Citation	Heidi Paesen, Kristel Wouters, Jeroen Maesschalck (2019) Servant leaders, ethical followers? The effect of servant leadership on employee deviance Leadership & Organization Development Journal
Archived version	Author manuscript: the content is identical to the content of the published paper, but without the final typesetting by the publisher
Published version	Klik hier als u tekst wilt invoeren.
Journal homepage	https://www.emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0143-7739
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Title: Servant leaders, ethical followers? The effect of servant leadership on employee deviance

Abstract

Purpose – Leadership is considered to be a crucial situational factor in predicting and explaining employee deviance. The purpose of this paper therefore is to investigate the relationship between servant leadership on the one hand and employee deviance on the other. While previous studies on the impact of servant leadership on employee deviance typically aggregated all its dimensions into a single scale, this study also explores the impact of the various dimensions of servant leadership separately.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected via an online survey in two ministries of the Belgian Federal Government (n = 3445). The analyses were conducted using confirmatory factor analysis and multiple linear and negative binomial regression analysis.

Findings – The empirical results suggest that the generic servant leadership scale has the expected negative, protective effect on both self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance. As for the dimensions, we found that only the 'putting subordinates first' dimension had a significant negative, protective effect on both self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance. The dimensions 'behaving ethically' and 'emotional healing' negatively impacted only observer-reported employee deviance and the dimension 'creating value for society' negatively impacted only self-reported employee deviance. Surprisingly, the dimension 'empowering' had a significant positive, strengthening effect on both self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance.

Originality – *value* – While most research assesses servant leadership's impact on desirable behaviour, this study is about its impact on employee deviance. Also unlike most previous research, this study looks not only at the overall effect of servant leadership, but also at the impact of the various dimensions of servant leadership separately.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, a considerable amount of research was done on employee deviance and its antecedents. Some studies focused on the effect of individual characteristics such as gender (e.g. Jones and Kavanagh, 1996; Samnani et al., 2014), age (e.g. Samnani et al., 2014; Donner et al., 2016), or tenure (e.g. Andreoli and Lefkowitz, 2009). Other studies assessed the impact of aspects of the organisational context such as ethical climate (e.g. Vardi, 2001; Stachowicz-Stanusch and Simha, 2013) and organisational justice (e.g. De Schrijver et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2013). One particularly interesting and important antecedent is 'leadership'. Leadership types such as transformational leadership (e.g. Effelsberg et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2015) and ethical leadership (e.g. Avey et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2012; Mo and Shi, 2017; Kuenzi et al., 2018) were indeed found to be correlated with employee deviance. To date, one concept that has been notably absent from this line of research is servant leadership.

Servant leadership, as originally developed by Robert K. Greenleaf, refers to a leadership style in which leaders selflessly serve their followers first (Greenleaf, 1970). In spite of a history of more than four decades, only "today research on servant leadership is being conducted at an accelerated pace" (Liden et al., 2014a, p.357). Previous studies focused on theoretical and conceptual issues (e.g. Hunter et al., 2013, p.316; Parris and Peachy, 2013, p. 378; Liden et al., 2014a), as well as on servant leadership's effect on outcome variables such as team effectiveness, organisational commitment and subordinates' job satisfaction (e.g. Hu and Liden, 2011; Chan and Mak, 2014). Servant leadership's effect on employee deviance has been studied only in a few studies (Sendjaya et al., 2017; Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018). Moreover, as is the case for most studies on the impact of servant leadership, these studies only looked at the impact of servant leadership as a generic concept (as measured in a single aggregate scale). They did not look at the impact of the dimensions of servant leadership separately. The current

study will assess the impact on employee deviance of both servant leadership as a whole as well as of its seven dimensions.

The paper sets out with a review of the literature on employee deviance and servant leadership, leading to eight hypotheses. It then describes the research methods, followed by a discussion of the results. The paper concludes with an analysis of the results as well as some reflections on the limitations and practical implications of the study.

2. Employee deviance

Employee deviance has been studied extensively in recent years. Much research focuses on specific types of deviance such as corruption, fraud, bullying or illegitimate use of violence. Other research brings together several types of deviant behaviour under a generic label such as organisational misbehaviour (e.g. Vardi and Weitz, 2004; Richards, 2008), integrity violations (e.g. Eberl et al., 2015), unethical (work) behaviour (e.g. Hong et al., 2017; Lawrence and Kacmar, 2017), counterproductive work behaviour (e.g. Gruys and Sackett, 2003), occupational crime (e.g. Mars, 2018), workplace aggression or violence (Neuman and Baron, 1998; Hershcovis et al., 2007) or workplace incivility (e.g. Cortina et al., 2001). In the current study we will use the label 'employee deviance'. This is sufficiently broad to cover a wide variety of deviant behaviours and is used as a dependent variable in various fields, including leadership studies (e.g. Brown and Trevino, 2006; Runing Sawitri et al., 2018). In the context of this study employee deviance is defined as any intentional behaviour by an employee that is related to his/her job, that is a violation of legitimate societal moral values and norms, and that is directed at either the perpetrator him/herself, others within or outside the organisation, the organisation itself or society at large (Wouters, 2016). This definition implies a clear delineation but is at the same time broader than many other definitions in the literature. It implies a number of choices. First, it refers to behaviour that is intentional, thus excluding accidental or unconscious deviant behaviour. Second, the term 'employee' (referring to a person working for an organisation for pay) implies that it focuses on all members of an organisation, not only on those with high status (as in white-collar crime). Third, the definition also implies a limitation to behaviour committed by individual persons, not organisations or other institutions. The reason for this is mainly normative. Thompson (1985, p. 559), focusing on the public sector, criticizes what he describes as the 'ethic of structure': the notion that the subject of moral judgement must be the organisation or the government as a whole. His concern is that, in this view, many public servants involved in deviance would not be held morally accountable and would therefore be less morally careful in the performance of their job. We share that concern and hence our definition focuses on individual behaviour. Fourth, the definition considers behaviour deviant when it violates norms that are both moral and legitimate. 'Moral' here refers to what is judged as right, just, or good conduct (cf. Lasthuizen et al., 2011, p.387) and 'legitimate' implies that the norms should be in accordance with basic democratic values. The definition explicitly refers to societal norms rather than merely organisational norms and thus offers a more general frame of reference that allows for comparisons across organisations. Fifth, our definition also implies the choice for a very broad scope of types of behaviour, varying widely in seriousness. The operationalisation below will include behaviour types ranging from insufficient effort to straightforward corruption. Finally, the definition provides a very broad focus on possible targets of employee deviance. These include not only employees, suppliers and clients, but also former employees, other stakeholders and society at large. Even the perpetrator him/herself could be a target, as is the case in self-harming behaviour.

