

# Servant Leadership and Commitment: Role of Transformational Leadership

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## Abstract

Leadership styles have been found to impact followers' affective and normative commitment. The purpose of this study is to analyse the mediating and moderating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment. Data were collected from 105 employees (49 male, 56 female) of various IT firms located in India. The respondents were asked to rate their supervisor's servant leadership and transformational leadership, and their own affective and normative commitment. Results show that transformational leadership fully mediated the relationship between servant leadership and follower's affective and normative commitment. We also found that servant leadership enhances followers' affective and normative commitment only when transformational leadership is low. A practical implication of the study is that displaying characteristics of servant leadership would be a good start for any leader-follower relationship and for making it more transformational. Once the leader is seen as highly transformational, servant leadership may not enhance followers' affective and normative commitment after that. This study adds to the existing literature by checking for both moderation and mediation by transformational leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment.

**Keyword:** Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership, Organisational Commitment

## Introduction

Leadership styles have been found to have significant

impact on followers' affective and normative commitment. Stone, Russell, & Patterson (2004) posit that both servant leaders and transformational leaders show concern for their followers. However, overriding focus of servant leader is on service to followers, and transformational leaders have a greater concern for getting the followers to work towards organisational objectives. Based on the above position, this study is an attempt to analyse the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment, with transformational leadership as the mediator. In addition, the study investigates the moderating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment. Servant leadership may initially enhance transformational leadership and thereby enhance follower's commitment, but once transformational leadership is high, servant leadership may not enhance follower's commitment after that. Thus, this study is a unique attempt to look at both the mediating and moderating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment.

In the context of voluntary service organisations, Schneider & George (2011) found that perceptions of transformational leadership and servant leadership styles were highly correlated, but servant leadership was identified as a better predictor of members' commitment. In the context of for-profit organisations, we find that transformational leadership is a better predictor of followers' affective and normative commitment than servant leadership. This study adds to the body of knowledge by checking for both moderation and mediation by transformational leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment. We find that transformational leadership fully mediates the

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relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment. Our tests for moderation indicate that for budding leaders, practice of servant leadership would be a good beginning, and from thereon, they need to imbibe the characteristics of transformational leadership in order to enhance followers' affective and normative commitment.

## Theory and Hypotheses

Servant leadership and transformational leadership emphasize showing concern towards followers. These leadership styles would help in building a bond of trust between the leader and the followers. The followers tend to get motivated by the fact that the leader cares about their well-being. In reciprocation, the followers go beyond their call of duty and take up extra initiative. In other words, they develop an attachment with their job and their organisation.

### Servant Leadership

Greenleaf (1991) stated that servant leadership is about focusing on others rather than focusing on self. Servant leaders serve others' highest priority needs rather than satisfying their normative expectations.

### Characteristics of a Servant Leader

The initially developed instrument by Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) to measure the 11 characteristics of a servant leader included listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, growth, community building, and calling – “a desire to serve and willingness to sacrifice self interest for the benefit of others”. This framework was considered fundamental to servant leadership and was in alignment with Greenleaf's original message. The final instrument measured five factors derived from the above characteristics: (1) altruistic calling – a leader's deep rooted desire to bring about a positive difference in other's lives; (2) emotional healing – empathy and listening skills; (3) wisdom – ability to take cues from the environment and understand the consequences; (4) persuasive mapping – extent to which a leader applies sound reasoning and mental frameworks; and (5) organisational stewardship

– ability to create a community spirit in the workplace. Russell & Stone (2002) indicated that the attributes of a servant leader stimulate followers' attitude and work behaviour, which in turn translates to better organisational performance.

### Servant Leaders as Moral Agents

Greenleaf (1991) proposed that servant leaders develop followers, who in turn act as moral agents continuing to develop others into servant leaders. He clarified that servant leaders are instrumental in grooming their followers to become wiser, healthier, and more autonomous, and thus become servant leaders themselves. Zhang, Lin, & Foo (2012) found that the servant leadership behaviour that held the top rank was the servant leaders' nature of providing opportunities for followers to learn. Such a behaviour would lead to an individual's professional development in the organisation.

