Effects of Servant Leadership on Institutional Effectiveness of Public Universities in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The aim of this cross-sectional survey study was to investigate the practices, correlations and effects of servant leadership on institutional effectiveness in universities. It attempted to depict the existing practices in relation to the magnitude and gaps of exercising servant leadership and institutional effectiveness in universities. A total of 722 participants consisting of the faculty, department heads, deans, directors and students were involved in providing data via closed-ended questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that servant leadership and institutional effectiveness were demonstrated at 'moderate' levels. Besides, Positive and significant relationship was recorded between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness. It was also found that servant leadership has significant predictive power in predicting institutional effectiveness of universities. From this, we may conclude that applying servant leadership in higher education institutions help facilitate institutional effectiveness and gear to university success. Consequently, leaders of higher education institutions are recommended to implant and exercise servant leadership approach vigorously so that they can render the required services and bring about success for their institutions. In addition, researchers are recommended to conduct further longitudinal studies and come up with comprehensive and causative findings to provide better information for decision makers and practitioners. On top of this, the findings of this survey study may signal the contributions of servant leadership to institutional effectiveness of universities, and may kick off investigators carryout similar studies, even in different contexts.

Keywords: Institutional Effectiveness; Public University; Servant Leadership.

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1. Introduction

This study focuses on investigating the effect of servant leadership practices on institutional effectiveness of higher education. In its true sense of leadership, the issue of rendering service to the beneficiaries becomes the decisive point. With no servanthood mindsets and practices, one cannot boldly talk about the existence of true leadership. By its very nature, leadership does mean serving-that is, serving the constituents. A leader must primarily be concerned about his/her deep motive and commitment to serve rather than viewing leadership positions as the best gateways to be served. Higher education performance in those core functions (i.e., instructions, research works and community outreach services) greatly depend upon leadership as it has significant impact on organizational effectiveness [7]. In relation to this [27] noted that "proper leadership in universities remains the missing link for effective and visionary performance…..that universities' performance may not improve until leadership is given critical attention" (p.89). He also extended his discussion by noting that university's effective performance and success are measured in terms of quality educational services such as quality research and publications, teaching and community services rendered to service recipients. In addition, the state of any social organization is largely impacted by leaders' behaviors exhibited in the day-to-day leadership practices [9] and [24]. Hence, organizations with autocratic leadership cultures characterized by tight controls and excessive directions hinder employees' freedom to think and act independently, and choke their creativities and innovations. Consequently, such leadership practices lead to failures of achieving predefined goals and unable to bring sustainable organizational developments. In this regard, a study by [4] indicated that leadership traits characterized by "too much directions and close monitoring leave no space for employees to breath and think independently hampering innovation and learning" (p.2). Conversely, a leadership approach that capitalizes the active participation of employees in shared leadership and ethical decision making processes has paramount importance in creating healthy organizations and make them effective in their goal attainments. In favor of this, [24] argues that a leadership approach that paves the opportunities for employees to demonstrate and allows everyone participate in leadership roles has paramount importance in increasing healthy and effective organizations. He further explained that an organization with follower-centeric perspectives and leadership practices, and a shift in emphasis toward viewing employees as indispensable organizational assets also induce success. Follower-centric leadership practices usually emphasis on caring of employees, empowering, creating relationships based on trust and integrity, and inspiring them to be more productive and successful. These leadership attributes also serve as bedrocks for creating healthy and productive organizations with a shared responsibility [3,17,24]. On top of this, a study by [31] indicated that leadership which gives due regard for people is crucial for realizing organizational success. Leaders of such thinking assume leading as a "privilege to serve others [but not] a display of power or opportunity to accumulate [personal] wealth" [31]. Of all other leadership theories, the findings of many studies show that servant leadership with leader's heightened personal integrity, credibility, trustworthiness, with special focus on followers and enhanced morality has positive linkages with higher and sustainable organizational performance [3,7,16,17]. Servant leaders set standards to be used for measuring performances and provide consistent feedbacks and encouragements with the aim of strengthening employees' and organizational growth and thereby ensure mutual successes. In relation to this [3] have indicated that servant leaders and leadership traits serve as foundations for high performing organizations by creating a compelling vision, values, and a responsive culture via turning the traditional

