Staff Commitment in Ugandan Public Universities: Does Servant Leadership Matter?

Mahadih Kyambade ✉ [1]**, Joshua Mugambwa**[2]**, Regis Namuddu**[3]**, Afulah Namatovu**[4]**,**

Godwin Kwemarira[5]

Department of Leadership & Governance, Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda[1,2,3,5]
Department of Applied Computing & IT, Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda[4]

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how staff commitment in Uganda's public universities is impacted by servant leadership. In many organizational contexts, servant leadership a leadership philosophy that puts the needs of the team first and motivates leaders to serve their staff has been gaining traction. Empirical research on its impact on staff commitment in Ugandan public universities is limited, despite its potential advantages. By examining whether and how servant leadership impacts staff commitment in the education sector, this study seeks to close this knowledge gap. The results of this study may influence leadership practices in public universities in Uganda as well as in other comparable educational environments worldwide. This study looks at how staff members' commitment to their schools is affected by public university leaders' servant leadership behaviours. Data for the study came from 214 employees of Uganda's public universities. A servant organizational leadership assessment scale was used to gauge the servant leadership behaviours of university administrators, and an organizational commitment scale was used to gauge staff members' organizational commitment. This study shows a significant and favourable correlation between staff members' commitment to the university and the servant leadership behaviours of university leaders. Servant leadership was a strong predictor of staff commitment.

✉ Corresponding author: mahadkyambade@gmail.com

Introduction

The strong demand for education at all levels has caused the Ugandan education system to expand and change quickly. Uganda's high population growth rate, inclusive education programs like universal primary and secondary education, the liberalization of the higher education subsector, and the country's predominantly young student population are all major contributors to the country's rapid growth and demand for higher education (Banya, 2001). All levels of enrollment have increased dramatically, but infrastructure, educational facilities, staffing requirements, funding levels, student scholarships for all eligible applicants, PhD production, etc. have not grown in line with the growth in enrolment. Initiatives have been made to create new syllabuses and update current ones, reform the curriculum, conduct research, test, and evaluate the results, and update and enhance syllabuses for courses taught in schools and colleges. Concerns about the calibre and applicability of courses offered in higher education have expanded internationally as a result of globalization and internationalization (Nghia et al., 2019). Like many other Sub-Saharan African nations, Uganda is struggling with graduated unemployment, which is made worse by the combination of youth and graduate unemployment. One of the objectives is to increase university accessibility for a wider range of Ugandans, enabling those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to gain as much as possible from higher education; hence, effective leadership and staff commitment are required. Although there aren't many studies specifically on the topic, it's widely accepted that effective leadership styles have a big impact on workers' commitment (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2023; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016; Biza & Irbo, 2020).

The concept of servant leadership, which puts the needs of the team first and motivates leaders to serve their staff, is becoming more and more popular in a variety of organizational contexts. Robert K. Greenleaf developed the idea of servant leadership in 1970 (Greenleaf, 1977). It is a leadership approach that places a strong emphasis on serving others including coworkers, clients, and communities. Prioritizing the needs of their team members, promoting a climate of cooperation and respect, and concentrating on the development and well-being of communities and the people who inhabit them are all characteristics of servant leaders. Academic employees' organizational commitment in Uganda's public universities is influenced by several variables, such as their age, tenure, position level, leadership philosophies, and level of job satisfaction. The success of any organization greatly depends on the commitment of its personnel. The level of commitment from faculty members can have a big impact on the calibre of research and instruction at public universities. Therefore, university administrators need to comprehend the elements that improve staff commitment (Maki, 2023). Effective leadership styles are widely known to have a significant impact on employees' commitment, even though there are few specific studies on the relationship between servant leadership and employee work engagement and organizational commitment in higher education. Affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment are three aspects of organizational commitment that are substantially and favourably correlated with transformational leadership style (Hadi & Tentama, 2020).