### Altruistic Calling

Altruistic calling nature of a servant leader indicates leader's deep-rooted desire to bring about positive change in others' lives and leader's self-sacrificial nature. Hoveida, Salari, & Asemi (2011) established that a significant relationship exists among the characteristics of servant leaders such as respecting the staff, developing the staff, providing leadership, sharing leadership, authenticity and community building with organisational commitment. The servant leaders by means of empowering the followers bring about a positive change in their followers' lives.

### Emotional Healing

Servant leaders have to listen intently, to understand the needs of followers, and they should be able to empathize with followers in order to connect well with them. Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts (2009) showed that leaders, who showed genuine care and concern for followers, were able to obtain improved performance from their followers. Study conducted by Del & Akbarpour (2011) found that servant leaders can win trust of their employees by virtue of showing affection and sympathy towards followers. Affection and sympathy for followers would be portrayed by the leader's interest in listening and empathising with followers.

## Wisdom and Persuasive Mapping

Servant leaders help followers realise their goals. The followers' goals should be aligned with the organisation's goals. For this, the servant leaders need to be wise, and they should persuade the followers to work towards their goals.

The servant leadership style influences the followers in various ways to perform better. Studies by Ebener & O'Connell (2010), and Yusuf (2010) showed that when leaders show concern and genuine interest in their followers, the leaders engender trust and a sense of commitment. In another study by Jones (2012a), the servant leaders, by gaining trust of followers, were able to bring about increased productivity. Culture building and empowering the followers were other positive impacts of servant leadership style. Empowerment of followers led to more productive environment, better streamlining of decisions and enhanced organisational performance. Servant leaders need to be sensitive to needs of followers, and they should be able to take cues from the environment in order to effectively persuade followers to achieve individual goals as well as the organisational goals.

## Organisational Stewardship

Melchar & Bosco (2010) found that servant leadership style builds a working climate that generates a feeling of empowerment among followers, thus molding followers into becoming servant leaders. Servant leaders tend to bring about a community spirit in workplace by nurturing future servant leaders.

## Servant Leadership and Self-Sacrifice

The theme of servant leadership, which emphasizes focusing on others, could be used to draw a parallel between servant leadership and self-sacrifice. Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) in their study to develop a scale for servant leadership have mentioned that one of the fundamental characteristics of servant leadership is to have imbibed a desire to serve others and willingness to sacrifice self-interest for benefit of others. The model of self-sacrificial leadership, demonstrated by Choi & Mai-Dalton (1999), showed that self-sacrificing nature of the leader created a perception of transformational qualities. The followers attribute trust and respect to leaders, since they understand that the leader is interested in addressing

their needs. Consequently, such leaders were found to be more influential than those who did not exhibit such behaviours. There exists an intersection between characteristics of self-sacrificial leadership and servant leadership. Thus, self-sacrifice in the context of leadership and servant leadership appear to be similar.

## Transformational Leadership

According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership "occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (page 20), and results in a transforming effect on both leaders and followers. Transformational leadership elevates the followers into higher leadership capabilities by means of addressing followers' real needs. Transformational leadership empowers followers and brings about a positive change in the lives of the followers. The empowerment and positive climate enhanced by transformational leadership would motivate the followers to pursue higher goals.

According to Avolio & Bass (1995), transformational leadership consists of four factors, all of which create a positive impact on followers.

### Idealised Influence

Idealised influence or charisma refers to the leader's ability to inspire pride, faith and respect in minds of followers. The follower is overwhelmed by leader's characteristics, and begins to consider the leader to be an extraordinary or charismatic person. Idealized influence was subsequently divided into the two sub-factors of idealized influence attributed and idealised influence behaviour.

### Inspirational Motivation

The leader focuses on grooming the followers to imbibe the leadership characteristics and become leaders themselves. It is about making the followers take responsibility in team building. The leader inspires the followers and helps them to reach greater heights in terms of owning responsibility.

### Intellectual Stimulation

The leader creates many opportunities for the followers by providing them a challenging environment. Such an environment would help followers to sharpen their

problem solving and analytical skills. It would kindle the passion in the followers to their limits, beyond the call of duty.

