Exploring the Influence of Principals' Servant Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Job Satisfaction in the Government Secondary Schools of Hawassa City Administration

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Abstract	Article Info
The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction. To achieve this purpose, the phenomenological qualitative research design was employed. The study was conducted in two government secondary schools, where 14 teachers and 4 principals were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings identified servant leaders' qualities, including giving first place for others, serving others' needs, supporting personal and social issues, showing humility, being a role model, and being open, honest, and ethical. The findings further underscored the characteristics of servant leadership that were exhibited by school principals. The

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teachers feel satisfied when their principals exhibit servant leadership characteristics, such as conceptualization, emotional healing, creating value for the community, putting followers first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically. This revealed that principals' servant leadership characteristics are critical that help to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. The study highlights that school principals should be aware of and practice all servant leadership characteristics to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Future research should consider expanding the scope to other regions, primary schools, and private schools.

Cite as:

Introduction

Leadership is one of the key driving forces for improving an organization's performance, and it can determine the success and failure of organizations (Akparep et al., 2019). In an educational setting, school leadership and management are considered critical elements for effective institutions, in addition to instruction and learning (Angwaomaodoko, 2023), when they are able to create a stronger, more cooperative, and more suitable environment in their schools (Guarino et al., 2006). Servant leadership is applicable in a variety of contexts, including educational institutions (Rahayani, 2010). It is an important leadership style that helps leaders create a conducive work

environment for employees and organizations (Walumbwa et al., 2010).

A servant leader is defined as a leader who prioritizes the needs of those they lead over their self-interest (Laub, 2004). A unique idea of servant leadership from other leadership is that of the leader as a servant; it places more emphasis on the needs of followers beyond leaders' needs and organizational demands (Greenleaf, 1970; Stone et al., 2004). According to Greenleaf, true leaders should put their workers' well-being first and strive for both their professional and personal development. In contrast to traditional leadership, which prioritizes the needs of the leader over those of the followers, servant leadership prioritizes the needs of the followers. Furthermore, servant leadership behaviors serve as the foundation for pervasive and fertile working environments that enable employees to develop positive and productive attitudes and behaviors toward others and the organization (Bambale & Shamsudin, 2015).

The term 'job satisfaction,' another essential element of the present article, refers to employees' attitude towards the job, and any positive or negative evaluations made of what they do are defined as job satisfaction (Weiss, 2002). Won and Chang (2020) define job satisfaction as a happy or positive emotional state that arises from an evaluation of one's work or work experiences. Job satisfaction can be defined as sets of facets that help as a means to obtain feelings of satisfaction (Aziri, 2011). These definitions

lead us to define teacher job satisfaction as the affective responses that teachers have to their work or to their role as teachers (Özkan & Akgenç, 2022). Many people realize that employees' effective and efficient work performance determines an organization's overall productivity and success (Green, 2016; Bin & Shmailan, 2015) and that more satisfied employees translate into higher performance (Shahu & Gole, 2008).

Teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by several factors. According to Von Fischer (2017), there are several factors that affect teachers' job satisfaction. One of the many important components that contribute to a suitable work environment for teachers to be happy in their jobs is the school leadership (Ma'ruf et al., 2020). Yet even if the study rejects the possibility of school principals having any direct influence on students' achievement, leadership directly affects teacher job satisfaction, and this factor also directly affects student achievement (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Simmons, 2020). If school leadership affects teacher satisfaction, retention, and student achievement, it is better for educational organizations to provide attention on effective school leadership (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Research has confirmed that servant leadership is accepted as a vital and appropriate style in public service delivery organizations and educational settings (Cerit, 2009).

We reviewed a wide range of conceptual and empirical research on servant leadership that was conducted in various countries,

cultures, and organizational settings in the world (e.g., Bambale & Shamsudin, 2015; Cerit, 2009; Liden et al., 2008; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2010, and others), but the majority has been done in the western context (Lobago & Abraham, 2016; Slack et al., 2020). Similarly, a systematic literature review conducted by Eva et al. (2019), which included 270 published articles and 15 unpublished manuscripts from 1998 to 2018, found that servant leadership is practiced in many cultures worldwide. The study also indicates that the majority of servant leadership research was conducted in Western countries and, to a very limited extent, in the African context. These studies may not explain the reality of Africa because there are differences in culture, civilization, and others.