Understanding the effects of leadership styles is crucial in the context of Uganda's public universities, where the commitment of academic staff is essential to achieving educational goals. The leadership style that university administrators have chosen is one such element that has been receiving more attention. Servant leadership is distinct from other leadership philosophies because of its emphasis on helping others (Spears & Horsman, 2021; Kyambade et al., 2023). Servant leaders put their team members' needs first and promote an environment of respect and cooperation. Few empirical studies are looking at how servant leadership affects staff commitment in Ugandan public universities, despite the potential advantages. By examining whether and how servant leadership affects staff commitment in this setting, this study seeks to close this gap. There aren't many empirical studies looking at how servant leadership affects staff commitment in Ugandan public universities, despite the growing interest in the concept. Managers in Ugandan public universities should always aim to use a combination of leadership styles that can improve job satisfaction and the employee-employer relationship to increase organizational commitment among academic staff. Given that servant leadership is

concerned with the development and well-being of communities and the people who live in them, this may also apply to it.

Literature Review

Servant Leadership

"Servant leadership" is a philosophy that places a strong emphasis on the moral and ethical dimensions of leading others. To better the organization and society, servant leaders prioritize the needs and interests of those they lead and work to empower and develop their followers. Since it has been demonstrated to have positive effects on a variety of individual and organizational outcomes, servant leadership has been receiving more attention and recognition in the academic and managerial literature in recent years. Servant leadership is a philosophy of leadership that prioritizes the development and needs of stakeholders and followers over the pursuit of personal gain. Robert Greenleaf first presented it in 1970, and in the last few years, its renown has grown. Servant leadership became popularized in the book by Greenleaf (1977). According to Greenleaf (2002), a servant leader puts service first. It starts with the innate desire to serve others first. The desire to lead is then brought about by conscious choice. The care given by the servant to ensure that the needs of others are met first and foremost is how they distinguish themselves from one another. Is the test "Do those served to grow as persons?" the best and hardest to administer? Do they grow wiser, healthier, more independent, freer, and more likely to become servants while they are being served? And how does it affect the least fortunate members of society? Will they gain something, or at least avoid losing more?

The traits of a servant leader, according to Greenleaf's research, include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to people's growth, and creating a sense of community (Buck, 2019, Kyambade et al., 2024). According to Laub (1999), promoting servant leadership involves altering both the workplace and society at large. The main shift noted by Laub is the growing propensity to foster an environment that enhances employees and puts a strong emphasis on employee happiness that is, to apply supportive leadership in a team approach.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the study's second major construct. According to Sani & Maharani Ekowati, (2020), organizational commitment is the attempt to embrace the goals and values of the organization as a member who has strong familial ties. Another way to think about organizational commitment is as a person's identification and involvement in the organization, which is typified by a willingness to put in a lot of effort on behalf of the organization and a strong belief in and acceptance of its goals and values (Mowday et al., 1979). The level of identification and loyalty that employees have for their organization is known as organizational commitment. Three elements make up this commitment: emotional attachment (affective commitment), perceived costs of leaving (continuance commitment), and sense of obligation (normative commitment).

Numerous positive outcomes, including reduced attrition, improved performance, and increased civic engagement, have been connected to organizational commitment. The accomplishment of long-term organizational goals has a stronger correlation with organizational commitment. Devoted workers believe they must go above and beyond the call of duty to personally contribute significantly to the company (Mowday et al., 1982). Three characteristics of organizational commitment were defined by Mowday et al. (1979) as follows: a firm commitment to upholding the organization's principles and goals; a readiness to put in a significant amount of work on its behalf; and a strong desire to remain a member of the organization.

Numerous research works have investigated the causes, consequences, and workings of organizational commitment. For instance, a few studies (Rasool et al., 2021; Saks, 2019; Teo et al., 2020) have looked at the connection between organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and job involvement. The level of interest and commitment employees have towards their work is known as job involvement. The degree to which workers feel that their company appreciates their contributions and is concerned about their welfare is known as perceived organizational support. According to the study, job involvement and perceived organizational support both increased organizational commitment and the relationship between the two was mediated by perceived organizational support. The network analysis and systematic literature review of organizational commitment and servant leadership are two more examples. "Servant leadership" is a philosophy that places a strong emphasis on the moral and ethical dimensions of leading others. To better the organization and society, servant leaders prioritize the needs and interests of those they lead and work to empower and develop their followers. The review discovered that through several mediating factors, including psychological safety, identification, trust, empowerment, and justice, servant leadership had a positive impact on organizational commitment. Additionally, it was discovered that a variety of contextual elements, including industry, culture, and follower traits, moderated the effects of servant leadership.