### Individualised Consideration

When the leader gives individualised attention to followers, it enhances self-efficacy and motivation of the followers. The leader acts as a mentor and helps the followers by giving feedback. The leader also creates a sense of empowerment by entrusting responsibilities to followers, to enable the followers to gain new learning experiences.

According to Bass (1994), Bass & Avolio (1994), and Hartog, Muijen, & Koopman (1997), transformational leaders inspire their followers and facilitate followers to utilise their potential thoroughly and work towards satisfying their greater needs. Transformational leaders motivate followers to stretch beyond their limits and the followers realize that the leader intends to fulfill their needs. Consequently, followers attribute trust and admiration towards their leaders. This kind of trust, admiration, and loyalty towards the leaders would motivate the followers to work towards achieving higher goals (Bass, 1985, 1994, 1999; Burns, 1978; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995).

Polychroniou (2009) demonstrated that a leader's emotional intelligence skills such as social skills, motivation, and empathy were positively correlated to transformational leadership. Transformational leaders were able to create an atmosphere of change, and they were able to stimulate and drive others to contribute more than expected. Another study by Leban & Zulauf (2004) also found many linkages between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. Transformational leaders empathize with followers and motivate followers to stretch beyond their call of duty.

### Relation Between Servant Leadership and Transformational Leadership

The characteristics of servant leadership and transformational leadership have many similarities. Both the servant leadership style and transformational leadership focus on addressing followers' needs, showing care, and concern for followers. Such leaders focus on the needs of the followers rather than plainly satisfying followers'

wants. Krishnan (2001) found that transformational leaders give more importance to others-oriented values as than to self-oriented values. Both servant leaders and transformational leaders bring about a change in the lives of the followers, and motivate the followers to contribute their best for the benefit of the organisation at large. Commonality between the two types of leadership is their focus on striking the emotional chord in the followers to motivate the followers to work towards their goals. Thus it can be hypothesized that

**H1:** Servant leadership is positively related to transformational leadership.

### Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is the employee's feeling of bond with the organisation. The more an individual is content with the job and the organisation, the more committed he or she would remain to the organisation. The leadership style practiced can influence the followers' organisational commitment.

### Dimensions of Organisational Commitment

Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment to, and the involvement in, the organisation. Continuance commitment is due to the consideration of perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation. Normative commitment refers to the perceived obligation to remain in the organisation (Tsai & Huang, 2008). The leaders' characteristics can be positively related to affective and normative commitment of the followers. However, continuance commitment could be only because the individual is weighing the efforts required to switch from the organisation.

### Leadership Characteristics and Follower's Organisational Commitment

Hasan & Subhani (2011) found that managerial social wisdom had a significant impact on organisational commitment and manager-subordinate relationship. Social wisdom of the managers refers to manager's intention to be sensitive to needs of employees in terms of skill-set development and enable employees to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively. Choong, Wong, & Lau (2012) indicated that a significant positive

relationship existed between psychological empowerment and organisational commitment. The concept of 'psychological empowerment' indicated that employees gain understanding of their abilities and they tend to make difference in the organisation. Lauture, Amewokunu, Lewis, & Lawson-Body (2012) argued that managers should be able to understand the needs of their employees and focus on factors such as skill development, training and staff development. These factors made a strong impact on employees' affective commitment (identification or emotional attachment with the organisation).

Studies by Savage-Austin & Honeycutt (2011), and Jones (2012) showed that there existed a relationship between servant leadership and better productivity and reduced turnover. Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts (2009) showed that servant leadership positively influenced followers' organisational commitment. Study by Joo, Yoon, & Jeung (2012) found that employees exhibited higher organisational commitment when they demonstrated higher core self-evaluations (such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional stability) and higher transformational leadership characteristics. It can be understood that both servant leaders and transformational leaders are instrumental in creating a positive work climate and so employees feel a strong sense of shared organisational values. These leadership styles motivate the followers and thus we can infer that a strong relationship exists between these leadership styles and followers' commitment.

Affective and normative commitment of followers would be impacted by the leadership style. However, continuance commitment would not depend on the leadership style. Thus, the relationship between servant leadership, transformational leadership, and followers' affective or normative commitment would be positive. This paves way for following hypotheses:

- H2:** Servant leadership is positively related to follower's affective commitment.
- H3:** Transformational leadership is positively related to follower's affective commitment.
- H4:** Servant leadership is positively related to follower's normative commitment.
- H5:** Transformational leadership is positively related to follower's normative commitment.