Eckert and Rweyongoza (2015) emphasize the significance of recognizing cultural variations when examining people's attitudes and actions. They recognized that culture, religion, language, and educational background have an effect on leadership. Numerous studies have shown that it is important to expand the body of knowledge by conducting more empirical research in non-Western nations to confirm the applicability and generalizability (Eva et al., 2019; Langhof & Güldenberg, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the phenomenon of servant leadership and its influence on job satisfaction in this setting.

In servant leadership, there is also a scarcity of qualitative research; many studies on the area have been quantitative in

nature (McNeff and Irving, 2017; Winston, 2010). Similar to this, a systematic review conducted by Eva and his colleagues indicates that only a small number of qualitative manuscripts were published in the field within the time interval between 1998 and 2018, and the majority of studies were quantitative. In line with this, further qualitative research is needed to develop a comprehensive understanding of servant leadership (Winston, 2010). Hence, this study was conducted to understand the teachers' and principals' perceptions and lived experiences about principals' servant leadership characteristics and its influence on teachers' job satisfaction in government secondary schools of Hawassa city administration.

Furthermore, there is a shortage of study reports on the characteristics of servant leadership exhibited by leaders and its influence on employee job satisfaction in an Ethiopian context (Alemayehu, 2021). Despite, in the context of Hawassa city administration, the researchers could not find any published or unpublished qualitative research report in the title of the study.

The study seeks to provide valuable insights for school principals aiming to foster an organizational culture that enhances job satisfaction among teachers. Therefore, the study explores the influence of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- How do participants perceive servant leadership characteristics of school principals?
- How do participants perceive the influence of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction?

We believe that this study will assist in filling the gap in the theoretical discussion and practices concerning servant leadership. We also strongly believe that our study will add to servant leadership studies and the wider literature by highlighting the value of it on teachers' job satisfaction.

Method

Research Design

In this study, the phenomenological qualitative research design was employed. Phenomenological research design helps to identify the meaning of people's lived experiences in relation to a specific concept or phenomenon and then constructs a comprehensive description and exploration of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, the aim of phenomenological study is to capture subjective, "insider" meanings and lived experiences of individuals (Finlay, 2009). It is an effective approach to obtaining in-depth and nuanced insights into the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In this context, this design was used because it helps to explore participants' perception, understanding, and lived experience about their principals' servant leadership characteristics and its influence on teachers' job-satisfaction. Phenomenon for this study is servant leadership characteristics that are exhibited by principals and its influence on teachers' job satisfaction. This design is appropriate for this study because it provides an avenue for participants to describe their

experience about the issue in their own words, expressions and languages.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in two selected government secondary schools in Hawassa city Administration. The purposive sampling technique was used for selection. Several factors were considered to choose these schools as the study setting. The schools have teachers with a diversified profile (experience, qualification, and age), popularity, and long duration, and students' achievement progress was considered. From these schools, 14 (5 female and 9 male) participant teachers and 4 principals were selected through the purposive sampling technique. Creswell (2012) posits that purposive sampling enables researchers to select the most appropriate and relevant individuals for the study. As a result of this, teachers and principals who have 10 and above years' total experience and who have more than two years' experience at the current school were selected. The reason why we supposed these participants was to have adequate information and experience and then provide the desired information. The main criteria used to select these participants were their experiences and their willingness to participate in the interview. Table 1 depicts the summary of demographic data.

Table1.