In this study, employee deviance will be measured in an online, anonymous survey, presenting respondents with different types of employee deviance and requesting them to report on this incidence. This will be done by means of both a self-report measure, asking for the respondents' own behaviour, and an observer-report measure, asking for occurrence of the behaviour in the

respondents' team. There is some debate over the comparative validity of both measures. Empirical studies that combined both measures have generated conflicting findings. Berry et al. (2012) and de Jonge and Peeters (2009), for example, found convergence between self- and other-reports of counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). They also found that the self- and other-reports correlate with the same variables. Berry et al. (2012, p.625) therefore conclude that "self- and other-ratings of CWB generally result in very similar patterns of findings". Zuber and Kaptein (2014), on the other hand, conclude on the basis of their research that we cannot assume that the frequency of self-reports can be approximated by the frequency in observer-reports. For them, using self- reports and observer reports is not "painting with the same brush" (Zuber and Kaptein, 2014, p.430).

3. Servant leadership

3.1 Definition, dimensions and measurement

There is no overall agreement on a definition of 'servant leadership' (Van Dierendonck, 2011, p.1229; Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011, p.250; Parris and Peachy, 2013, p.377; Brown and Bryant, 2015, p.16). Greenleaf (1977, p.7), for example, described a servant leader as follows:

"the servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed?" (Greenleaf, 1977, p.7)

A servant leader is thus genuinely concerned with serving his or her followers (Greenleaf, 1977). Eva et al. (2018, p.4) developed a more comprehensive definition, adequate for guiding

empirical research. They define servant leadership as "(1) an other-oriented approach to leadership (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community". It is a leadership style in which the leaders show concern for individual members' growth and development (Greenleaf, 1977; Mayer et al., 2008) rather than for their own or organisational objectives (Ehrhart, 2004).

Not surprisingly, given the variation in definitions, there is also important variation in the dimensions used to conceptualize servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011, p.1231; Brown and Bryant, 2015). For instance, Spears (1995) uses Greenleaf's work to suggest ten characteristics of 'servant leadership': listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community. Russell and Stone (2002) identified nine functional characteristics (vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, empowerment) and eleven additional characteristics (communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, delegation). Sendjaya et al. (2008) provide six dimensions: voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence. Van Dierendonck (2011) identified six somewhat different characteristics: empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction and stewardship. Finally, Liden et al. (2008) theoretically identified nine dimensions, which were later reduced to seven:

- *Emotional healing*: being sensitive to followers' personal concerns and setbacks
- Creating value for community: showing concern for helping local communities
- Conceptual skills: possessing task knowledge and problem-solving abilities to effectively support and help others / followers

- *Empowering*: encouraging others / followers in identifying and solving problems, as well as giving followers latitude in decision making
- Helping subordinates grow and succeed: demonstrating genuine concern for others'
 development and career growth by providing support and mentoring
- Putting subordinates first: putting the best interest of others (especially immediate followers) as top priority
- Behaving ethically: interacting openly, fairly, and honestly with others

Among all these conceptualisations and the concomitant scales to measure them (Laub, 1999; Ehrhart, 2004; Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011), the current study opts for the conceptualisation and scale of Liden et al. (2008). Van Dierendonck (2011, p.1252) concluded that this scale "show[s] a stable factor structure across multiple samples and cover[s] (most of) the terrain described by the key servant leadership characteristics". Studies that used this scale (e.g. Hu and Liden, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2012; Chan and Mak, 2014; Panaccio et al., 2015; Chiniari and Bentein, 2016) reported high reliability (Cronbach's α were respectively 0.96, 0.88, 0.94, 0.94, 0.94 and 0.96).

Although the servant leadership concept shares some similarities with concepts such as transformational leadership, authentic leadership and ethical leadership, it is also theoretically distinct. It differs from transformational leadership because it emphasizes the needs of followers rather than the organisational values and objectives (Smith et al., 2004; Stone et al., 2004) and because it adds a moral dimension and a social responsibility component (Hoch et al., 2018). The servant leadership concept is also distinct from authentic leadership as it extends beyond the organisation itself and focuses on all organisational stakeholders (Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2013). It also differs from ethical leadership because it focuses on the development of followers rather than on ethics (Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). In sum, servant

leadership, as a distinct concept, can provide more insight into leadership processes and their outcomes (Walumbwa et al., 2010; Hoch et al., 2018).

3.2 Outcomes of servant leadership

While empirical research on the effect of servant leadership has traditionally been very limited (Hunter et al., 2013, p. 316; Parris and Peachy, 2013, p.378; Liden et al., 2014a), it has gained momentum in recent years. Most research has been done in private sector organisations such as banks (e.g. Hu and Liden, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2011), restaurants (e.g. Carter and Baghurst, 2014; Liden et al., 2014b) or retail organisations (e.g. Hunter et al., 2013). A few studies were done in the public sector (e.g. Miao et al., 2014; Schwarz et al., 2014; Shim and Park, 2018). These studies show a positive effect of servant leadership on a number of outcome variables, such as organisational citizenship behaviour (e.g. Walumbwa et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2013; Panaccio et al., 2015), trust in leaders and organisational trust (e.g. Chan and Mak, 2014; Jaramillo et al., 2015), organisational-level and team-level performance (e.g. Hu and Liden, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2012), organisational commitment (e.g. Liden et al., 2008; Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018) and subordinates' job satisfaction (e.g. Mayer et al., 2008; Chan and Mak, 2014). These studies have generated very useful insights, but they focus on desirable outcomes, not on undesirable outcomes such as employee deviance (Hoch et al., 2018; Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018). Two recent studies are an exception, finding servant leadership to negatively influence organisational workplace deviant behaviour (Sendjaya et al., 2017) and antisocial work behaviours (Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018), respectively. However, both studies only assessed the effect of servant leadership as a generic concept (as measured in a single aggregate scale), not of its dimensions separately. Moreover, both studies were done in private sector companies, while the current study is done in the public sector.