## Transformational Leadership as Mediator

Servant leadership focuses more on service to followers, while transformational leadership focuses more on inspiring followers to work towards organisational objectives (Stone *et al.*, 2004). Singh & Krishnan (2008) found that leader's altruism was positively related to transformational leadership, which in turn was positively related to follower's collective identity. Thus, organisational outcomes may be more closely related to transformational leadership than they are to servant leadership. Hence, we hypothesized:

- H6:** Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between servant leadership and follower's affective commitment.
- H7:** Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between servant leadership and follower's normative commitment.

## Interaction Between Servant Leadership and Transformational Leadership

Servant leadership and transformational leadership could be independently related to follower's commitment towards organisation. However, there could also be an interaction between servant leadership and transformational leadership in influencing followers' commitment. Transformational leadership could be a moderator for the effect of servant leadership on followers' affective and normative commitment. Choi & Mai-Dalton (1999) had hypothesized that effect of self-sacrificial leadership (predictor) on followers' attributions of charisma (dependent variable) will be moderated by the degree of the leader's competence (moderator). They found that the slope of the line for the leader with high competence was flatter, i.e., the effect of predictor on the dependent variable was high when the level of moderating variable is low and the effect of predictor on the dependent variable was comparatively low when the level of moderating variable is high. It implied that when the level of moderating variable is low, the predictor variable can compensate to some extent for the lack of moderating variable. Similarly in our study, we can expect that when the level of leader's transformational abilities are low, the effect of servant leadership on commitment

would increase. But when the leader's transformational abilities become high, the effect of servant leadership on the dependent variable would start dropping.

**H8:** Transformational leadership moderates the effect of servant leadership on follower's affective commitment such that servant leadership is positively related to affective commitment only when transformational leadership is low.

**H9:** Transformational leadership moderates the effect of servant leadership on follower's normative commitment such that servant leadership is positively related to normative commitment only when transformational leadership is low.

## Method

### Sample

Information technology (IT) industry was chosen for this study because IT industry is mostly service-based that have a culture of teamwork, and thus provides an environment conducive to study leader-follower relationship. Data were collected from employees of various IT firms located in India. A total of 105 employees (49 male, 56 female) volunteered to participate in the study and held at least a graduate degree. To be included in the study every employee had to satisfy two criteria: (1) the employee had to be at least six months old in the organisation; and (2) the employee had to be supervised by the current supervisor for at least 6 months. All the participants met the above-mentioned criteria and were included in the analysis. Of the participating employees, 25 percent were in the age group below 25 years, 74 percent of the employees were in the age group of 25 to 40 years, and 1 percent with age greater than 40 years. The sample was asked to give ratings for their supervisor's leadership behaviour (measuring servant leadership and transformational leadership) and for their own affective and normative commitment towards the organisation.

### Measures

The survey questionnaire had three sections. The study used measurement scales taken from prior studies. The Servant Leader Questionnaire developed by Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) was used to measure servant leadership. This instrument measures five factors of servant

leadership: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organisational stewardship. The instrument contained 23 items that measured frequency with which the supervisor displayed servant leadership behaviours. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Krishnan's Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (Loganathan & Krishnan, 2010) developed for the Indian context (Singh & Krishnan, 2007) was used to measure transformational leadership. The respondents were asked to answer the leadership questionnaire items regarding their supervisors. The questionnaire had six items to measure each of the five factors of transformational leadership (total of 30 items): idealised influence attributed, idealised influence behaviour, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

The commitment scales (revised version) developed by Meyer, Allen, & Smith, (1993) were used to measure affective commitment and normative commitment. The instrument had 6 items for each of the two dimensions of commitment, with 18 items in total. The items were measured on a five point Likert scale. The measures indicated the respondents' affective and normative commitment score.

