

## Servant Leadership as a Predictive Factor of Teachers' Job Satisfaction

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the degree of application of the servant leadership principles as well as the degree of job satisfaction as perceived by school teachers and, to examine the correlation between these two variables. The servant leadership is a form of leadership that is linked to high percentages of teachers' job satisfaction; however, it has not received the researchers' attention and lacks adequate empirical foundation. In Greece, only few studies have analysed this leadership style and, this study is the first to be conducted in a primary education environment. More specifically, the sample of the research consisted of 141 teachers from 20 public primary schools in the prefecture of Trikala in central Greece and as a measurement tool we used the OLA questionnaire (Laub, 1999 - edition for educational units), which we adjusted to the needs of the present research. The results revealed a positive trend towards the degree of perception of the characteristics of servant leadership by the majority of sample teachers. It has also been found that sample teachers receive an amount of a lot to a great deal of satisfaction from their work. Moreover, the research has shown a statistically significant powerful positive relationship between job satisfaction and the perceived application of the principles of servant leadership, and that the perceived application of the principles of servant leadership could be a predictive factor of teachers' job satisfaction. The above results demonstrate the positive contribution of servant leadership to teachers' job satisfaction, which is linked to the efficiency of the educational work of schools.

**Keywords:** servant leadership, job satisfaction, primary education, educational leadership

### Introduction

Research reveals that, Greece occupies the last posts among the states of the European Union regarding the performance of Greek pupils and lags behind in the educational novelty and innovation, being in the final ranks in the modernization of the educational systems (European Commission, 2016).

Undoubtly, within the educational unit, teachers have a complex and particularly important role, and, their effectiveness seems to be considerably correlated with the levels of their job satisfaction as well as with the meaning they attribute *in* and *at* their work (Matsaggouras & Makri-Mpotsari, 2003; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004; Papaloi, 2017).

An alternative way of leadership, with a positive impact both on the functioning of schools and on the teachers themselves as well as on the quality of education provided and the efficiency of schools, is the servant leadership (Hebert, 2004; Irving, 2004; Laub, 1999; Thompson, 2002).

With this paper, we look forward to shed light in the educational reality by analyzing the dimensions of servant leadership and its impact on teachers' job satisfaction. From a practical point of view, our research is expected to provide useful

information on the practices of school principals and the degree to which this form of leadership influences the orderly functioning, effectiveness and quality of the educational work.

### Servant leadership

The concept of leadership is one of the most important and more complex concepts in the science of management, being a determinant factor for the efficient functioning of organizations (Brauckman & Pasiardis, 2008, p. 216). The different conceptual approach that has been attempted by scholars, for decades, demonstrates precisely this complexity and the breadth of the concept. According to Laub (2004) leadership *"is an intentional change process through which leaders and followers, joined by a shared purpose, initiate action to pursue a common vision"* (p. 5). Leadership, as a process of change, is of great importance for the functioning, effectiveness and quality of education provided by schools, which in a constantly changing environment should be forward looking and not attached to the present and much worse to the past.

Servant leadership is an alternative way of leadership, which has a positive impact both on the functioning of schools and on the teachers themselves (Laub, 2004). In 1970, Greenleaf with his essay *"The Servant as Leader"* presented the term servant leadership for the first time (Lanctot & Irving, 2007, p. 5) and created the basis of the theoretical approach of servant leadership, which according to him is a way of living and not just a management style. The coexistence of the two seemingly different concepts, the leader and the servant in the same person, initially created the feeling of a paradoxical and oxymoron schema, since both these concepts are considered opposite and it is difficult for somebody to understand their coexistence within the same person (Spears, 2005, p. 1). However, these two concepts coexist creatively in servant leadership, having a dynamic and conceptual relationship among them and operating alternatively and in addition to the practices proposed by Greenleaf for a different way of leadership (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002).

In practice, implementing the philosophy of offering service in exercising power means that leaders perceiving their roles as servants, offer service to others through leadership (Laub, 1999, p. 14). In fact, Van Dierendonck (2010) claims: *"being a servant allows a person to lead; being a leader implies a person serves"* (p. 4). According to Greenleaf (2007), servant leadership aims at the personal development of the employees, so the best way but difficult one as well is to monitor servant leadership by giving answers to questions such as: *"Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"* (p. 83).