Against the background of these empirical findings, we expect a negative effect of generic servant leadership on followers' deviant behaviour. The literature suggests at least six ways in which servant leadership might exert this negative effect. First, the effect might occur through the mechanism of 'social learning', i.e. learning behaviour through observations of others who model the behaviour (Bandura, 1977). Given their formal status and position in the organisation, leaders often act as such role models (Liden et al., 2014b). Hence, a manager who exhibits servant leadership will inspire similar behaviour among his or her staff, thus making employee deviance less likely. Second, servant leadership's effect on followers' deviant behaviour might also occur through the 'social exchange' mechanism (Blau, 1964). As servant leaders show genuine concern for their followers' development and also act in their best interest, followers are expected to be more likely to reciprocate such treatment by behaving less deviant (Walumbwa et al., 2010; Eva et al., 2018). Two more recent contributions have added further substance to this 'social exchange' mechanism. Drawing from self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2017), Chiniari and Bentein (2016) pointed at the mediating role of the three basic psychological needs of employees: autonomy, competence and relatedness. A servant leader positively influences her followers' three psychological needs, which in turn creates an obligation to reciprocate, for example by behaving less deviant. Panaccio et al. (2015) point at the mediating role of the psychological contract. They found that servant leaders can enhance the fulfilment of their followers' psychological contract, which again creates an obligation to reciprocate. A third possible mechanism is 'social identity' (Tajfel, 1978). By making their followers' best interest their top priority and by helping followers to grow and succeed, servant leaders are likely to enhance followers' identification with the organisation (Eva et al., 2018). This in turn leads to more behaviour that is beneficial to the organisation (Yoshida et al., 2014) and less behaviour that is damaging to the organisation (Evans and Davis, 2014). A fourth, somewhat related, mechanism is 'normative commitment'

(Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018). Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2018) argue that employees' positive experiences with servant leaders strengthen their normative commitment to their organisation, thus reducing the risk that they will commit antisocial behaviour. Fifth, fairness could also play a role. Ehrhart (2004) and Chung et al. (2010) found that servant leaders create a climate that employees perceive as fair or just, which in turn leads to more organisational citizenship behaviour (Chiniari and Bentein, 2016) and less (interpersonal) workplace deviance (Ménard et al., 2011). Finally, Joseph and Winston (2005) and Burton et al. (2017) point at the role of trust. They found that servant leadership enhances leader and organisational trust, which again increases the likelihood of organisational citizenship behaviour (Hu and Liden, 2011) and decreases that of organisational deviance in general (Demir, 2011; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2013) and absenteeism in particular (Deery et al., 2006).

3.3 Hypotheses

The effect of servant leadership will be tested by means of both a self-report and an observer-report measure of employee deviance. The more followers perceive their leader as demonstrating servant leadership, the less likely we expect them to exhibit employee deviance themselves (self-report) or their colleagues from the same team to exhibit employee deviance (observer-report). The latter hypothesis relies on the assumptions (1) that the members of the same team have the same direct supervisor and (2) that the respondents' assessment of the leader's servant leadership is shared by the other members of the team.

H1: Perceived servant leadership is negatively related to self-reported and observerreported employee deviance

Moreover, we conjecture that the mechanisms and dynamics described above to account for the effect of generic servant leadership on employee deviance, also suggest a similar negative, protective effect of its dimensions separately. In fact, earlier research indeed suggests such an

effect on various types of employee deviance for two of the seven dimensions of servant leadership: the 'empowering' dimension (Fatima et al., 2013) and 'ethical leadership', which closely resembles the 'behaving ethically' dimension (e.g. Avey et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2012; Neves and Story, 2015). We hypothesize similar effects of the other five dimensions. Hypotheses 2 to 8 now specify the expected effect of those seven dimensions.

H2: 'Emotional healing' is negatively related to self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance

H3: 'Creating value for community' is negatively related to self-reported and observerreported employee deviance

H4: 'Conceptual skills' is negatively related to self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance

H5: 'Empowering' is negatively related to self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance

H6: 'Helping subordinates grow and succeed' is negatively related to self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance

H7: 'Putting subordinates first' is negatively related to self-reported and observerreported employee deviance

H8: 'Behaving ethically' is negatively related to self-reported and observer-reported employee deviance

4. Methods

4.1. Participants and procedures

The data used in this article were collected via an online survey¹ in two ministries ('Federal Public Services') of the Belgian Federal Government in October - November 2011. This was part of a larger study on integrity at the workplace in the Belgian Federal Government (Maesschalck et al., 2016). The survey reported on in this article was sent to half of the population of each organisation, randomly selected.² With the Belgian federal administration being bilingually French and Dutch, the survey was available in both languages. Respondents received an e-mail request to fill out the survey containing a personalized URL-link. Later, two or three (depending on the organisation) reminders were sent via e-mail. Of the 13,929 employees who had received the invitation, 3,445 respondents (24.7%) answered at least one question and 1,851 respondents (13.3%) answered all questions. The latter means that 46.3% of those who had started filling out the survey stopped before it was completed. Although low response rates are not uncommon in research on employee deviance (Greco et al., 2015), the response rate of this study is lower compared to that of other studies. Greco et al. (2015), for example, found in a meta-analysis that the response rates in counterproductive work behaviour research ranged from 3% to 100%, with a mean response rate of 37%. For the current study, the length of the survey might have played a role, as indicated by the large number of respondents who did not complete the entire survey. The fact that it was an online rather than a paper-and-pencil survey might also have played a role (Shih and Fan, 2008). In any case, this low response rate implies that conclusions about the incidence of employee deviance will be very difficult to draw and that great caution will be necessary for generalisations. Yet, both the rate of 13.3% and the absolute number of 1,851 respondents are sufficient for an exploratory

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¹ In addition to the measures reported here, the survey also included a measure of organisational fairness, a measure of ethical leadership, a victim-report of employee deviance, and measures of knowledge and perceptions of integrity management.