organizational pyramid (hierarchy) upside down or into heterarchy. Reference [13] further consolidated the idea based on his empirical findings as employees in organizations show better respect and due regard for servant leaders, demonstrate higher morale and confidence when working with servant leaders, and most importantly, more productive and successful. As a result, servant leadership is not only a leadership approach that creates pleasant, trustworthy and vigorous relationships between leaders and followers but also makes followers feel delighted and responsible on their jobs, and invest their utmost knowledge and skills for the organization as well as boost its productivity. Research findings also indicate that there are enhanced employee organizational engagements, effectiveness and creativity when organizations are led by servant leaders and servant leadership philosophy [13,28]. Moreover, servant leadership has a unique concern for followers and organizations rather than focusing on sustaining leadership positions. It is defined as putting and actuating services to others at the forefront of any leadership exercises with enhanced ethical and moral responsibilities. It is selfless leadership act with top priorities in serving and fulfilling the needs of others (customers and stakeholders). While serving, leaders put the needs of their followers and customers first, forsake private benefits and advancements, exercise shared leadership, help followers develop and maximize performance, and seek to learn from their followers. This may also help create conducive working environs with smooth and harmonious leader-follower relationships and goal focused practices which ultimately help make organizations outperform and demonstrate effectiveness. Even though studies indicating the application of servant leadership in higher education institutions are scarce compared to other business, public and religious institutions, some assert its applicability and paramount importance for enhancing instructional tasks in academic realm. In this regard, [26] argue that servant leadership is more tenable for higher education as it results in improved teaching and research, facilitates execution of leadership responsibilities, promotes "academic collegiality, shared leadership, the retention of academic freedom, and a better balance of academic and managerial power within the university" (p.177). Since the ultimate purpose of servant leadership is serving by leading, its application in higher education institutions enables the academic community exercise essential human values such as morality, integrity, good research, social responsibility and accountability, and being available to one's colleagues, students and other important stakeholders. In relation to this, a study by [9] showed that servant leadership is a preferred leadership approach for higher education as it promotes strong employee focus, open communications and short power distance. Moreover, studies conducted by [10,21,30,32] indicated that servant leadership in higher education plays key roles in initiating innovative ideas, creating conducive instructional environments and ensure better academic performances. Despite this, studies conducted by [12,23,19] showed that higher education institutions in Ethiopia are in short of leaders deep-rooted in moral teaching and feelings of professionalism, and those who view leading as an opportunity and responsibility to serve staffs, students and the community at large. It was also indicated that often leaders in higher education institutions fail to assume themselves as servants to their followers, and reluctant to make themselves accountable for and take responsibilities for instructional failures. In addition, the findings of [15,14,2] augmented the idea that officious and autocratic leadership cultures manifested by leaders of higher education institutions are common practices that lead to institutional ineffectiveness. On the other hand, there also paucity of research works in connection to institutional effectiveness of educational sector in general and universities in particular. On top of this, there are no studies made with regard to the relationship between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness at higher education in Ethiopian context. Even those limited number of research works mainly focused on the

applicability of servant leadership at primary schools [18,20,11,1].

Thus, the purpose of this investigation was to examine the practices, relationships and effects that applying servant leadership might have on institutional effectiveness in public universities in Ethiopia. In doing so, the following were used as guiding questions for this research endeavor:

1) To what extent do leaders in universities exhibit servant leadership?
2) To what extent do universities are institutionally effective?
3) Is there statistically significant mean difference between the faculty and students about the practices of servant leadership and institutional effectiveness?
4) Is there statistically significant relationship between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness?
5) To what extent does servant-leadership practice predict institutional effectiveness?
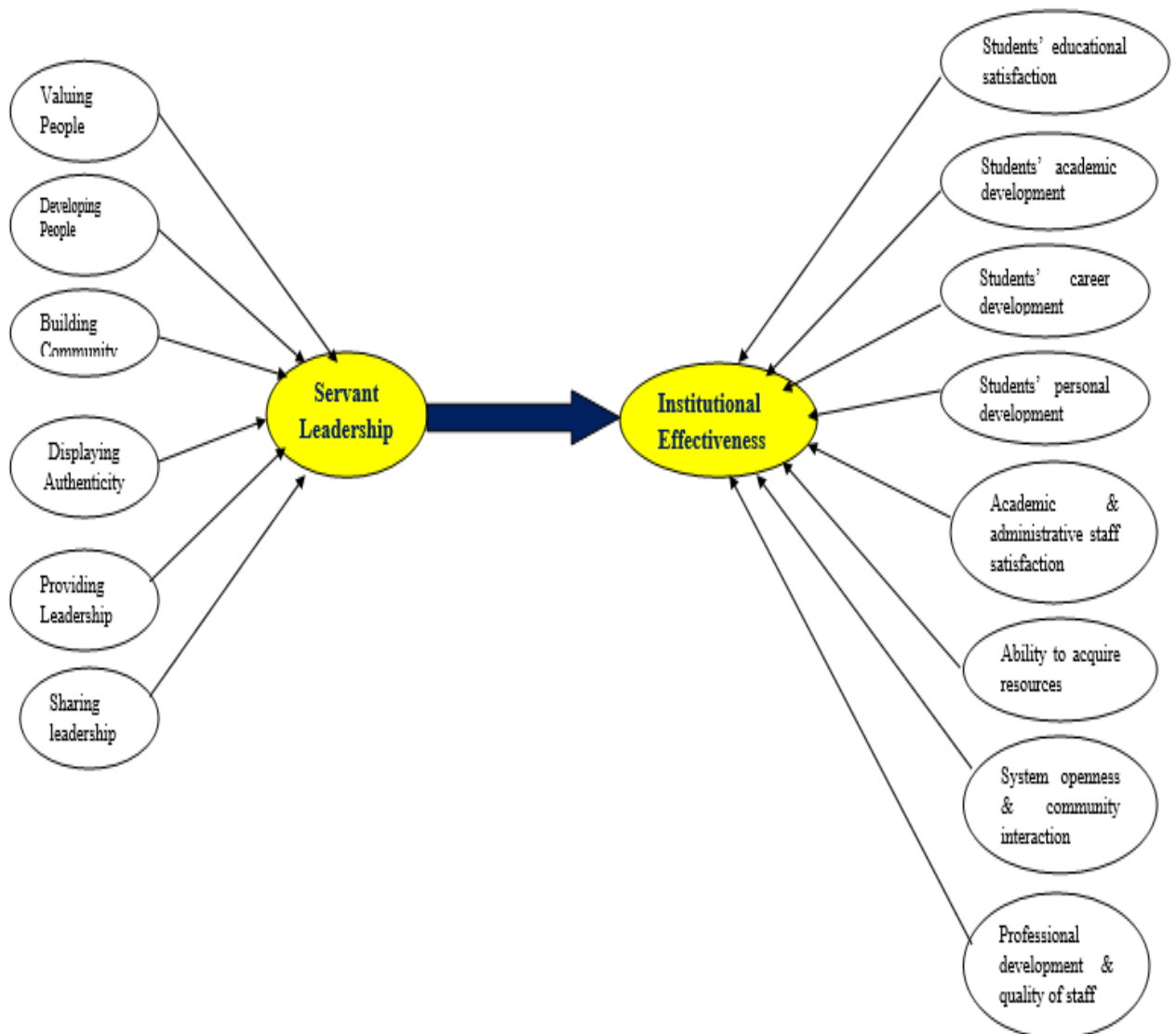6) To what extent do the dimensions of servant leadership predict institutional effectiveness?

Figure1: Conceptual Framework for the Influence of Servant Leadership on Institutional Effectiveness