The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Without a doubt, all organizations, including educational institutions, are impacted by the idea of organizational commitment. When it comes to the effectiveness of universities, staff commitment is also crucial. Eliyana & Ma'arif, (2019) study, looked at the connections between three outcome variables employee extra effort, employee satisfaction with the leader, and organizational commitment and Bass's (1985) three leadership dimensions transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. They discovered that transactional leadership and transformational leadership had the greatest positive effects on organizational commitment, with laissez-faire leadership having the worst effects. Additionally, they proposed that because servant leadership and transformational leadership have similar traits and goals, they could be viewed as sub-dimensions of one another.

Kiker et al., (2019) study offered a thorough summary of the development and status of servant leadership research. Along with identifying the key causes, effects, and mechanisms of servant leadership, they also noted important problems and potential future directions for this area of research. They discovered that several mediating factors, including trust, empowerment, psychological safety, identification, and justice, had a positive impact on organizational commitment when it came to servant leadership. Additionally, they discovered that a variety of contextual elements, including industry, culture, and follower traits, moderated the effects of servant leadership. The relationship between organizational commitment and servant leadership traits (stewardship, humility, authenticity, altruism, and empowerment) in public sector organizations was examined in the paper by Howladar & Rahman, (2021). They discovered that while only altruism and empowerment had positive effects on continuance commitment, all five characteristics had positive effects on affective commitment. Additionally, they discovered that the relationship between affective commitment and servant leadership traits was mediated by followers' faith in the leader. The Zhang et al., (2021), article carried out a methodical analysis of the management journal literature on servant leadership from 1970 to 2018. Based on their research methodologies, contexts, constructs, antecedents, outcomes, mediators, moderators, and scales, they examined 106 articles. They discovered that organizational commitment and servant leadership were positively correlated in the literature on hospitality management as well as more general management. The absence of longitudinal studies, cross-cultural comparisons, multilevel analyses, and theoretical integration, among other shortcomings and difficulties, was also noted. The commitment of a skilled workforce will guarantee that all skills and knowledge are used for the benefit of the company. People who are devoted to their organizations will succeed in their careers (Ahad et al., 2021). If not, they will look for a way to leave the

company and be unable to live up to the standards. School administrators must therefore encourage greater organizational commitment among their staff members.

Research questions

Six research questions were developed for the current study based on the theoretical concepts that were previously discussed in the literature review:

1. How does valuing people impact organizationalcommitment?
2. How does the development of people impact organizational commitment?
3. How does building community impact organizational commitment?
4. How does displaying authenticity impact organizational commitment?
5. How does providing leadership impact organizational commitment?
6. How does sharing leadership impact organizational commitment?

Figure 1: Conceptual model

Source: primary data

Methods

Sample

The study was carried out in Public universities in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. Three public universities were included in the study, and 214 employees were selected as a sample. Two hundred and fifty staff members from the three public universities took part in this study. The questionnaire received responses from 214 staff members or 85.6% of the total. 44.9% of these employees were women and 55.1% of men. The findings show that the largest proportion of respondents 2.8% were over 56-65 years old, while 54.7% of respondents are between the ages of 31-45. The majority of employees in Uganda's public universities are led by people with bachelor's degrees (43.9%), with 1% of respondents having doctorates, according to the highest education measure.

Data collection

The study's questionnaire included items that related to two themes: (1) organizational commitment and (2) servant leadership. The measurement of these two themes will be described in more detail in the section below.