² The other half of the employees received another survey, not reported on in this study.

study to test the reliability of the scales and to use regression analysis to assess the effect of (dimensions of) servant leadership on employee deviance.

4.2 Measures

Servant leadership was measured using a Dutch and French translation³ of the 28-item-scale developed by Liden et al. (2008). It measures each of the seven dimensions of servant leadership by means of four statements. Respondents could answer on a 7-point fully labelled Likert-scale with labels ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7). Respondents were explicitly asked to assess their direct supervisor. In most cases this was a team leader or other middle manager. If the respondent was a middle manager him- or herself, the direct supervisor was a senior manager. Given the relatively traditional bureaucratic structure of the participating organisations, it would be fair to assume that most respondents from the same team would be reporting about the same person, which, as mentioned above, is important for the interpretation of the observer-report. Before testing the actual model, we first addressed the equivalence of the two survey versions. As mentioned above, the survey was distributed in bilingual organisations and depending on the respondent's official language, he or she received either the Dutch or the French version of the survey. To assess equivalence, we followed the procedure proposed by Muthén and Aspourov (2002). We tested whether the measurement instrument was scalar invariant, which is the highest form of equivalence and the default setting in Mplus 7 for multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA). This model, with fixed factor loadings and intercepts, was found to have a good fit (RMSEA=0.059; CFI=0.954; TLI=0.948). We concluded that the way in which respondents from the two language groups interpreted the

³ The servant leadership scale of Liden et al. (2008) was first translated from English to Dutch by the native Dutch-speaking researchers. Then, the Dutch version of the scale was translated to French by a professional translator. This translation was evaluated by the researchers as well as by another person who speaks French as mother tongue. Any differences were discussed and adjudicated upon by the researchers.

survey items was equivalent. In the remainder of the analysis, results from both language groups are aggregated.

In order to test the 7-dimensional construct, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with Mplus 7 on the items of servant leadership (see Table 1). First, a 7-dimensional model with 28 (7 x 4) items was estimated in Mplus. The full model, estimated with ML-estimation, had an acceptable fit (RMSEA=0.069; CFI=0.926; TLI=0.915). However, high modification indices were found for some items. Following the procedure proposed by Raykov and Marcoulides (2012, p.51), we eliminated the items with high modification indices one at a time, beginning with the item with the highest modification index. In the first model, item PUT4⁴ showed a high cross loading on the dimensions 'helping subordinates grow and succeed', 'conceptual skills' and 'creating value for society'. Therefore, item PUT4 was omitted from the model. A second model, without item PUT4, had better fit statistics (RMSEA=0.065; CFI=0.938; TLI=0.928), but showed high cross loadings for item HELP3 on the dimension 'putting subordinates first'. Item HELP3 was therefore also removed from the model. A third model, estimated without items PUT4 and HELP3, again had a slightly better fit (RMSEA=0.065; CFI=0.941; TLI=0.931), but modification indices now showed high cross loadings for item EMP1 on the dimensions 'helping subordinates grow and succeed', 'conceptual skills' and 'creating value for society'. Item EMP1 was therefore removed from the model. The fourth model, estimated without items PUT4, HELP3 and EMP1, had an acceptable fit (RMSEA=0.063; CFI=0.946; TLI=0.937), but modification indices now demonstrated high cross loadings for items CREV4 and COSK1. These items were also removed from the model. The final model, without items PUT4, HELP3, EMP1, CREV4 and COSK1, consisted of 23 items without high cross loadings and with a very good fit

⁴ For the readability of the paper, we used codes for each item. The actual items for each of these codes, can be found in Table 1.

(RMSEA=0.057; CFI=0.960; TLI=0.952) (see Table 1). A second-order confirmatory factor analysis on the final model was also performed with 'servant leadership' as the second-order factor. This model also had a good fit (RMSEA=0.066; CFI=0.944; TLI=0.936). All dimensions loaded on the global factor.

Based on this final model, we created a generic servant leadership scale and summative scales for each dimension. The items for each dimension, and their corresponding codes, standardized factor loadings and error variances are presented in Table 1. The Cronbach's α and composite reliability scores for each dimension are also shown in Table 1. Both the generic servant leadership scale and the summative scales for each dimension had sufficient reliability. Table 2 presents the correlations between the seven dimensions of servant leadership.

The dependent variable employee deviance was measured by means of an observer- and a self-report measure. While social desirability bias is an obvious threat to the validity of, particularly, self-reports, there are still good reasons to rely on self-reports. Several studies (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Zuber and Kaptein, 2014) show that respondents are indeed willing to admit that they engaged in employee deviance themselves. Ones et al. (1993) even found that self-reports of employee deviance had higher validity than external measures such as actual records of rule-breaking incidents or of disciplinary actions. These specific observations on employee deviance fit with observations in criminological research on deviant behaviour more generally. Based on an extensive review of research relying on self-reports, Thornberry and Krohn (2000, p.58) observe that "[t]he content validity of the recent inventories is acceptable, the construct

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⁵ The Cronbach's α score of each of the (sub)scales was higher than the recommended .70 (Kline, 1999); composite reliability scores were all higher than .75.

validity is quite high, and the criterion validity appears to be in the moderate-to-strong range."

They conclude that for most research goals, self-reports are "acceptably accurate and valid."