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey and correlational research design. It was a cross-sectional research approach. According to [8], descriptive survey design is a study which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. It was conducted in public universities found in one of the nine national regional states of Ethiopia. According to the current federal arrangements of Ethiopia, the Amhara National Regional State is the largest federal state in its area and population size next to Oromiya National Regional State. Under this national regional state, there are ten public universities. Public universities fall under four homogenous groups (strata) of generations: 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation universities. Each group (generation) consisted of universities nearly with similar characteristics in many aspects such as structures, infrastructures, staff profiles, and so on. This study however focused on seven public universities as a study population excluding the 4th generation public universities as they are newly established and lack well established structures, resources, infrastructures, and leadership as well as governance experiences. Hence, one from the first three generations and a total of 3 (42.9%) were selected using stratified sampling technique. Therefore, this design was deemed appropriate for this study which collected data from deans, directors, department heads, faculty and students based on the topic of the study. Besides, 14 (41.18%) deans, 47 (23.38%) department heads, 53 (70.67%) directors, 278 (58.04%) faculty members and 330 (12.21%) students were selected using stratified sampling technique. Standardized questionnaires were adapted from Laub's [22] servant leadership and Cameroon's [6] institutional effectiveness dimensions. Hence, the respondents were asked to rate their responses in a 5-point scale of Very High (VH), High (H), Moderate (M), Low (L), and Very Low (VL). A pilot-test, involving 103 participants selected randomly from one public university which was not included in the samples of the main study was carried out to check the reliability of the instruments using Pearson's Product moment correlation. Consequently, reliability coefficients of 0.975 and 0.942 were recorded for servant leadership and institutional effectiveness respectively. The researcher with the help of six research assistants therefore administered the questionnaire to respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions that state the practices of servant leadership and institutional effectiveness. The decision rule for interpreting the mean scores of the data was 3.0. An independent t-test was also employed to compare the mean differences between the responses of instructors and students at 0.05 alpha levels. In addition, simple linear correlation was employed to determine the association between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness. Moreover, linear and multiple regressions were employed to evaluate the effect size of servant leadership on institutional effectiveness; and the effects of servant leadership dimensions on institutional effectiveness respectively.

3. Results

The study involved 722 participants; among which, 621 (86.01%) copies of the questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents, making a total of 557 (89.69%) copies duly filled and returned. Consequently, the collected data were analyzed for each variable as indicated in the following tables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Servant Leadership

Dimensions	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
	196	2.8031	.65052	.04647	-.2886	-.1053
	161	3.4559	.80350	.06332	.3308	.5810
Valuing People	200	3.7170	.71826	.05079	.6168	.6168
	196	2.8490	.72752	.05197	-.2535	-.0485
	161	3.3155	.88421	.06969	.1779	.4531
Developing People	200	3.6120	.62112	.04392	.5254	.5254
	196	2.8737	.72876	.05205	-.2289	-.0236
	161	3.4736	.78740	.06206	.3510	.5962
Building Community	200	3.7300	.59592	.04214	.6469	.6469
	196	2.7937	.65970	.04712	-.2992	-.1133
	161	3.4543	.82312	.06487	.3262	.5824
Display Authenticity	200	3.6471	.63613	.04498	.5584	.5584
	196	2.8214	.66741	.04767	-.2726	-.0846
	161	3.3872	.84648	.06671	.2554	.5189
Provide Leadership	200	3.6867	.64637	.04571	.5965	.5965
	196	2.7589	.72518	.05180	-.3432	-.1389
	161	3.3370	.89148	.07026	.1982	.4757
Share Leadership	200	3.6525	.69717	.04930	.5553	.5553
	196	**2.9084**	.61309	.04379	-.1780	-.0052
	161	**3.5079**	.77173	.06082	.3878	.6281
Servant Leadership	200	**3.7834**	.56939	.04026	.7040	.7040

1=*Bahir Dar University (BDU);* **2**=*Debre Tabor University (DTU);* **3**=*Debre Birhan University (DBU)*

The mean and standard deviations were calculated to understand the level of the practices of servant leadership and its dimensions. As shown in Table1, the results are above average for DBU (Mean=3.7834, SD=0.56939) and DTU (Mean=3.5079, SD=0.77173) but slightly below average for BDU (Mean= 2.9084, SD= 0.61309). The means and standard deviations showed that dimensions of servant leadership are manifested with different magnitudes. From the results of the survey data, it is also possible to safely that leaders manifest servant leadership behaviors at 'moderate' level in sample universities. In addition, compared to other servant leadership dimensions, building the community was better demonstrated by leaders in all sample universities (Means & Standard Deviations= 2.8737 & 0.72876; 3.4736 & 0.78740, and 3.7300 & 0.59592 respectively). This means that leaders are good at resolving difficult issues in a timely way, facilitating team spirit, valuing and respecting diversity issues related to culture, ethnicity, skills and abilities amongst staffs and students in their respective working environs. In addition, they showed better performances in creating cohesiveness and bringing staffs together that help them secure improved performances and goal achievements. But for BDU, the data showed that leaders' commitment in sharing power to staffs to make decisions by their own and enabling