Measurement of Servant Leadership

The servant organizational leadership assessment (SOLA) scale developed by Laub (1999) was used to gauge the degree to which leaders at public universities demonstrated servant leadership behaviours. Public universities served as the analysis unit for this study. The purpose of organizational leadership assessment (OLA) is to give organizations a tool to evaluate whether or not a group exhibits traits associated with servant leadership. The six essential areas of servant leadership are perceived by the workforce according to the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA). According to Dennis & Bocarnea, (2005), the OLA is the most appropriate leadership tool for evaluating servant leadership at the analytical level of a university. OLA was therefore applied in this study to determine whether the unit of analysis was appropriate. Furthermore, Laub (1999) noted that the OLA had strong reliability, with all six sub-scores having alpha coefficients of .90 or higher. Additionally, Laub stated that the Delphi process forms a significant part of the instrument's validity. Six components of OLA are identified: (1) valuing individuals (10 items); (2) fostering individual development (09 items); (3) fostering community (10 items); (4) exhibiting authenticity (12 items); (5) offering leadership (09 items); and (6) sharing leadership (10 items). Using a five-point Likert scale that went from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed with the statements.

Because this study was conducted in an environment with a different cultural structure, a factor analysis was performed to determine whether the factors were coherent with those mentioned in the Laub (1999) scale. Six factors with Eigen values greater than one were identified by factor analysis results. Eigen-values for Factors 1 through 6 were 3.55, 3.43, 2.53, 1.39, 4.28, and 1.12, respectively. The following factors were determined by factor analysis with varimax rotation: the first was valuing people (e.g., my university leaders listen to me). The second was human development (e.g., my university's leader fosters a learning environment). The third was creating a sense of community (for example, my leader strives to maintain good working relationships). The fourth was being genuine (e.g., my leader is receptive to staff challenges and criticism). Providing leadership (e.g., my leader is clear on the major objectives of the university) was the fifth. The sixth was sharing leadership (e.g., my leader encourages me to collaborate with them on big decisions). The factors with load values ranging from .446 to .795 were those related to valuing people; those related to developing people

were from .504 to .739; those related to building community were from .473 to .704; those related to displaying authenticity were from .471 to .690; those related to providing leadership were from .468 to .687; and those related to sharing leadership were from .485 to .708. It was discovered that 65.33% of the variance was explained by the scale's factors. The correlation analysis's findings in this study demonstrated a robust correlation between the OLA's component elements. The six OLA factors (ranging from .736 to .892) showed a strong significant positive correlation, according to Laub (1999). Furthermore, the six OLA constructs were used in the majority of earlier studies (Laub 1999; Rowold & Borgmann, 2013). Consequently, the OLA's six construct form was deemed appropriate for the study.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to gauge internal consistency. The alpha for valuing people was .87, for developing people it was .92, for creating community it was .89, for exhibiting authenticity it was .91, for offering leadership it was .84, for sharing leadership it was .90, and for the entire questionnaire it was .95. Additionally, it was discovered that the servant leadership scale's item-total correlation varied between .55 and .81. As a result, the survey instrument's internal consistency was sufficiently reliable.

Measurement of Organizational Commitment

The most popular measure of commitment, the organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday et al. (1979), was used in this study to gauge staff members' commitment to the university. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for this scale ranged from .82 to .95, and the majority of studies that used the OCQ reported a validity and reliability instrument (Mowday et al. 1979; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2020; Ridwan et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2019). Thus, the Mowday et al. (1979) OCQ was used to gauge the organizational commitment of the staff. Research studies by (Babatope et al., 2023; Bishop et al., 2023; and Royaei et al., 2020) on organizational commitment have made extensive use of the 15 items of the OCQ (e.g., I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected for this school to be successful. In this study, participants were asked to use a five-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to indicate how much they agreed with the statements.

Because it includes two factors, the organizational commitment scale created by Mowday et al. (1979) has been utilized by numerous academics (Gopinath, 2020; Serhan et al., 2022; Thien et al., 2021). Some researchers (Hedayat et al., 2018) have used it in its entirety. For this reason, the OCQ in this study was subjected to a factor analysis. One factor with Eigen values larger than one was identified by factor analysis results. The eigenvalue for the factor was .5.44. The OCQ's item load values varied from .689 to .844. The variances revealed by the scale's factor were discovered to be 54.09%. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to gauge internal consistency. In terms of the questionnaire, the alpha was .93. Additionally, it was discovered that the OCQ's item-total correlation varied between .64 and .81. As a result, the survey instrument's internal consistency could be trusted.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyze the data. Not the employees, but Uganda's public universities served as the analytical unit. Therefore, staff responses were aggregated for each instrument at the university level, and analyses were conducted on university means instead of individual staff scores. The level of servant leadership behaviours exhibited by public university leaders and the organizational commitment levels of their staff were assessed using the mean and standard deviation values. The association between organizational commitment and servant leadership was investigated using a bivariate Pearson correlation test. Multiple regression analyses were used to assess how servant leadership factors affected organizational commitment.