Many items in this survey were taken or adopted from the survey instrument used by Kolthoff (2007) and Lasthuizen (2008), that built on earlier work by Huberts et al. (1999), Kaptein (1998) and Kaptein and Van Reenen (2001). Another important source of inspiration were the instruments developed by Robinson and Bennett (1995, 2000). The survey also contains a number of newly developed items, some of which measuring types of employee deviance that do occur in the public sector, but are often overlooked in existing typologies. Specifically, we included some items that refer to the excessive application of rules or 'rigid rule following': situations where following the rules would be manifestly harmful, for example to the public interest (e.g. "strictly following rules when you find them to be unethical"). We also included some items that can be described as disruptive and uncooperative behaviour (e.g. "taking credit for another one's work", "not wanting to work together with another department or team").

The observer-report measure contained 33 items, each describing a particular instance of employee deviance (see Table 3). Respondents were asked how often the behaviour described in the item had occurred in their team⁶ (i.e. in an organisational unit of typically two to 40 coworkers with whom the respondents had worked directly) during the last 12 months. Respondents could answer on a 5-point answering scale with vague quantifiers ('never', 'seldom', 'sometimes', 'often', 'very often') with an additional 'not applicable' option. We decided to use vague quantifiers because of the perceptual character of this measurement. It was expected that respondents would find it difficult to report exact frequencies of their colleagues' deviant behaviour.

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⁶ Although we ask for (deviant) behaviour in the respondent's team, it is important to note that the (deviant) behaviour itself is seen as an individual level phenomenon.

The self-report measure contained 33 items that were the same as those in the observer-report measure (see Table 3). Respondents were asked how often they had engaged in the behaviour during the last 12 months. As for the answering scale, it was assumed that a self-report measure allows for more exact answers than an observer-report measure. Hence, instead of the answering scale with the vague quantifiers used for the observer-report measure, we used an answering scale with increasing frequency ranges ('0 times', '1 time', '2 times', '3 to 5 times', '6 to 10 times', '11 to 20 times', 'more than 20 times') as well as an additional 'not applicable' option. This answering scale (originally used in a measure of intimate partner violence (Strauss et al., 1996)) allows for a precise measurement of the low frequencies that we expected for most of the behaviour types. At the same time it also allowed for the measurement of higher frequencies of types of employee deviance that might be more common (e.g. "insufficient work effort", "working slowly or sloppy") and of the four items referring to desirable behaviour (e.g. "Helping others when their work load is too high") that were added in order to make the survey less threatening, but not included in the analysis.

The regression analyses to assess the effect of (the dimensions of) servant leadership on employee deviance were performed for the observer- and the self-report measure separately. A more generic measure that would have amalgamated self-report and observer-report results was not considered desirable for various reasons. As explained above, the answering scales of the self- and the observer-report are different. Also, as Zuber and Kaptein (2014, p. 421) point out, the frequency in observer-reports cannot automatically assumed to be the same as the frequency in self-reports, for example because self-reports are more sensitive to social desirability bias or because not all behaviours can be easily observed by others.

⁷ The self-report measure also contained 12 additional items (eight items referring to other forms of employee deviance and four items referring to desirable behaviour), but these are not used in this analysis as they have no counterpart in the observer-report measure.

<< insert Table 3 about here >>

Finally, in order to control for confounding effects, we included the variables 'gender' and 'age' as these variables have been found to relate to employee deviance (Samnani et al., 2014; Donner et al., 2016). Gender was dummy coded (0 = female; 1 = male). Age was reported in five categories asking for year of birth in decades (e.g. 'Born between 1950 and 1959') so as to maintain perceived anonymity. Organisational tenure was measured but not included in the analysis because of its strong correlation with age (r = .77).

5. Results

We first analysed the effect of the generic servant leadership scale on both dependent variables: the employee deviance observer-report index and the employee deviance self-report index. For the observer-report index, a linear model could be applied because the deviation of the residuals from normality was not too high. Table 4 shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis. The first model included only the control variables 'gender' and 'age'. For age, four dummy variables were computed. The reference category was 'born in or after 1980'. As shown in Table 4, the control variables have no significant effect on the observer-report index. In the second model, we added the generic servant leadership scale. Finally, the third model is the most parsimonious one, where the non-significant control variables are excluded. The generic servant leadership scale explains 11.7% of the variance in the employee deviance observer-report. As hypothesized, servant leadership indeed has a negative effect on the observer-report index.

<< insert Table 4 about here >>

For the self-report index, no linear model could be applied because the deviation of the residuals from normality was too high. Therefore, a negative binomial analysis was performed. This

analysis was preferred over a Poisson regression analysis because of overdispersion in the data. Since no standardized coefficients are available in a negative binomial regression, the independent variable servant leadership was standardized so as to allow for comparability between servant leadership as a generic concept and its subdimensions (see below). Table 5 shows the results of the multiple negative binomial regression analysis. Like on observer-reported employee deviance, the generic servant leadership scale also has a negative, protective effect on self-reported employee deviance.

<< insert Table 5 about here >>

The second step assesses the effect of the seven separate dimensions of servant leadership. For the effect on the observer-report index, a linear model can be applied because the deviation of the residuals from normality was not too large. Multicollinearity is not too high in the model (VIF and tolerance indicators were acceptable)⁹. The Durbin-Watson has a value of 1.864, which indicates absence of autocorrelation in the residuals. Table 6 shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis. Model 3 is the most parsimonious one, where the non-significant control variables are excluded. The seven dimensions of servant leadership together explain 12.8% of the variance in the employee deviance observer-report index. Four of the seven dimensions have a significant effect on the observer-report index: 'empowering', 'behaving ethically', 'emotional healing', and 'putting subordinates first'. As hypothesized, the latter three dimensions have a negative effect. Somewhat surprisingly, the former dimension 'empowering' has a positive effect: the more empowering the leader, the higher the score on the employee deviance observer-report.

⁸ For the correlations between the servant leadership dimensions and the observer- and self-report of employee deviance, see table 2.

⁹ VIF or Variance Inflation Factor was used to assess multicollinearity. We used the cut-off criterion provided by Hair et al. (1995) of 10. A VIF higher than 10, indicates multicollinearity.