Demographic data

No	Participants	Code	Sex	Age	Level of education	Experience at current school	Total experience
1	Teacher 1	T1	Male	54	MSc	5	32
2	Teacher 2	T2	Male	36	BSc	8	10
3	Teacher 3	T3	Female	49	BA	12	28

4	Teacher 4	T4	Male	58	BSc	11	38
5	Teacher 5	T5	Female	48	MA	12	28
6	Teacher 6	T6	Female	57	BA	7	38
7	Teacher 7	T7	Male	32	BSc	6	12
8	Teacher 8	T8	Male	57	MSc	7	34
9	Teacher 9	T9	Female	54	BSc	8	33
10	Teacher 10	T10	Female	57	BA	6	34
11	Teacher 11	T11	Male	35	MSc	8	12
12	Teacher 12	T12	Male	40	MA	5	17
13	Teacher 13	T13	Female	42	BA	4	23
14	Teacher 14	T14	Male	35	BSc	3	15
15	Principal 1	P1	Male	52	MA	7	30
16	Principal 2	P2	Male	41	MA	3	20
17	Principal 3	P3	Male	51	MA	15	32
18	Principal 4	P4	Male	40	MA	6	19

Data Collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants (teachers and principals). Because this gives us the opportunity to obtain understanding about participants' experiences, perceptions, and feelings related to the phenomenon. It is also helpful to capture participants' perceptions about principals' servant leadership characteristics and their influence on teachers' job satisfaction through their own words (Creswell, 2012). Semi-structured interviews enabled us to prepare interview questions in advance. This helps the researchers to be well-prepared and competent during the interview. Therefore, the researchers used a set of predetermined open-ended questions to guide a conversation with participants, giving them the opportunity to delve specific themes and response in more detail. Semi-structured interview allows for further questions

when clarification is required (Ruslin et al., 2022). Participants were asked a wide range of questions related to who their servant leader was, what servant leadership characteristics were exhibited by principals, and how these principals' servant leadership characteristics influence the teachers' job satisfaction.

The interviews were conducted in person. Interviews with teachers took place in teachers' tea cafeterias and department offices based on the time frames that were arranged; interviews with principals were held in their offices. That was done to minimize distraction. Due to the participants' choice, the interview was conducted in Amharic. Each individual interview lasted approximately 15 up to 40 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded after consent was obtained from respondents.

In addition to this, field notes played critical roles in capturing events, conversations, and behavior observed in the field. It enables the collection of a wide range of information, such as what researchers heard, felt, saw, and thought during the study (Creswell, 2012; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The main purpose is to capture nuances and contextual information that might easily forgotten over time and often serve to supplement information gathered from interviews by providing further insights on the observed setting and behavior.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically. In a qualitative study, the data analysis process takes place simultaneously with the data collection process (Strauss and Corbin 1990). After interviews with participants, the first step was the transcription of interviews and interview notes. Secondly, the transcribed interviews were translated from Amharic to

English. To fully understand the meaning of the phenomenon, each transcript was read multiple times. Thirdly, the data coding process was started. After intensive reviews of the transcript, coding data, and comparison of similarity in the responses, the data were classified into four broad themes and seven subthemes.

To ensure accuracy of findings, researchers checked study findings with participants. Asking participants for feedback is the most important technique to establish the credibility of the study findings' (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2016). Similarly, researchers asked experts outside of the study to conduct a thorough review of the study's report. These experts checked whether the findings were grounded in the data, whether inferences were logical, whether the themes were appropriate, and the degree of researchers' bias also checked. To ensure accuracy and to generate trustworthy results of the study, researchers obtain the support from participants and professionals for different aspects of the study report (Creswell, 2012).

Ethical Issues

Researchers obtained a formal letter of cooperation from Hawassa University, College of Education, and we provided that to 2 sampled schools for data collection permission. The study was approved by the College of Education Ethics Review Committee at Hawassa University under reference number [COE-RECC-10/23]. Moreover, informed consent was obtained from the participants before starting the data collection process, including permission for publication of the results obtained from interview transcripts. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and they were free to leave at any time if they so wished, without giving a reason or facing any negative consequences. Participants were also guaranteed that the information

would be kept confidential and anonymous. To maintain confidentiality during the transcription and analysis of the interview data, each participant was given a numerical identifier as participant T1, T2, T3, up to T14 for teachers and P1, P2, P3, and P4 for principals.

Results

The results of this study were presented based on the following three broad themes and seven subthemes. These broad themes are**:** who is a servant leader, principals' servant leadership characteristics and practices, and the influences of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction.

Who is a Servant Leader?

Questions were posed to the participants regarding how they define servant leader. Most of participants defined a servant leader as the one who gives first place for others; the one who supports employee personal and social problems; the one who uses persuasion instead of using coercion; shows humility; a role model; the one who is open, honest, and ethical.