### Common Method Variance

When all data are collected from a single source, it can lead to common method bias. To check for the presence of common method bias, Harman's one factor (or single-factor) test, which is one of the most widely used techniques, was used. This method involves loading all the variables in the study into an exploratory factor analysis and examining the un-rotated factor solution to determine the number of factors that account for the variance in the variables (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Jeong-Yeon, & Podsakoff, 2003). The basic assumption of this technique is that if a substantial amount of common method variance is present, either a single factor will emerge from the factor analysis or one general factor will account for the majority of the covariance among the measures. In the current study, principal component analysis was done on the four variables, and it was found that two factors emerged (Eigen value >1). This provides the confidence that common method bias might not have significantly affected the results of this study.

**Table 1: Correlations Between Variables <sup>a</sup>**

<i>N ranges from 100 to 106</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1. Affective commitment	3.22	0.61	(0.64)			
2. Normative commitment	3.21	0.58	***.40	(0.64)		
3. Transformational leadership	3.55	0.66	***.37	***.60	(0.95)	
4. Servant leadership	3.51	0.63	** .33	***.57	***.81	(0.93)

<sup>a</sup> Alphas are in parentheses along the diagonal.

† =  $p < .10$ . \* =  $p < .05$ . \*\* =  $p < .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < .001$

## Results

Table 1 contains the correlations between all the variables. Cronbach alphas are included along the diagonal. The mean and standard deviation values of all the variables are also shown in the table. Significant positive correlation seems to exist between all the variables. Hypotheses 1-5 are supported.

## Mediation

In order to check the mediation effect, the method suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986) was used. The method suggests that in order to prove mediation effect considering servant leadership as predictor or independent variable, transformational leadership as mediator, and commitment as dependent variable, following conditions must hold: first, independent variable must affect mediator variable; second, independent variable must affect dependent variable; and third, mediator must affect dependent variable, while the independent variable is in the regression model. The method indicates that if all the three conditions are satisfied in predicted direction, then when both the independent and mediator exist in the third regression model, effect of independent variable on dependent variable must be less compared to second regression equation. This is considered proof for mediation effect. Perfect mediation holds if independent

variable has no effect when mediator is controlled. Sobel’s test needs to be done to prove that the decrease in the effect of servant leadership on the dependent variable is statistically significant.

From Table 2, we find that when servant leadership alone is in the model in the second regression equation, effect of servant leadership on affective commitment is significant. However, when transformational leadership (mediator) is introduced in the third regression equation, the effect of transformational leadership on affective commitment alone is significant. The effect of servant leadership on affective commitment is no more significant, thereby indicating full mediation. Thus, full mediation is demonstrated where transformational leadership is the mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment. Sobel’s test was done to prove that the decrease in the effect of servant leadership was statistically significant. This provides support for Hypothesis 6.

From Table 3, we find that when servant leadership alone is in the model in the second regression equation, effect of servant leadership on normative commitment is significant. However, when transformational leadership (mediator) is introduced in the third regression equation, the effect of transformational leadership on normative commitment alone is significant. The effect of servant leadership on normative commitment is no more

**Table 2: Servant Leadership as Predictor, Transformational Leadership as Mediator for Affective Commitment**

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Parameter estimate</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Model R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Model F</i>
Transformational leadership	Servant leadership	.85	***14.52	.67	***210.88
Affective commitment	Servant leadership	.32 <sup>a</sup>	**3.56	.11	**12.70
Affective commitment	Servant leadership	.07 <sup>a</sup>	.44		
	Transformational leadership	.29	*1.98	.14	***8.51

<sup>a</sup>Sobel test statistic for transformational leadership mediating the effect of servant leadership on Affective commitment = 2.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

\* =  $p < 0.05$ . \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

**Table 3: Servant Leadership as Predictor, Transformational Leadership as Mediator for Normative Commitment**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Parameter estimate	T	Model R <sup>2</sup>	Model F
Transformational leadership	Servant leadership	.85	***14.52	.67	***210.88
Normative commitment	Servant leadership	.53 <sup>a</sup>	***7.21	.33	***51.99
Normative commitment	Servant leadership	.23 <sup>a</sup>	1.90		
	Transformational leadership	.34	***2.90	.38	***32.11

<sup>a</sup>Sobel test statistic for transformational leadership mediating the effect of servant leadership on Normative commitment = 3.04 (p<0.01).