<< insert Table 6 about here >>

As for the effect of the servant leadership dimensions on the self-report index, no linear model could be applied because of the skewed distribution of the scale errors. Hence, a negative binomial regression analysis was performed in SPSS 23. This was preferred over a Poisson regression analysis because of overdispersion in the data. Since no standardized coefficients are available in a negative binomial regression, each independent variable was standardized before the analysis. This procedure allowed for comparing the effect of each dimension of servant leadership separately. Table 7 shows the results of the multiple negative binomial regression analysis. Model 3 is the most parsimonious one, where the non-significant control variables are excluded. The results show that two dimensions, 'creating value for society' and 'putting subordinates first', have a significant effect in the expected negative direction: the higher the score on those dimensions, the lower the score on the self-report index. A third dimension, 'empowering', generates the same surprising observation we noted for the observer-report index: this dimension has a positive, strengthening effect on the employee deviance self-report index.

<< insert Table 7 about here >>

6. Discussion and conclusion

This study offers at least two contributions to the existing literature about servant leadership. First, while most of the existing research focused on servant leaders' ability to promote desirable behaviour (Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018), the current study addressed its effects

¹⁰ The coefficients refer to the coefficients of standardized variables, i.e. the standardized dimensions of servant leadership. Although they can be compared, they cannot be interpreted as standardized coefficients since the dependent variable, the self-report index, is not standardized. Standardizing the dependent variable would alter the distribution, rendering the negative binomial model not applicable.

on employee deviance. Second, it addresses not only the effect of generic servant leadership on employee deviance, but also of its seven dimensions separately.

We found that servant leadership, as measured by means of the generic scale, indeed has the expected negative effect on employee deviance, as measured in both the observer-report and the self-report indices. This is in line with previous research that found a negative relationship between servant leadership (as a generic concept) on the one hand and organisational workplace deviant behaviour (Sendjaya et al., 2017) and antisocial work behaviours (Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018) on the other. As for the dimensions, two dimensions were found to have a significant effect on both the self-report and observer-report indices: 'putting subordinates first' had the expected negative effect, while 'empowering' had, unexpectedly, a positive effect. Two other dimensions ('conceptual skills' and 'helping subordinates grow and succeed') influenced neither self- nor observer-report. The dimensions 'behaving ethically' and 'emotional healing' had the expected negative effect on the observer-report index, but no effect on the self-report index. Conversely, the dimension 'creating value for society' had the expected negative effect on the observer-report index.

Some findings are consistent with our hypotheses and in line with previous research. The most obvious one is the negative effect of the dimension 'putting subordinates first' on both the observer- and the self-report indices. This is in line with general claims in the servant leadership literature that by considering the best interests of others as top priority, leaders stimulate their followers to reciprocate with behaviours that benefit instead of harm the organisation (Walumbwa et al., 2010; Eva et al., 2018). We also found a negative effect of the dimension 'behaving ethically', albeit only on the observer-report index. This negative effect is in line with other research suggesting that ethical leadership negatively influences employee deviance (e.g. Avey et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2012). We found the same pattern for the dimension 'emotional healing': the expected negative effect on the observer-report index, but no effect on

the self-report index. For the dimension 'creating value for society', it was the other way round: we found no effect on the observer-report index, but found the expected negative effect on the self-report index. The latter finding is in line with previous studies (Peterson, 2002; Kao et al., 2014) that found a negative effect of 'service climates' and 'social responsibility climates' on employee deviance. There are several reasons that might account for this differential effect of the dimensions of servant leadership on the observer-and the self-report respectively. First, it might have to do with the fact that observer-reports of employee deviance tend to generate more variation than self-reports (Zuber and Kaptein, 2014). This is partly because variation in perceived behaviour of several individuals is likely to be higher than variation in perceived behaviour of one individual (Zuber and Kaptein, 2014) and partly because self-reports' stronger sensitivity to social desirability bias could generate under-reporting and hence less variation. Second, the different answering categories used in the self- and observer-report measure might also have played a role. While the self-report measure denominated the frequencies relatively exactly ('0 times', '1 time', '2 times', '3 to 5 times', '6 to 10 times', '11 to 20 times', 'more than 20 times'), the observer-report measure had more vague answering categories (e.g. 'often', 'sometimes'). Finally, the different effect might also have to do with the different data analysis techniques that were used for the self- and observer-report measure. While for the observerreport index a linear model was applied, this was not possible for the self-report index, where a negative binomial regression analysis was applied.

Contrary to expectations, the dimension 'conceptual skills' neither influenced the self- nor the observer-report indices. Upon closer look, it is indeed not that obvious how a leader's capacity to think and handle conceptually would influence his or her followers' deviant behaviour. The finding that the dimension 'helping subordinates grow and succeed' neither influenced the self-nor the observer-report indices is more surprising. Indeed, Liden et al. (2015, p.254) expected that it is exactly because "it prioritizes bringing out the full potential of followers" that servant

leadership will help to reach higher levels of ethical behaviour. Perhaps the impact of this dimension is asymmetrical: while it does not lead to less employee deviance, it might lead to more ethical behaviour? Perhaps this dimension only influences employee deviance when it scores really low: followers will only exhibit employee deviance when leaders really neglect their development? Of course, these are mere conjectures that require further research.

Most surprising was the positive, enabling effect of the dimension 'empowering' on both observer-report and self-report indices. This contradicts not only our expectations but also Fatima et al. (2013)'s findings. In their study in Pakistan, they found that a leader's empowering attitude reduced followers' deviant behaviour. The differences between our and Fatima et al. (2013)'s findings might have to with methodology: the measurement of both independent and dependent variables was slightly different. Another reason could be the fact that Fatima et al. (2013)'s research was conducted in call centers, a very particular environment in terms of supervision and autonomy. The reason for the enabling effect of empowering could also be more substantive. A more empowering attitude might generate more autonomy and thus create more opportunities for employees to engage in employee deviance (e.g. Lewis, 2005). Earlier research showing the strengthening, positive effect of autonomy on employee deviance (e.g. Vardi and Weitz, 2004) seems to support this explanation.

