a wider variety of personal and professional sources to collect data rather than paid sources.

Lastly, this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study may not be generalizable to in-office working conditions because most companies have adopted a telecommuting policy due to the pandemic. Future studies should focus on collecting data in an environment that is more generalizable to normal working conditions when businesses are open.

Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to evaluate the relationship between trait mindfulness and servant leadership across all eight dimensions. This study examined if gender acted as a moderator of the relationship between trait mindfulness and each dimension of servant leadership. Results showed that trait mindfulness was significantly related to the dimensions of humility, authenticity, empowerment, stewardship, and courage, thus adding to the literature of servant leadership. These findings suggest trait mindfulness is an antecedent of servant leadership and thus could be used as a method in hiring to assess potential employees and to help develop servant leader behaviors internally via mindfulness training programs. Gender of managers was not found to moderate the relationship between trait mindfulness and any dimension of servant leadership.

Additional research should be conducted to examine the long-term effects of mindfulness trainings on servant leader behaviors. As mindfulness increases in popularity, additional research should be done to measure the impact trait mindfulness has on servant leadership behaviors and the resulting organizational outcomes that stem from increasing servant leader behaviors.

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Appendix

Demographic Items

What is your current employment status?

How long have you been employed at your current company?

Are you a manager or a supervisor in your current role?

How many subordinates directly report to you?

Which of the following best describes the industry in which you work?

What is your age?

What is your gender?

What is your race/ethnicity?

Scale Items

Mindfulness

I am open to the experience of the present moment. I am open to the experience of the present moment.

I sense my body, whether eating, cooking, cleaning, or talking.

When I notice an absence of mind, I gently return to the experience of the here and now.

I am able to appreciate myself.

I pay attention to what's behind my actions.

I see my mistakes and difficulty without judging them.

I feel connected to my experience in the here-and-now.

I accept unpleasant experiences.

I am friendly to myself when things go wrong.

I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.

In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting.

I experience moments of inner peace and ease, even when things get hectic and stressful.

I am impatient with myself and others.

I am able to smile when I notice how I sometimes make life difficult.

Servant Leadership

I help my subordinates to further develop themselves.

I encourage my staff to come up with new ideas.

I stay in the background and give credits to others.

I hold subordinates responsible for the work they carry out.

I criticize my subordinates for the mistakes they have made in their work.

I take risks even when I'm not certain of the support from my own manager.

I'm open about my limitations and weaknesses.

I learn from criticism.

I emphasize the importance of focusing on the good of the whole.

I give my subordinates the authority to take decisions which make work easier for them.

I do not chase recognition or rewards for the things I do for others.

I hold my subordinates accountable for their performance.

I maintain a hard attitude towards people who have offended me at work.

I take risks and do what needs to be done in my view.

I have a long-term vision.

I enjoy my colleagues' success more than my own.

I hold my subordinates responsible for the way they handle a job.

I find it difficult to forget things that went wrong in the past.

I am prepared to express my feelings even if this might have undesirable consequences.

I admit my mistakes to my manager.

I emphasize the societal responsibility of our work.

I show my true feelings to my staff.

If people express criticism, I try to learn from it.