them exercise leadership in the assigned work units have given relatively less emphasis compared to the other servant leadership dimensions. For the other two universities (DTU & DBU), leaders' commitment and performance in developing people found relatively weak. This does mean that leaders competence and commitment in creating an environment which promotes learning and growth for staffs, leading others by modeling appropriate behaviors, providing mentoring supports for staffs to grow professionally, and viewing conflicts as better opportunities for learning and growth are relatively at lower implementation stages (see Table1).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Institutional Effectiveness

Dimensions		N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Students Educational Satisfaction	1	196	2.8610	.75795	.05414	2.7542	2.9677
	2	161	3.4457	.88684	.06989	.3076	.5837
	3	200	3.5254	.71051	.05024	.4263	.4263
Students Academic Development	1	196	2.8520	.66683	.04763	2.7581	2.9460
	2	161	3.4576	.84723	.06677	.3257	.5894
	3	200	3.5125	.68218	.04824	.4174	.4174
Students Career Development	1	196	2.9923	.85256	.06090	2.8722	3.1124
	2	161	3.1615	1.00717	.07938	.0047	.3183
	3	200	3.1615	1.00717	.07938	.0047	.3183
Students Personal Development	1	196	2.7946	.67338	.04810	2.6998	2.8895
	2	161	3.3882	.82154	.06475	.2603	.5161
	3	200	3.5813	.68771	.04863	.4854	.4854
Academic & Administrative Staff Satisfaction	1	196	2.7483	.64594	.04614	2.6573	2.8393
	2	161	3.2298	.84017	.06621	.0990	.3606
	3	200	3.5767	.61045	.04317	.4915	.4915
Ability to Acquire Resources	1	196	2.7526	.73292	.05235	2.6493	2.8558
	2	161	3.0342	1.03851	.08185	-.1275	.1958
	3	200	3.5325	.67078	.04743	.4390	.4390
System Openness & Community Interaction	1	196	2.8367	.70447	.05032	2.7375	2.9360
	2	161	3.3188	.96850	.07633	.1681	.4696
	3	200	3.5450	.67016	.04739	.4516	.4516
Professional Development & Quality of Staff	1	196	2.7670	.80286	.05735	2.6539	2.8801
	2	161	3.4327	.88022	.06937	.2957	.5697
	3	200	3.3341	.66200	.04681	.2418	.2418
Institutional Effectiveness	1	196	**3.2869**	.60443	.04317	3.2017	3.3720
	2	161	**3.8637**	.82145	.06474	.7359	.9916
	3	200	**4.0332**	.59377	.04199	.9504	.9504

*1=BDU, *2=DTU, *3=DBU

Investigating the extent of the practice of institutional effectiveness in higher education institutions was another task of this research endeavor. Hence, as it was portrayed in Table2, for all sample universities the results showed above average or threshold (i.e., 3.00) and participants of this survey rated from 'moderate to high levels' to indicate the status of institutional effectiveness in their respective university. And the mean values and standard deviations were: BDU (Mean=3.2869, SD=0.60443), DTU (Mean=3.3.8637, SD= 0.82145) and DBU (Mean= 4.0332, SD=0.59377). When we look at the mean values for the practice of each dimension of institutional effectiveness, students career development (BDU, Mean=2.9923); students academic development (DTU, Mean=3.4576); and students personal development (DBU, Mean=3.5813) were exhibited relatively at higher magnitudes. On the other hand, comparatively speaking, administrative staff satisfaction at BDU (Mean=2.7483, SD=0.64594) and students' career satisfaction at DTU (Mean=3.0342, SD=1.00717) and DBU (Mean=2.9900, SD=0.99617 found relatively at lower magnitudes.

3.1. Statistical Tests for Mean Difference between Groups (Faculty & Students)

Comparing the mean differences of the responses obtained from faculty and students was made to investigate the variations in views about the extent of the practice of each variable in the study context.