\* = p < 0.05. \*\* = p < 0.01. \*\*\* = p < 0.001

**Table 4: Moderation Effect by Transformational Leadership**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Parameter estimate	T	Model R <sup>2</sup>	Model F
Affective commitment	Servant leadership	-.07	-.52		
	Transformational leadership	.18	1.33		
	Servant leadership *Transformational leadership	-.44	***-4.19	.27	***12.47
Normative Commitment	Servant leadership	.16	1.33		
	Transformational leadership	.29	*2.48		
	Servant leadership *Transformational leadership	-.21	*-2.39	.41	***24.30

\* = p < 0.05. \*\* = p < 0.01. \*\*\* = p < 0.001

significant, thereby indicating full mediation. Thus, full mediation is demonstrated where transformational leadership is the mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and normative commitment. Sobel’s test was done to prove that the decrease in the effect of servant leadership was statistically significant. This provides support for Hypothesis 7.

To check the moderation effect (Hypothesis 8) of transformational leadership on the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment, servant leadership and transformational leadership were multiplied to create the product term. In order to test Hypothesis 8, regression analysis was done with affective commitment as dependent variable, and servant leadership, transformational leadership, and the product term as independent variables. The process was repeated for normative commitment, to test Hypothesis 9. Table 4 includes the results of the regression analyses for both affective and normative commitment.

From Table 4, we find that the interaction term has a significant relationship with both affective and normative commitment, thereby demonstrating moderation. In order to find the direction of interaction, we plot the graphs between the servant leadership and affective commitment

for low and high values of transformational leadership. Figure 1 indicates the direction of interaction effect.

When transformational leadership is low, the effect of servant leadership on affective commitment is found to be increasing (positive slope). However the effect of servant leadership on affective commitment seems to be decreasing, when transformational leadership characteristics is high (negative slope). This supports Hypothesis 8.

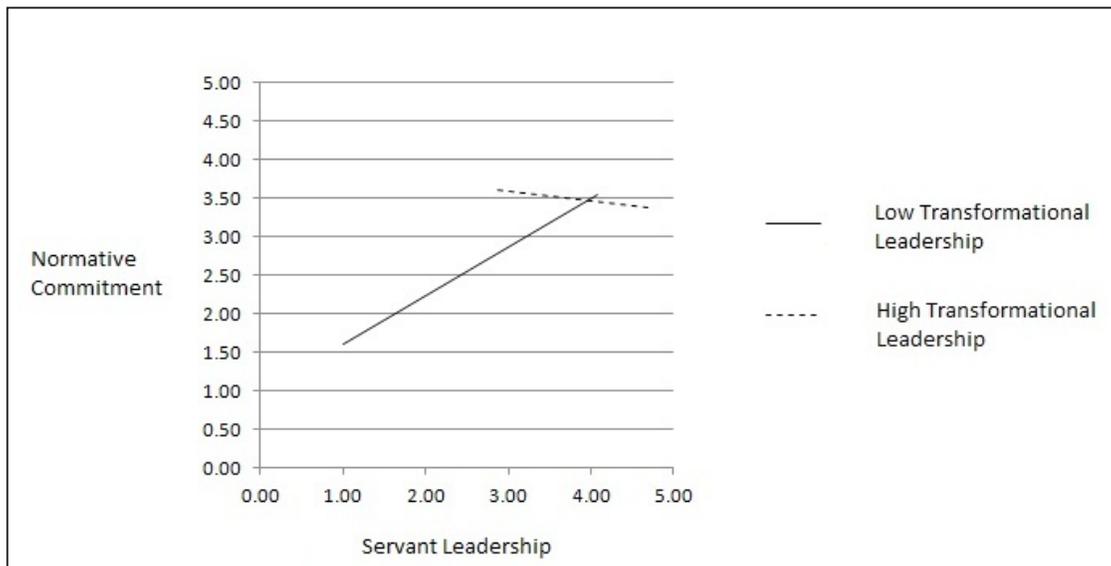
Figure 2 shows that when transformational leadership is low, the effect of servant leadership on normative commitment is found to be increasing (positive slope). However, the effect of servant leadership on normative commitment seems to be decreasing, when transformational leadership is high (negative slope). This supports Hypothesis 9.