Five potential limitations of this study deserve mentioning. First, there is an obvious risk that respondents did not answer honestly, particularly to the questions about employee deviance. Many efforts were made to reduce that risk of social desirability bias, including the non-threatening formulation of items and answering scales as well as an emphasis on anonymity of the respondent and on confidentiality of the organisation. Yet, in spite of all these efforts, a certain degree of social desirability bias still seems plausible. Second, because all data in this study were gathered with one questionnaire, there could be a problem of common rater bias, a specific form of common method bias (e.g. George and Pandey, 2017). To assess common rater

bias, we conducted a Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We performed a principal components factor analysis using all items from the servant leadership and employee deviance scales. The analysis reveals the presence of 20 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. It also reveals that no more than 21.63% of the total variance was explained by one factor. 11 Therefore, it is unlikely that common rater bias confounded our results. Moreover, a number of studies have concluded that the common rater or method bias problem is overstated (Spector, 1987, 1994; Lindell and Whitney, 2001). Doty and Glick's (1998, p.374) metastudy, for example, indicates that common method bias "is a cause of concern, but does not invalidate many research findings". Nevertheless, future research would benefit from measuring servant leadership and employee deviance from different sources. A third limitation is that, although our regression analyses show the effect of servant leadership, they do not allow us to understand the underlying mechanisms. Future, perhaps more qualitative, research should further examine which mechanisms (e.g. 'social learning', 'social exchange', 'normative commitment', 'trust', 'fairness') are really at play. Fourth, data were collected only in two ministries of the Belgian Federal Government. Whether the study's findings are also applicable to other organisational settings and cultural contexts remains to be studied. Finally, this paper did not address more fundamental critiques, particularly from the critical management literature, of the servant leadership concept and of leadership research more generally. Alvesson and Kärreman (2016), for example, are sceptical about the servant leadership literature's pleas for what they call 'extreme moral values of a saint like quality' (Alvesson, 2011). Their concern is that this kind of emphasis on leadership leads to an underestimation of the effect of "[a]nything systemic such as institutions, capitalism, political (de-)regulations, and consumer culture encouraging maximization of self-interest and greed" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2016, p.144). However

¹¹ If the factor accounts for more than 25% of the total variance, then common rater bias may be present (Williams et al., 1989).

useful the servant leadership concept might be in explaining outcomes such as employee deviance, it will be important to keep that broader picture in mind.

The current study has a number of implications for practice. To the many desirable outcomes that have already been shown to result from servant leadership, this study adds an important one: overall, servant leadership tends to reduce employee deviance. Therefore, organisations are encouraged to take the criterion 'servant leadership' into account in the selection, coaching and rewarding of managers. However, this study also demonstrated that one dimension of servant leadership (i.e. 'empowering') has a significant positive, strengthening effect on employee deviance. While further research is necessary to understand this, it already serves as a warning to practitioners that, however valuable, empowerment might imply risks that require mitigation.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) and, to a more limited extent, by the Ministry of Budget and Management Control in Belgium. The ministry helped with the implementation of the survey, but they had no access to the data and were not involved in the analysis of the data.

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Table 1 Confirmatory factor analysis on the items of servant leadership

	CODE	G. 1 11 1	
	CODE	Standardized	Error
Behaving ethically (C= 0.871; α = 0.870)		factor loading	variance
My manager holds high ethical standards	ETH1	0.802	0.357
My manager holds high ethical standards My manager is always honest	ETH2	0.877	0.231
My manager is always nonest My manager would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve		0.700	0.231
	e EIH3	0.700	0.510
success	ETH4	0.797	0.382
My manager values honesty more than profits	E1H4	0.786	0.382
Emotional healing (C= 0.921; α= 0.918)	EMILE 1	0.020	0.211
I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem	EMHE1	0.830	0.311
My manager cares about my personal well-being.	EMHE2	0.915	0.163
My manager takes time to talk to me on a personal level	EMHE3	0.870	0.243
My manager can recognize when I'm down without asking me	EMHE4	0.832	0.308
Creating value for society (C=0.832; α= 0.836)			
My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community		0.758	0.425
My manager is always interested in helping people in our community	CREV2	0.890	0.208
My manager is involved in community activities	CREV3	0.714	0.490
I am encouraged by my manager to volunteer in the community	CREV4	High crossloadin	g, removed
Conceptual skills (C=0.866; α= 0.863)			
My manager can tell if something is going wrong	COSK1	High crossloadin	g, removed
My manager is able to effectively think through complex problems	COSK2	0.879	0.227
My manager has a thorough understanding of our organisation and it	s COSK3	0.742	0.449
goals			
My manager can solve work problems with new or creative ideas	COSK4	0.854	0.271
Empowering (C= 0.780 ; α = 0.757)			
My manager gives me the responsibility to make important decision	s EMP1	High crossloadin	g, removed
about my job.			
My manager encourages me to handle important work decisions on my	y EMP2	0.887	0.213
own			
My manager gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the	e EMP3	0.819	0.329
way that I feel is best			
When I have to make an important decision at work, I do not have to	o EMP4	0.464	0.785
consult my manager first			
Helping subordinates grow and succeed (C= 0.875; α= 0.878)			
My manager makes my career development a priority	HELP1	0.839	0.296
My manager is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals		0.856	0.267
My manager provides me with work experiences that enable me to	o HELP3	High crossloadin	g, removed
develop new skills			
My manager wants to know about my career goals	HELP4	0.816	0.334
Putting subordinates first (C= 0.874; α= 0.873)			
My manager seems to care more about my success than his/her own	PUT1	0.786	0.382
My manager puts my best interests ahead of his/her own	PUT2	0.866	0.250
My manager sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs	PUT3	0.854	0.271
My manager does what she/he can do to make my job easier	PUT4	High crossloadin	g, removed
ML-estimation: RMSEA=0.057; CFI=0.960; TLI=0.952		<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Table 2 Correlations between the seven dimensions of servant leadership and the observer- and self-report measures of employee deviance