Table 3: Independent t-test between the faculty and students at BDU

| Variables | | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
	Groups	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Servant Leadership	Faculty	2.9408	.68473	.706	166	.481	.07043	.09973	-.12648	.26734
	Students	2.8703	.60645							
Institutional Effectiveness	Faculty	3.3399	.63178	1.631	166	.105	.15796	.09683	-.03322	.34913
	Students	3.1819	.62325							

*The mean difference is significant at P<0.05

Table**3** above displayed that the mean value for servant leadership is below the average or threshold, and both faculty and students rated slightly below the average to describe the extent of the practice of this variable in the university. But, concerning the status of institutional effectiveness, the mean value is above the average or threshold. This indicates that the faculty and students rated the extent of the practice of the variable as 'moderate' or they have the perception that behaviors related to institutional effectiveness are demonstrated

'moderately' by leaders and employees in the institution. The result of an independent samples t-test also depicted that there was no statistically significant mean difference between faculty and students with regard to the extent of the practice of the variables (i.e., for servant leadership: $t_{(166)}$=0.706, p=0.481 and institutional effectiveness: $t_{(166)}$=1.631,p=0.105). The magnitude of the difference in the mean between groups was very small (i.e., mean differences for servant leadership= 0.07043, 95% CI= -.12648 to .26734 and institutional effectiveness= 0.15796, 95% CI= -.03322 to .34913). Therefore, based on the results of an independent t-test, it is possible to say that with 95% confidence level, groups (faculty and students) had closely related evaluations with regard to the extent of the practice of each variable at BDU.

Table 4: Independent t-test between the faculty and students at DTU

Variables	Groups	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
Servant Leadership	Faculty	3.3826	.77228	-2.920	132	.004	-.38632	.13230	-.64803	-.12461
	Students	3.7689	.75695							
Institutional Effectiveness	Faculty	3.7416	.73859	-2.545	132	.012	-.36385	.14299	-.64669	-.08100
	Students	4.1054	.91365							

*The mean difference is significant at P<0.05

As shown in Table**4**, both instructors and students rated the extent of the practices of the variables from 'moderate' to 'high' levels. The result of the mean difference for each variable was also statistically significant (i.e., servant leadership, $t_{(132)}$ = -2.920, p<0.004 and institutional effectiveness, $t_{(132)}$ = -2.545, p<0.012). Besides, the magnitude of the difference in the mean between groups was large (i.e., the mean differences for: servant leadership= -.38632, 95% CI= -.64803 to -.12461 and institutional effectiveness= -.36385, 95% CI= -.64669 to -.08100). Therefore, based on the results of an independent t-test, it is possible to say that with 95% confidence level, groups (faculty and students) had quite different evaluations with regard to the extent of the practice of each variable in the university. Besides, for all cases, the probabilities are less than 0.05 alpha level and students had higher mean values than faculty in evaluating the practices and prevalence of variables in the university (see Table4). This implies that students with high mean values appear to have better positive evaluations about the practices of the variables in their own context (DTU) as compared to faculty.

Table 5: Independent t-test between the faculty and students at DBU

Variables	Groups	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
Servant Leadership	Faculty	3.5948	.30288	-2.170	170	.031	-.16715	.07701	-.31918	-.01513
	Student	3.7620	.65547							
Institutional Effectiveness	Faculty	3.8481	.32444	-2.666	170	.008	-.22392	.08399	-.38972	-.05811
	Student	4.0720	.71778							

The mean difference is significant at P<0.05.

The result of an independent sample t-test in Table**5** depicted that there were significant mean differences between groups with regard to the evaluation of the practices of servant leadership and institutional effectiveness in the university ($t_{(170)}$ =-2.170, p<0.031, and $t_{(170)}$ =-2.666, p<0.008 respectively). For both cases, the probabilities are less than the alpha level (0.05). Besides, the mean values of students' evaluation with regard to the manifestations of servant leadership behaviors and institutional effectiveness were higher than the mean values of Faculty evaluation (see Table5). This shows that students had positive views and evaluations about the practice of servant leadership and the status of institutional effectiveness at DBU.