The participants reflected their perception about who is a servant leader for them. T1 and T9 explained that a servant leader is the one who gives first place for the others. Most of the participants' perceptions approach the concepts of a servant leader as the one who provides services for others. The major implication of this is that servant leaders place the good of employees over their own needs.

Also, true servant leaders are satisfied by serving others' needs. Similarly, more than eight participants stated that servant leaders are the ones who provide help and support for the employee's work-

related, personal, and social problems. This implies that teachers need support on the matter of the outside workplace. And this type of leader shows genuine concern to provide support for others.

Another servant leader quality shared by participants was listening. Most participants shared servant leaders, as a leader is the one who listens to personal and social problems and provides support for the others. This insight is supported by T12, "*servant leaders first ask and listen to the concern, need, and idea of employees before taking any action.*" The implication of this is that servant leaders show their concern to listen to others idea instead of talking more.

Another participant, T2, shared an idea of servant leadership, saying that a servant leader is one who makes friendly relationships and well approaches with teachers and students. One participant praising a servant leader said, "*A leader is the one who works collaboratively with the employee.*" (T3) T7 added, "*A servant leader is different from others because he serves his followers like a servant, he does not act like a boss, and he is responsible for the others.*" This implies that servant leaders influence others through persuasion instead of using coercion.

Other participants mentioned extensively about servant leaders' quality as a role model behavior. T3 claimed that servant leaders are more promoted to show appropriate behavior for others rather than commanding. T7 and T14 explained that a servant leader inspires others to follow in their footsteps by showing appropriate behavior that helps society and the organization. Similarly, the participant mentioned his experiences: "*Leaders are role models for teachers and the school community in time management, commitment, and ethical behavior.*" (T4) This insight was supported by T6 and T9, as servant leaders

always benchmark characteristics of effective leaders. Similarly, T13 expressed, *"servant leaders impact employee characteristics through their action."* These types of leaders lead others through their behavior and action.

Other participants mentioned widely that servant leaders' quality was ethical behavior. T4 stated that a servant leader is the one who respects others and his/her work. T6 and T13 mentioned that servant leaders fairly distribute any incentive for others. According to T8 and T14, a servant leader is behaving ethically, being open, and showing his/her honesty through his/her action. In addition to this, T2, 8, and 10 perceived that a servant leader is the one who shows humility in his or her characteristics that does not promote him or herself. This implies that servant leaders do not negotiate for their ethical principles to achieve a result.

Another participant shared a memory of his school leader's servant leadership behavior as: *"A servant leader is the one who can formulate long vision and wisely encourage others' involvement."* (T2) T8 also supported, *"A servant leader is the one who is capable of seeing the big picture of the organization beyond daily operation."* T14 also added, "A servant leader is the one who provides large effort for his vision." This implies that servant leaders are visionary, and they align people with their visions.

Principals' Servant Leadership Characteristics and Practices
The participants shared their experiences about servant leadership characteristics exhibited by principals. These participants' views are categorized into seven subthemes: conceptualizing, emotional healing, creating value for the community, putting followers first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically.

Conceptualizing

Participants discussed how they and their principals can see beyond the school's immediate surroundings (daily operations) and, while doing so, recognize when something goes wrong ways and find innovative solutions to difficult situations that arise. According to participant T11, he got a leader who constantly assesses the effects of every action that affects an organization's performance, resolves conflicts, and solves problems that arise from actions that undermine the organization's ability to function as a whole. Similarly, the majority of principals who took part in the study mentioned that they had a goal, a vision, and both short- and long-term strategic plans. They discuss their goals and the school's vision with teachers and other stakeholders. As P1 said, they offer creative solutions to the issues that arise in the school.