Results

The mean rating of valuing people (mean = 3.54), developing people (mean = 3.50), building community (mean = 3.49), displaying authenticity (mean = 3.52), providing leadership (mean = 3.58) and sharing leadership (mean = 3.54) is higher than the midpoint of 3.0 on the rating scale, according to the means and standard deviations of staff members' scores for servant leadership and staffs' organizational commitment. However, staff members' levels of commitment to the university (mean = 3.47) are higher than average. Furthermore, the staff members' mean scores on the servant leadership dimensions were largely consistent, which could present a point of contention regarding the degree to which university administrators are regarded as servant leaders. The overall mean scores for servant leadership may be impacted by a significant disparity in the mean scores across the factors. An estimation based on the mean servant leadership scores may not be very meaningful in situations where some dimensions are realized at a high level and some are realized at a low level. Based on these mean scores, it can be concluded that staff members view university leaders as servant leaders.

Multiple regression analysis and correlations were used to test the research questions. To ascertain the relationship between organizational commitment among staff members and servant leadership and its components, Pearson product-moment correlations were performed (refer to Table 1). The findings show a strong positive correlation (R = .830 to .927) between these variables and servant leadership. Table 1's correlation matrix revealed that staffs' organizational commitment is significantly and positively correlated with valuing people (R = .756, p = .000), developing people (R = .771, p = .000), creating community (R = .626, p = .000), exhibiting authenticity (R = .798, p = .000), offering leadership (R = .679, p = .000), and sharing leadership (R = .718, p = .000). Staffs' organizational commitment and servant leadership had a significant and positive relationship, according to correlation analysis (R = .824, p = .000). This finding suggests a positive correlation between organizational commitment and servant leadership and its components. To investigate the impact of the servant leadership elements on staff organizational commitment, multiple regression analysis was done. Table 2 displays the findings from these analyses. According to the regression analysis presented in Table 2, there was a significant correlation between the organizational commitment of staff and the servant leadership elements that influenced their commitment to the university, including leaders' values of people, people development, community building, authenticity, sharing leadership, and leadership provision (R = .869, R^2 = .755, p = .000). Taken as a whole, these variables accounted for 75.5% of the variation in school commitment.

Table 1.   Correlations coefficients for factors of servant leadership and organizational commitment

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Valuing of people	1.00							
Development of people	.779**	1.00						
Building of community	.731**	.675**	1.00					
Displaying of authenticity	.787**	.722**	.646**	1.00				
Providing of leadership	.735**	.659**	.715**	.623**	1.00			
Sharing of leadership	.875**	.803**	.692**	.785**	.770**	1.00		
Total servant leadership	.931**	.873**	.837**	.874**	.841**	.932**	1.00	
Organizational commitment	.761**	.775**	.639**	.801**	.684**	.721**	.830**	1.00

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

Table 2: Analysis of the relationship between organizational commitment and the servant leadership factors through regression

Variables	B	SE	$\square$	T	p
Constant	2.251	.968	–	2.243	.02
Valuing of people	.201	.163	.189	2.421	.01
Development of people	.473	.183	.377	2.753	.00
Building of community	.051	.207	.043	.249	.80
Displaying of authenticity	.457	.179	.473	2.557	.00
Providing of leadership	.321	.233	.249	1.373	.18
Sharing of leadership	.314	.164	.280	1.073	.29

$R = .869$, $R^2 = .755$, $F_{(6, 22)} = 1.306$, $p = .00$.