3.2. Correlation between Servant Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness

Under this sub-section, linear relationship and multiple linear regression analyses were made to examine the correlations between variables and the effect sizes or coefficient of determinations. Linear regression was made to examine the effect of servant leadership on institutional effectiveness. Besides, multiple linear regression analysis was made to examine the combined effect of servant leadership (SL) dimensions on institutional effectiveness (IE) at higher education institutions.

Table 6: Simple Linear Relationship

Variables		1	2
Servant Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1.00	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	557	-
Institutional Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.751**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	557	557

**. Correlation is significant at 0.05

One of the basic questions was focused on investigating whether there is a correlation between SL and IE. Thus, as it was indicated in Table6, the Pearson correlation coefficient result indicated that there is a strong positive relation between the variables. That is, SL showed strong positive relationship to IE with the coefficient of r=0.751. According to the McMillan's (1992) criteria, the correlation is also strong or high between the variables. Therefore, based on the result of the Pearson correlation coefficient, one may say that the variables mentioned above have direct positive relationship between them. That is, as leaders in higher education institutions apply servant leadership style in their day-to-day leadership exercises, they may ensure institutional effectiveness in their respective working contexts.

Table 7: Simple Linear Regression Statistics

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	.751[a]	.564	.563	.49308	.751	26.801	.000

a.   *Dependent Variable: Institutional Effectiveness*

Another basic question raised was aimed at investigating the coefficient of determination of servant leadership on institutional effectiveness. Consequently, the results of linear regression in table7 indicated that 0.564(56.4%) of the variability for institutional effectiveness was accounted by the effect of servant leadership style exhibited in higher education institutions. When compared with the amount of coefficient of non-determination or coefficient of alienation which accounts for 43.6%, the effect of the above variable was significant. The model was also a good fit and statistically significant for the data used for this regression analysis (F $_{(1,556)}$ =718.307, p<0.001).

Table 8: Multiple Linear Regressions

Dimensions	R	R^2	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig.
Valuing people	.762[a]	.581	.48560	.157	3.398	.001
Developing people				.232	4.229	.000
Building community				.030	.602	.548
Displaying authenticity				.016	.263	.793
Providing leadership				.240	4.638	.000
Sharing leadership				.184	3.956	.000

b. Dependent Variable: Institutional Effectiveness

Investigating the predictive power of the dimensions of servant leadership was another concern of the study. Hence, the result of multiple regressions analysis revealed that 0.762(76.2%) of the variability for institutional effectiveness was accounted by the composite effect of the dimensions of servant leadership exhibited in higher education institutions. When compared with the amount of coefficient of non-determination or coefficient of alienation which accounts for 23.8%, the combined effect of the above dimensions was significant and strong. The model was also a good fit and statistically significant for the data used for this regression analysis (F $_{(6,556)}$ =127.134, p<0.001). The direct effect of each independent dimension on institutional effectiveness was also examined using beta coefficients. Thus, the effects of valuing staffs (B=0.157, t=3.398, p<0.001), developing staffs (B=-0.232, t=4.229, p<0.001), providing leadership (B=0.240, t=4.638, p<0.001) and sharing leadership (B=0.184, t=3.956, p<0.001) on institutional effectiveness were statistically significant. That is to say, 15.7%, 23.2%, 24% and 18.4% of institutional effectiveness was accounted by leaders' practices in valuing staffs, developing people in the university, providing leadership and sharing leadership respectively. Whereas building the university community (B=-0.037, t=0.030, P>0.05) and displaying authenticity (B=0.016, t=0.263, p>0.05), showed not statistically significant effects on institutional effectiveness. As a result, 3.7% and 1.6% of changes in institutional effectiveness was accounted by these servant leadership dimensions respectively.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that leaders exhibit servant leadership behaviors in sample universities despite differences