Emotional Healing

Most of the participants mentioned that the principals understand teachers' problems and well-being. Participant shared what he experienced by saying, *"I obtained very smart principal at the past time in this school, but not now."* (T2) He said that this principal asks and listens to teachers and students' problem friendly. He added that, his principal most of time gives advice and supports to the students rather than solely rushing to take harsh measures. Another participant shared a memory of behavior that was exhibited by his principal: "My principal prioritizes teachers' interests and well-being." (T9) And continued, *"If he sees me coming in late, he asks about the personal issue that caused my lateness, but he never questions why I am late."* He added that his principal gives priority to his well-being. Similarly, T5 appreciated her principal because her principal recognized personal, family, and

work-related problems. Furthermore, T9 also added that his principal asks about his problem and well-being before asking about the work. Another principal characteristic and practice that is extensively mentioned is listening to others. T6 greatly appreciated her leader's effort to listen to her problems and concerns. She said *"I respect my principal because of his approach and support."*. T12 mentioned, *"My principal listens equally to both teachers and students to solve problems."* Teachers' overall perception implies that a teacher needs to be listened to, and principals need to support on matters in and outside of the workplace. As P2 said, *"We listen to teachers' personal problems, and we support teachers who are in need of financial help."*

Creating Value for the Community

P2 mentioned that *"when financially struggling students come from the community, we welcome them, support them, and teach them"*. For instance, we buy pens and notebooks for such students. We finance this activity from the school budget, donations from wealthy individuals, staff, and students. Also, he added that they are preparing dorms for students who wish to read at night in the library. P1 stated that for the community, we teach their students, and we deliver them for the results. In addition, he said that they collaborated and worked with the community to change schools. P3 also added that they are involved in the activity that benefits the community. For example, they make their school field available for different groups who wish to play sports out of school hours that benefit them and assist the school to obtain additional financial sources. Another teacher participant concurred with this idea and described her leader's behavior: *"I have met a person who works for the community and inspires others to do the same."* (T10)

Putting Followers First

The principals' servant leadership characteristics that shared by participants was putting followers first. T1 expressed his experiences as follows:

> *"I got principal in another school provides first place for teachers. This principal said, **"I am not the boss for you, I am the facilitator, and I am here to serve you"**. He said for teachers, "you are the main component to improving instruction and the school". This leader mostly scarifies his time to support teachers.*

Their principal pays attention to teachers' issues and offers solutions, as T5 and T7 mentioned. Another female participant talked the opposite, and she described her present school leader's behavior: *"I had no principal at this school in present time who listened intently to my concerns and offered assistance."* (T6) However, before, she got such kinds of principals.

Helping Subordinates Grow and Succeed

Participants also talked about how much they admired their leaders for being sensitive to their personal and professional growth. Participant shared the following insights from his experiences:

> *"The previous principal of my school was an extremely smart person who offered many opportunities to enable the teachers to reach their maximum potential. Through field trips, training, and the creation of an environment that supports staff self-learning, this principal encourages teachers to grow in their careers and fosters learning. Now our school is model, and only a few teachers can count as BA/BSC holders. This result comes from the past principal's effort."* (T2)

T12 also stated, "*My previous principal committed to improve teachers' potential in different ways, such as staff self-training and field trips.*" In contrast to this, after that principal, he did not get such kind of principals in this school. T3 and T4 reported that their present school principals express gratitude for their outstanding work. P3 further stated, **"***Through CPD and other long- and short-term training, we support and foster an environment where teachers may advance their careers***"**. This suggests that mentorship and fostering an environment that is conducive to teachers' professional development are the responsibilities of leaders.

Empowering

The principal also exhibited another characteristic of a servant: empowering teachers. In relation to this, the participant shared his principal's behavior in following ways:

> *"Before I transferred to this school, I got a principal that shared full responsibilities for the teachers and vision for entire groups, and that created a potential impact on students'. This principal shows trust in others. Allows teachers to be independent, make decisions on their own work, and be confident in their potential."* (T1)

In a similar vein, T7 and T10 appreciate their principals for assigning work that comes with complete responsibility. T2 further stated that he had a principal at his former school who shared complete responsibility and had trust in the abilities of others. Such leaders become more successful because the achievement of one school is the result of all school communities.