Regression analysis results indicate that employees' organizational commitment is significantly impacted by treating people with respect, investing in their development, and acting authentically. However, there was no discernible effect on staff members' organizational commitment to creating a sense of community, exercising leadership, or sharing leadership (see Table 2). These findings indicate that staff members' organizational commitment is significantly predicted by their value of people, their development as individuals, and their genuineness.

The study's last research question examined how employees' organizational commitment was impacted by servant leadership. As per Table 3's regression analysis, which looked at how servant leadership affected employees' commitment, staff members' organizational commitment is significantly predicted by servant leadership (R = .830, R2 = .690, F = 60.010, p = .000). It explains 69% of the variance in organizational commitment.

Table 3: Analysis of the servant leadership model's regression on organizational commitment

Variable	B	SE	$\square$	T	p
Constant	2.889	.853	–	2.466	.01
Servant leadership	.456	.112	.830	7.747	.00

$R = .830$, $R^2 = .690$, $F_{(1, 27)} = 60.010$, $p = .000$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how staff members' commitment was impacted by the servant leadership practices of university administrators. A survey study was conducted in Ugandan public universities to investigate this relationship, and information was gathered from a sample of university employees. The findings indicate that staff members' commitment to the organization is most strongly predicted by three aspects of servant leadership: valuing people, developing people, and exhibiting authenticity. While there is a paucity of research on the subject, many academics have examined organizational commitment in the context of transformational leadership which is closely related to servant leadership rather than the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment. For instance, the elements of servant leadership that focus on developing people and appreciating them are similar to the personalized attention and intellectual stimulation components of transformational leadership (Otto et al., 2021). Organizational commitment is positively impacted by factors such as personalized attention and intellectual stimulation (Cahyono et al., 2020).

These results are in line with the findings of this particular research line. This finding can be explained in the context of Ugandan culture, which values collectivism highly. The collectivist culture values relationships over rules and encourages emotional expression. Trust, harmony, and a profound comprehension of moral principles form the foundation of the relationship between university administrators and their staff. Furthermore, according to collectivists, staff members' attachment to their universities is largely mediated through their interpersonal relationships (Donglong et al., 2020). Thus, to ensure organizational commitment, university administrators operating in collectivist societies like Uganda may cultivate excellent working relationships with staff members. Furthermore, earlier studies in both non-educational and educational contexts showed that administrators' encouragement of staff members and their demonstration of emerging behaviours had a favourable impact on staff members' organizational commitment (Huang et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022; Ennida & Allouani, 2023; Alwaheeb et al., 2020). These results corroborate the current study's findings, which show that staff commitment to universities is positively and significantly impacted by staff development initiatives supported by university administrators. These findings suggest that administrators of Uganda's public universities should work harder to train their staff members to increase their commitment to the institutions.

Effective university administrators should be able to communicate effectively, have strong interpersonal skills, act with honesty and transparency, empathize with staff members, listen to their thoughts and feelings, and treat them with respect (Contreras et al., 2020; Alawamleh et al., 2020). These qualities mesh well with servant leadership behaviours like respecting others (Laub 1999, Bavik, 2020). Leaders at public universities can show that they value their employees by paying attention, showing compassion, lending a hand, and showing respect. It was discovered that the respect given by university administrators had a significant impact on the commitment of staff members to the institution. This result can be explained in terms of the paternalism that permeates Ugandan society. In the paternalistic interaction between the head of the university and the staff, the head of the university offers the staff a comprehensive and kind concern in exchange for their blind obedience and allegiance. The university leader's job in a paternalistic relationship is to lead, safeguard, nurture, and take care of the staff (Qian & Walker, 2021). In this sense, it makes sense that employees would look to their leaders to treat them with respect and consideration in the paternalistic culture of Uganda. It follows that for staff members, feeling respected is more significant than working as a team and taking part in decision-making processes. To increase staff commitment, university administrators must value and respect them.