in their magnitudes. Either through training and development or because of long year experiences at work, leaders in many of the dimensions of servant leadership exhibit 'moderate' practices in sample universities. Despite this, the study results of [12,23,19] indicated that higher education institutions are in short of leaders committed in moral teaching and feelings of professionalism as well as servanthood behaviors. The aforesaid studies also indicated that leaders don't view leading as an opportunity and responsibility to serve staffs, students and the community at large. Often, many fail to assume themselves as servants to their followers, and reluctant to make themselves accountable for and take responsibilities for instructional failures. And this was further supported by the findings of [15,14,2]. They augmented that officious and autocratic leadership cultures manifested by leaders of higher education institutions are common practices. These also lead to institutional ineffectiveness and inefficiencies. Therefore, the findings of this study seem partly incongruent with prior findings though the study areas covered were quite different. Regarding institutional effectiveness in higher education institutions, the results showed 'moderate' to 'high' practices (see Table2). That is, in terms of promoting professional development and maintaining quality of the academia, ensuring students academic development, and creating system openness as well as community interactions, commendable achievements have been recorded. However, studies carried out by [14] disfavored the above findings and stated that regardless of diverse initiatives and commitments made at public civil service organizations including higher education institutions, their effectiveness in performances are far less and even their achievements widely differ from institution to institution. On top of this, disparities among the findings may help researchers conduct more in-depth and large scale studies and triangulate the results in higher education sector and even in other social organizations for better outcomes. Moreover, a strong positive relationship is recorded between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness (see Table6). Thus, as leaders in higher education institutions demonstrate servant leadership behaviors and practices, the impact upon institutional effectiveness will also be enhanced. This is also congruent with the research findings of [3,4,7,17]. They came to the conclusion that when leaders in higher education institutions manifest servant leadership behaviors in their leadership practices, they lay the foundations for high performing organizations via creating a compelling vision, values, and a responsive culture and turn the traditional organizational pyramid (hierarchy) upside down or into heterarchy. As a result, the relationships that they create with their employees are collegial, and the leadership power used becomes more persuasive than coercive. In addition, the findings also indicated that the application of servant leadership in higher education institutions significantly impacts their performance and institutional effectiveness. Consequently, the application of servant leadership in higher education institutions has significant predictive power for institutional effectiveness. This is also congruent with the research findings of [5,25] which is stated as the application of servant leadership approach in social organizations like higher education institutions help facilitate organizational performances and institutional effectiveness.

5. Conclusions

A number of studies showed that leadership plays key roles in creating effective institutions and making them reputable as well as competent. The same is true for higher education institutions. With three pillars mandated to higher education institutions (instructional processes, research activities and community services), demonstrating effectiveness and efficiencies becomes an indisputable expectation from all stakeholders and beneficiaries. This study therefore attempts to investigate the practices, relationships and effects of servant

leadership on institutional effectiveness in universities. Hence, the mean values showed close to and above the threshold or average. From this, we may conclude that despite differences in magnitudes, leaders in sample universities exhibit behaviors associated to servant leadership and institutional effectiveness. The result of the Pearson correlation coefficient also showed strong and positive correlation between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness. As a result, one may construe that as the rigor of the practice of servant leadership in higher education institutions increases, the institutional effectiveness will undoubtedly raise up and vice-versa. The results also showed significant effects of servant leadership on institutional effectiveness in universities. In addition, except two of servant leadership dimensions (building the community and displaying authenticity), servant leadership dimensions showed statistically significant effects on institutional effectiveness in universities. From this, one may come up with the conclusion that applying servant leadership dimensions significantly contribute to institutional effectiveness of universities.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study is not free of limitations. Primarily, it was constrained by the absence of literatures and research works done on issues in the context of Ethiopian higher education. Secondly, the data collection process for some of the respondents was based on self-reported data which may partly lead to biases in the study. Thirdly, the study doesn't show cause-effect relationships between the variables. Nevertheless, the results of this research work may give and have valuable insights about the effects of servant leadership on institutional effectiveness in public higher education contexts.

7. Recommendations

The findings of this study depicted that implementing servant leadership approach in higher education institutions contributes a lot to realize institutional effectiveness. As a result, it is recommended that leaders in higher education institutions apply servant leadership vigorously so that they are able to render the required services and ensure their institutional success. Besides, even though the results of the correlation analyses showed significant and positive relationships between servant leadership and institutional effectiveness, they cannot show causality. As a result, researchers are recommended to conduct further longitudinal studies and come up with comprehensive and causative findings that help provide better information for decision makers and practitioners about the study issues.

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