Behaving Ethically

Another servant characteristics practiced by principal was behaving ethically. T5 responded, *"In my long experience, I have encountered some really approachable principals who interact honestly, treat teachers fairly, and encourage open communication."* T4 also shared his experiences, *"My previous principal treats all teachers equally." "I don't have a principal like that in this school right now."* (T4) Another participant also added that, through her experiences, he got ethical school leaders in this school and other schools. (T6) These principals were not fault finders. T7 and T9 reported that they obtained some principals at their schools that behave ethically. These principals treat teachers fairly, interact openly with teachers, and responsible for others. On the other hand, the participant described the challenges he has faced as follows: *"I have a principal who does not treat teachers equally for incentives."* (T14) This implies that when the leader works with an employee in an organization, he/she is expected to show open behavior, transparency, honesty, treat people equally, and be accountable for others.

The Influence of Principals' Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Most of participants shared how principals' servant leadership characteristics influence the teachers' job satisfaction. Participants have mentioned that servant leadership characteristics exhibited by principals' play a significant role in teachers' job satisfaction. The teacher participants shared that the principal's servant leadership characteristics influenced their job satisfaction in different ways.

Teachers felt satisfied when their principals created good relationships and approached them through providing support for their problems.

(T3,5,6,7 & 9). These teachers were also satisfied at their job because of the friendly support and relationship with their principals. Another participant agreed with this notion and shared this idea as follows: *"When principals show supportive behavior that encourage teachers to enjoy their job and satisfied teachers also encourage taking additional task and responsibility."* (T11). The perceptions of these teachers indicated that principals' supportive behavior and good relationship with teachers can create great impact on teachers' job satisfaction.

Participants valued leaders who are sensitive to their feelings and concerns. T9 shared that when principals give attention to personal concerns and ask about her problems and well-being before asking about the work, that greatly impacts her job satisfaction. She added that, in contrast to that when principal follows weak approach like boss-oriented and fault-finding approaches that create dissatisfaction. Another participant praises her principal effort: *"My previous principal asked about my personal problem that creates a large impact on my job."* (T6) These teachers were satisfied because their principals support them in solving their problems.

T2 shares about his previous principal characteristics: *"My previous principal contributed to teachers' professional development by providing training opportunities and creating suitable environments that encourage teachers to realize their dreams."* Similarly, another participant appreciated the principal effort: *"My principal committed to improving teachers' potential in different ways like field trips and staff self-training that creates a large impact on the teachers' job satisfaction."* (T12) T4 appreciated how his school principal encouraged his performance and professional development, and this helped him to be satisfied with his job. In this case principals are responsible to contribute to teachers' professional

development and performances with. In contrast to this, another participant shared his principals' behavior in following ways:

"I experienced extremely terrible leadership in my first school—the exact opposite of servant leadership, which led me up to leave my profession. Following transfer to a new school, I have got another good supportive leadership and principal that helped me to change my attitude and helped me to continue my profession through his encouragement." (T10)

T1 mentioned that his previous principal provided autonomy and full responsibility to the teachers to decide for their work independently without interferences that create job happiness. Similarly, T7 shared that his principal delegates responsibilities and shares power. T10 commented: *"My principal delegates tasks based on teachers' capacity these create impact on their satisfaction"*. These perceptions indicated that, teachers are satisfied if their principals provided them with independence and full responsibilities without interference.

Other principals' characteristics that create impact on teachers' job satisfaction are ethical and honesty characteristics. T5 mentioned that her previous principal distributed incentive for the teachers that created good feeling on her work. Similarly, T13 states, *"I feel satisfied when the principal treats me fairly and equally with other teachers based on our performance."* T9 also mentioned what she experienced: *"I feel satisfied when my school principal shows real well- approach, agreeableness, and open communication."* These perceptions indicated that when principals show agreeableness, honesty behavior, ethical, genuine and true feeling for others, it creates internal happiness among teachers. On the other hand, *"I got a principal who treats teachers unfairly, and these*

principal forms an informal group that supports him, gives for these teachers unfair support, and unfairly holds my incentives that creates a negative impact on my job." (T14).

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' servant leadership characteristics influence on teachers' job satisfaction. The participants conceptualized servant leadership by indicating characteristics that exhibited by principals and principals' servant leadership characteristics influence on teachers' job satisfaction. These are discussed below.

Who is a servant leader?