Dir	nensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Behaving ethically	1								
2.	Emotional healing	0.744	1							
3.	Creating value for the community	0.739	0.799	1						
4.	Conceptual skills	0.721	0.750	0.751	1					
5.	Empowering	0.452	0.401	0.376	0.402	1				
6.	Helping subordinates grow and succeed	0.666	0.743	0.698	0.658	0.434	1			
7.	Putting subordinates first	0.631	0.640	0.627	0.521	0.352	0.749	1		
8.	Observer-report of employee deviance	-0.320	-0.311	-0.295	-0.280	-0.116	-0.307	-0.303	1	
9.	Self-report of employee deviance	-0.146	-0.164	-0.188	-0.111	-0.019	-0.176	-0.204	0.549	1

Table 3 The items of employee deviance in the observer-report and self-report indices

- 1. Insufficient work effort
- 2. Falsely reporting sick
- 3. Arriving late or leaving early without proper justification
- 4. Working fewer hours than paid for
- 5. Wasting company materials
- 6. Working slowly or sloppily
- 7. Taking credit for another one's work
- 8. Only performing interesting tasks and leaving other (less interesting) work to others
- 9. Taking a longer lunch or coffee break without permission
- 10. Focusing on cheap solutions to such an extent that the quality of the result is endangered
- 11. Taking reckless decisions
- 12. Stealing organisational property with a value of less than €5
- 13. Stealing organisational property with a value between 5 and €25
- 14. Stealing organisational property with a value of more than € 25
- 15. Accepting a personal gift from a citizen, client and/or external person with a value of less than €5
- 16. Accepting a personal gift from a citizen, client and/or external person with a value between 5 and €25
- 17. Accepting a personal gift from a citizen, client and/or external person with a value of more than € 25
- 18. Accepting money or favours to do or not do something in a professional capacity
- 19. Selling confidential information to external parties
- 20. Abusing confidential information
- 21. Turn facts inside out in documents
- 22. Hiding unethical issues to protect the image of the organisation
- 23. Favouring friends, family or parties outside the organisation
- 24. Not reporting illegal behaviour of a colleague
- 25. Bullying a colleague
- 26. Treating a colleague disrespectfully
- 27. Discriminating a colleague (for example based on gender, race or sexual orientation)
- 28. Making racist statements
- 29. Gossiping about a colleague
- 30. Not wanting to work together with another department or team
- 31. Strictly following rules when you find them to be unfair for a citizen
- 32. Following an illegal order of your supervisor
- 33. Strictly following rules when you find them to be unethical

Table 4 Results of the multiple linear regression analysis with the observer-report index of employee deviance as dependent variable and the generic servant leadership scale as independent variable

Variable	model 1	model 2	model 3
Intercept	22,657	45,089	45,432
Gender			
Male $(ref = female)$,003	,011	-
Age			
Born between 1970 and 1979 (ref = born in or after	1.617	1.278	
1980)	1,017	1,276	-
Born between 1960 and 1969	-,494	-1,127	-
Born between 1950 and 1959	1,052	,946	-
Born before 1950	2,000	1,432	-
Servant Leadership	-	-,230***	-,230***
Adj. R²	-,001	,118***	,117***

^{*} $p \le .05$; ** $p \le .01$; *** $p \le .001$.

Table 5 Results of the multiple negative binomial regression analysis with the self-report index of employee deviance as dependent variable and the generic servant leadership scale as independent variable

Variable	model 1	model 2	model 3
Intercept	2,421	2,417	2,357
Gender			
Male	-,001	,000	-
Age			
Born between 1970 and 1979	,006	-,016	-
Born between 1960 and 1969	-,032	-,034	-
Born between 1950 and 1959	-,100	-,109	-
Born before 1950	-,160	-,124	-
Servant Leadership	=	-,177***	-,177***
(Scale)	1,194	1,198	1,192
(Negative binomial)	1,154	1,118	1,121

^{*} $p \le .05$; ** $p \le .01$; *** $p \le .001$.

Table 6 Results of the multiple linear regression analysis with the observer-report index of employee deviance as dependent variable and the seven separate dimensions of servant leadership as independent variables

Variable	model 1	model 2	model 3
Intercept	22,657	41,297	41,178
Gender			
Male	,003	,014	-
Age			
Born between 1970 and 1979	1,617	,656	-
Born between 1960 and 1969	-,494	-1,457	-
Born between 1950 and 1959	1,052	,443	-
Born before 1950	2,000	,576	-
Servant Leadership	-	-	-
Behaving ethically	-	-,359*	-,352*
Emotional healing	-	-,314*	-,313*
Creating value for society	-	-,157	-,144
Conceptual skills	-	-,053	-,064
Empowering	-	,358**	,360**
Helping subordinates grow and succeed	-	-,350	-,345
Putting subordinates first	-	-,463*	-,486*
Adj. R²	-,001	,129***	,128***

^{*} p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001

Table 7 Results of the multiple negative binomial regression analysis with the self-report index of employee deviance as dependent variable and the seven separate dimensions of servant leadership as independent variables

Variable	model 1	model 2	model 3
Intercept	2,421	2,442	2,334
Gender			
Male	-,001	,000	-
Age			
Born between 1970 and 1979	,006	-,089	-
Born between 1960 and 1969	-,032	-,079	-
Born between 1950 and 1959	-,100	-,163	-
Born before 1950	-,160	-,175	-
Servant Leadership	-		-
Behaving ethically	-	,038	,034
Emotional healing	-	-,014	-,018
Creating value for society	-	-,144*	-,152*
Conceptual skills	-	,036	,047
Empowering	-	,112**	,105*
Helping subordinates grow and succeed	-	-,051	-,044
Putting subordinates first	-	-,158**	-,151*
(Scale)	1,194	1,206	1,200
(Negative binomial)	1,154	1,085	1,089

^{*} p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.