It can be inferred that a leader who is low on transformational leadership, can improve followers’ commitment by being a servant leader. However, for a leader who is already high on transformational leadership, showing the characteristics of servant leader does not enhance followers’ commitment.

**Figure 1: Moderating Effect of Transformational Leadership on Affective Commitment**



**Figure 2: Moderating Effect of Transformational Leadership on Normative Commitment**



## Discussion

The results indicate that there exists a positive correlation between characteristics of servant leadership and characteristics of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and followers' affective and normative commitment. As hypothesized, the interaction term between servant leadership and transformational leadership has a significant effect on followers' affective and normative commitment. Probing into the direction of

interaction, we find that as hypothesized, the influence of servant leadership on affective and normative commitment is positive, only when transformational leadership is low. In addition, when transformational leadership is high, the influence of servant leadership on affective and normative commitment becomes negative.

## Theoretical Contributions

Stone, Russell, & Patterson (2004) argued that both servant leaders and transformational leaders show

concern for their followers; however, the overriding focus of the servant leader is upon service to the followers, and the transformational leaders have a greater concern for getting the followers to work towards organisational objectives. In support of the above position, we find that transformational leadership is a better predictor of followers' affective and normative commitment than servant leadership is, or rather transformational leadership addresses the followers' needs in order that they contribute better towards the organisational objectives. The effects of servant leadership on followers' affective and normative commitment disappear when transformational leadership is in the regression equation.

In the context of voluntary service organisations, Schneider & George (2011) found that perceptions of transformational leadership and servant leadership styles were highly correlated, but servant leadership was identified as a better predictor of the members' commitment. Our study addresses the effect of leadership style on affective and normative commitment in the context of for-profit organisations (using a sample of Indian IT organisations). We find that transformational leadership is a better predictor of followers' affective and normative commitment than servant leadership is. The contradiction in the results could be because in the case of voluntary organisations, the members have enrolled themselves voluntarily and so their motivation levels might be high, whereas in the case of for-profit organisations, employees might be concerned more about their individual benefits rather than about the organisational goals. Our study adds to the body of knowledge by checking for moderation and mediation by transformational leadership in the relationship between servant leadership and commitment. We find that transformational leadership fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and commitment. Our tests for moderation indicate that servant leaders would be able to positively impact followers' affective and normative commitment, only when transformational leadership is low. When the transformational leadership is high, there would be no need to display servant leadership as it would only lessen the impact on followers' affective and normative commitment.

### **Managerial and Organisational Implications**

In the short term, leaders must identify whether they are low or high on transformational leadership. If they are

low on transformational leadership, they should start displaying characteristics such as going beyond the call of duty to meet the followers' needs, helping the followers deal with emotional issues, and encouraging the followers to bring about a community spirit in the work place.

In the long term, it is imperative for the servant leaders to enhance the transformational leadership characteristics in order to positively impact the followers' affective and normative commitment. The servant leaders should display characteristics such as involving the followers to strive towards the organisation's common goal, recognising competence in the followers and encouraging them to build on the same, encouraging the followers to solve the problems independently and striving to bring the best out of every follower.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

We urge future researchers to perform a longitudinal research to assess how servant leaders can enhance their effect on followers' affective and normative commitment by displaying characteristics of transformational leadership. More in-depth analysis of dimensions of servant leadership, transformational leadership could be done to drill down and find if any specific characteristics of transformational leadership influences the effect of servant leadership on the follower's affective and normative commitment.

### **Conclusion**

Organisations are looking for ways to improve the affective and normative commitment of employees. Apart from the environmental factors, the leadership style practiced by the leaders impacts the follower's affective and normative commitment. Displaying the characteristics of servant leadership can be good start for any leader. The study addresses the relationship between servant leadership and transformational leadership. The full mediation effect of transformational leadership shows that servant leaders display characteristics of transformational leadership and only due to that they are able to positively influence the follower's affective and normative commitment. The study shows that only the leaders who are low on transformational leadership, need to display characteristics of servant leadership to improve

their influence on followers' affective and normative commitment. However, for leaders who are already high on transformational leadership, there is no need to display servant leadership characteristics, as it would only dampen the effect on affective and normative commitment.

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