An unexpected finding of this study was that staff members' organizational commitment was not significantly impacted by the leadership qualities of giving, sharing, and creating community. The elements, which included actions like cooperation and decision-making, had no appreciable impact on employees' organizational commitment. However, prior research has shown that employee involvement in decision-making boosts organizational commitment (Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2021; Mwesigwa et al., 2020). These outcomes agree with the current study's conclusions. The study's findings imply that staff members' organizational commitment was not significantly impacted by their involvement in decision-making processes related to educational activities or their collaboration with university administrators. This result can be explained in terms of Ugandan culture's collectivism, paternalism, and high power distance. Employee participation in decision-making is seen in such a culture as a reflection of subpar leadership. This indicates that employees in such a culture would probably rather follow instructions from leaders than take independent action. In societies that are collectivist or paternalist, people are more likely to follow authority figures' decisions without question. Furthermore, there is respect for the managerial hierarchy in Ugandan culture. The staff is typically expected to comply with the demands and decisions of the leader, such as the principal or chancellor (Peretomode, 2021). As a result, administrators alone typically

make decisions in the Ugandan administrative structure. Participation in decision-making may not be deemed important by staff, particularly lecturers. This could be the outcome of instructors internalizing this situation because chancellors or principals are perceived as having little control over the centralized and bureaucratic control of the Ugandan education system and as having limited initiative when making decisions about their universities.

The study's findings demonstrated that employees' organizational commitment was significantly impacted by servant leadership. In contrast to this study, McNeil Jr.'s (2021) study the only one in the literature to examine the relationship between servant leadership and commitment found a weakly negative correlation between the two. According to Ruiz-Palomino et al., (2023), servant leadership fosters a democratic understanding, which calls for the administration of the school to work in tandem with the staff and to value and care for them. Yalçınkaya et al., (2021) discovered that while democratic administrators' behaviours had a positive impact on staff commitment, authoritarian administrators' behaviours had a negative effect. These outcomes validate the study's conclusions. Based on these results, it can be concluded that to increase staff members' commitment to the university, Ugandan public university administrators should manage their institutions democratically. Numerous studies (Hendri, 2019; Aranki et al., 2019; Loan, 2020) have also stressed the positive relationship between administrator behaviours and employee organizational commitment, as well as the positive effects of organizational commitment on employee performance and productivity. In this regard, staff members' commitment to the school should be strengthened since they can positively impact both the accomplishment of goals and success at universities. To achieve this, administrators of universities should be democratic, encouraging, and participatory.

Conclusion and Implications

There are two practical and future research implications for the current study's findings. First, compared to developing nations like Uganda, empirical research on the benefits of servant leadership has been largely restricted to the developed Western world. Using Uganda as a case study, this research builds on and expands on previous research by investigating the impact of servant leadership on employees' organizational commitment in developing nations. The differences in research outcomes that arise from conducting studies in diverse cultural contexts can be attributed to the features of the respective organizations and cultural backgrounds. There are cultural differences between Uganda and the Western nations, where servant leadership research has been conducted before. Uganda scores higher on power distance, and collectivism and lower on individualism than Western nations. The findings of this study provide more evidence that staff members' attitudes and behaviours were influenced by their cultural context. To further validate the findings of this study, additional research in developing, collectivistic cultural contexts like Uganda is recommended.

Second, employees who are highly committed to their universities should be expected to engage in behaviours that help the organization achieve its goals and to exert considerable effort beyond minimal expectations. These behaviors include a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values as well as a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. University administrators must become more conscious of how their actions impact staff members' organizational commitment if they are to encourage it. According to the current study's findings, employees' organizational commitment was impacted by factors such as treating them with respect, investing in their professional growth, and modelling authentic servant leadership. Based on these findings, leaders should give staff members opportunities to learn how to implement new teaching techniques in instructional activities and advance education to increase organizational commitment. University administrators should also assist staff members by giving them access to excellent professional development opportunities,

encouraging them to attend conferences, and giving them feedback on their efforts and skill development. Additionally, leaders who exhibit servant leadership qualities, such as personally attending to staff members' needs and interests, may contribute to the development of organizational commitment among employees. From a cultural standpoint, administrators at Ugandan universities should exhibit behaviours such as honouring employees' birthdays and valuing their contributions, particularly to student education. Thus, administrators at universities ought to be approachable, candid, and encouraging.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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