Participants were asked in first interview question to share their perception about who a servant leader for them is. They define servant leader as the one who gives first place for the others and serve others need. The finding highlights servant leaders as the ones who provide services for others they led. Similar to this finding, the main motive and role of servant leaders is to serve others (Greenleaf, 1970, as cited in Olesia et al., 2014). Reed, et al. (2011) confirmed that servant leaders build people through providing services, genuinely putting people in first place, listening to and respecting others.

Moreover, participants perceived that, servant leader promote provide help, sensitive for others well-being, and listen teachers' idea, concern, and problems. In similar to this, Yukl, (2010) found out servant leader servant leader provides values and develops people through listening, empowering and showing his commitment for the growth of employee.

The current study revealed that servant leaders foster ethical characteristics through interacting honestly, treating all fairly, encouraging open communication, and respecting others. Similar to these, Liden et al., (2008) confirmed as servant leaders behave ethical that contain interacting willingly, openly, fairly, responsibly and honestly with others in the organization and even the society at large.

Principals' Servant Leadership Characteristics and Practices

Participants in this study shared servant leadership characteristics exhibited by the principals. These characteristics are providing value for the people through respecting others, asking and listening to teachers' concerns first, and showing appreciation for good performances. Similar to this, Laub (1999) found out that leaders work with people in organizations through giving priority for others, listening, respecting others, show love and compassion towards others and believing in them.

One of the findings from this study is that school leaders have conceptual skills that help them see beyond immediate surroundings (day-to-day operations). Similar to this finding, servant leaders are able to view the organization beyond its limits, adjust goals, and find innovative answers to the organization's complicated difficulties (Liden et al. 2008). To achieve the goals and objectives of both individuals and organizations', servant leaders need to possess wide conceptual skills.

The current study revealed that principals work to develop teachers through creating training opportunities, encouraging teachers to upgrade their profession, creating a suitable environment for learning, and facilitating necessary resources such as internet access and

teaching and learning materials. In line with this finding, Laub (1999) confirmed that servant leader develop people through providing opportunities for learning and growth. Again, Liden et al. (2008) and Stone et al. (2004) found that servant leaders show genuine concern for others' and provide support and mentoring for their career growth and development.

This study found that principals empower teachers, share and delegate tasks with full responsibility and believe on others ability. Similar to this, servant leaders pay more attention to employee development and well-being, as well as share their power to make decisions on the job (Hai & Van, 2021). Servant leaders give to subordinates the freedom to identify problems and make decisions during problems-solving activities (Liden et al., 2008).

The Influence of Principals' Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

The findings of this study revealed that principals' servant leadership characteristics have significant effect on teachers' job satisfaction. Different studies (e.g. Cerit, 2009; VonFischer, 2017; Wong, 2019) also confirmed that principals' servant leadership characteristics influence the teachers' job satisfaction. Teacher participants perceived that they felt satisfied when their principal provided value for them through providing time to listen to them, being sensitive to their concerns, and asking about personal and work-related problems. Similarly, Cerit (2009) confirmed that servant leadership characteristics (providing value for the people) are strongly related with teachers' job satisfaction.

The findings of this study revealed that participants felt satisfied when their principals contributed for their effort to professional

development through providing different training opportunities, encouraging teachers to upgrade on their profession, and creating a suitable environment for learning. Similar to this result, Cerit (2009) found out school principals' effort to contribute to teachers' professional development had essential effects on teachers' job satisfaction. According to Wong (2019), professional development resources and training are the means as to improve employee practices.

Participants felt satisfied when their principal provided autonomy and delegated full responsibility to the teachers to decide for their work independently. Many studies findings show that enhancing employee autonomy and empowerment positively affects workers' job satisfaction. These studies indicated that empowered teachers are more likely to take pride in their work, which greatly enhances job satisfaction (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Dilekci, 2022).

The findings of this study demonstrated that a principal's ethical and honesty behavior can affect teachers' satisfaction with their jobs. A study by Cansoy, Parlar, and Türkoğlu (2021) found a positive correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and the ethical leadership characteristics of principals. Participants felt satisfied because their principals displayed authenticity characteristics like open communication, agreeable and well-approach. Different studies (eg. Hebert, 2004; Hui, et al., 2013) confirmed that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by suitable school environment, principals' support for teachers' question, open communication and respect from principals to teachers.

Conclusion

Research participants expressed their perceptions about who is a servant leader. Regarding to this, the servant leader is perceived as the one who give first place for others, serve others need, listen and support others personal and social problem, show humility, role model, honesty and ethical leader.

This study identified servant leadership characteristics that exhibited by secondary school principals. These characteristics are conceptualizing, emotional healing, creating value for the community, putting followers first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically.

The result of the study also revealed that teacher participants felt satisfied if their principals exhibited characteristics of providing value for people, contributing to their professional development, building community, displaying authenticity and sharing power and responsibilities. It was concluded that principals' servant leadership characteristics have significant effect on teachers' job satisfaction.

Theoretical and Practical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several theoretical implications. The servant leadership theoretical model, which was developed by Liden et al. (2008), is empirically supported by this study. This model aims to elucidate how leaders impact their immediate followers' job outcomes, including commitment, satisfaction, and performance. Our study corroborates this theoretical perspective, demonstrating how servant leadership characteristics can influence teachers' job satisfaction. In addition to this, previous research in other contexts shows that there is

a positive relationship between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction (Cerit, 2009; VonFischer, 2017; Wong, 2019). There is scarcity or little known about principals' servant leadership characteristics influence on teachers' job satisfaction in the Ethiopian context. The present study provided theoretical knowledge about the influence of principals' servant leadership on teachers' job satisfaction, filling research gaps.

The findings of this study demonstrate that principals who exhibit servant leadership characteristics contributed to enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. These findings also provide practical guidance for schools and other educational organizations to cultivate a servant leadership culture, create favorable environments, and ultimately bolster employee well-being and satisfaction. In the same way, studies indicate that satisfied teachers provide their pupils with better instruction and learning assistance (Kunter et al., 2013), which can increase student performance (Nguni et al., 2006). Teachers' satisfaction is influenced by the following factors: achievement, advancement, recognition, salary, working environment, policies and practices, and job security (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014; Ozguner & Ozguner, 2014). Similarly, we strongly believe that our study gives constructive feedback for government and policymakers regarding teachers' job satisfaction to improve teachers' life status through better pay, work conditions, recognition, and advancement in the global and Ethiopian context.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions reached, the following possible recommendations are forwarded to increase the teachers' job satisfaction. According to Lamaro and Okello (2024), effective work of

teachers resulted from improved job satisfaction. Therefore, school principals should make an effort to contribute to teachers' job satisfaction through putting first place for teachers' needs, listening and helping teachers' problems, paying attention to their concerns, creating a suitable environment for learning and professional development, building friendly relationships with teachers, developing trust on teachers, empowering and sharing power for teachers, and displaying ethical behavior. School principals should be aware and practices all servant leadership characteristics and should pay special attention to the emotional healing, putting followers' first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically to improve teachers' job satisfaction. At the end, this study's findings provided indications regarding how servant leadership impacts teachers' job satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended that universities develop curricula that would equip school administrators with the abilities and knowledge regarding the theory and application of servant leadership.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study has certain limitations that need to be considered in future research. This study was limited to two government secondary schools and small sample sizes. It is challenging to generalize the findings of this study to a larger setting. Finally, the researchers would like to suggest the following areas for additional study for anyone looking to expand or enhance the work.

- Although the dynamics of teachers' job satisfaction may vary across different educational levels due to variations in teachers' duties, payment, working environment, growth, interpersonal relationships, and students' age, this study only looked at secondary schools. Thus, it would be wise to investigate if the

characteristics of servant leadership are as helpful in fostering work satisfaction in elementary, middle, and high schools.

- An analysis that compares private and public schools might shed light on whether servant leadership techniques work better in one setting than the other. It is necessary to conduct comparative study on servant leadership practice and its effect on employee job satisfaction in two or more public and/or private and/or service-oriented organizations.

- The future research should, include other schools from Hawassa City Administration and other regions to give insight into this study's validity.

- It is necessary to conduct longitudinal studies to examine the impact of servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction in Ethiopian context.

- It is necessary for future study if it could investigate influences of servant leadership characteristics on students' achievement in Ethiopian context.

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