Nevertheless, Laub (2004) points out that the theory of servant leadership suffers from the absence of a clear conceptual definition and generally of a conceptual confusion regarding the use of the terms used. He proposes the following definition of servant leadership, which we adopt for the needs of this research: *"Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader"* (Laub, 1999, p. 81). This definition was further enriched with relative descriptive framework according to which, *"servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization"* (Laub, 1999, p. 81). Interestingly, in the above definition, six key characteristics are revealed, which are the main structures for describing the servant leadership as an act. In particular, Laub (2004, p. 8) states that servant leadership is a model that shapes the understanding and practice of leadership, which requires a different focus on the priorities given. The servant leader being fully aware of the organizational needs of the institution and his own power puts over his own desires even the interests of the organization for the benefit of the employees without ignoring the above crucial issues. Hence, he gives priority to and focuses on his followers, believing that in this way other critical issues such as productivity, teamwork and customer service will have more positive results by maximizing the potential of each employee in the organization. Finally, ethics is a focal point of servant leadership, on the basis of which substantial changes are being made to reform and transform the organization with a view to resolve difficult situations at every level (Parolini, 2004; Russell, 2001; Spears, 2010).

Despite its great interest, the effectiveness of this leadership model has received strong criticism. In particular, it is criticized as been utopian and rather unrealistic and overly idealistic, because the humility model it puts forward is impossible for people to follow (Wong and Davey, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, it is difficult to be applied to consumer societies in which individualism and non authenticity in behavior prevails because people will try to take advantage of the peculiarity and distinct behaviour of the servant leader which they will regard as a weakness and not as a moral pattern of behaviour, which they will have to adopt (Pfeffer, 2015, as cited in Ribeiro, 2016). In any case, studies have shown the positive contribution of servant leadership, both to organizations and employees (Al-Mahdy, Al-Harathi, & Salah, 2016; Anderson,

2005; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Bovee, 2012; Cerit, 2009; Hebert, 2004; Irving, 2004; Laub, 1999; Miers, 2004; Mpantouna, 2011; Patsis, 2016; Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson & Jinks, 2007; Thompson, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

In the field of education, this theory has not received the attention of the researchers and lacks adequate empirical foundations (Heskett, 2013; Laub, 2004). In particular, research analyzing servant leadership in educational environments is internationally extremely limited (Al-Mahdy, Al-Harhi, & Salah El-Din, 2016; Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Anderson, 2005; Bovee, 2012; Cerit, 2009; Chambliss, 2013; Drury, 2004; Güngör, 2016; Hebert, 2004; Inbarasu, 2008; Irving, 2004; Laub, 1999; Mayera, Bardes & Piccolo, 2008; Thompson, 2002) and almost non-existent in Greek literature.

### **Job satisfaction and its importance in educational contexts**

Job satisfaction is a multidimensional conceptual construction that lacks a commonly accepted conceptual and functional definition (Evans, 1997, p. 832; Matsagouras & Makri-Mpotsari, 2003, p. 158; Weiss, 2002). However, scholars seem to agree on the existence of an overall satisfaction, which depicts employee's satisfaction from the different aspects of his work (Koustelios & Kousteliou, 2001; Locke, 1969; Matsagouras & Makri-Mpotsari, 2003).

To be more specific, personal, organizational and environmental factors such as the very nature of the teachers' work, i.e. teaching, leadership style, infrastructure, resources and, school's relationship with the local community appear to have a considerable impact on the way job satisfaction is perceived by teachers (Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000).

Moreover, research data demonstrate the importance of job satisfaction for both employees and the organization itself. Doherty (1998, op. cit. in Koustelios, Theodorakis, & Goulimaris, 2004) points out that "*job satisfaction is a determinant of human resource effectiveness and of wider organizational effectiveness*" (p.91). This assumption is confirmed by a recent study carried by Murtedjo & Suharningsih (2016), which showed a significant positive correlation of job satisfaction and performance of primary school teachers. Employees' job satisfaction is associated with the organizational commitment and behavior of employees in the organization (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006, p. 153) whereas, it has positive and stabilizing effects on organizational functioning such as low rate of absenteeism, adoption of positive working attitudes, low mobility rates (Hatton et al., 1999) and reduced employees' willingness to leave their jobs (Kantas, 1998, p. 107).

As for the positive contribution of job satisfaction on a personal level, it is linked to employees' mental health (Kantas, 1998, p. 107) and constitutes a predictor of professional burnout (Spector, 1997, p. 66). Finally, job satisfaction is related to the person's overall satisfaction with his life, since the person can also convey the pleasure and dissatisfaction he has experienced during his working hours outside of his schedule too (Judge & Watanabe, 1993, op.cit. in Saiti & Papadopoulos, 2015, p. 74).

As far as educational institutions are concerned, teachers' job satisfaction is correlated with the efficiency and the quality of our educational system (Kantas, 1998; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). More specifically, teachers' job satisfaction is positively correlated with the progress of the pupils (Wright & Custer, 1998) and especially with their performance, through the procedures adopted by the teachers in their class (Cerit, 2010). In other words, teachers' job satisfaction has a positive effect on enthusiasm, attitude, energy and more generally on teachers trying to improve the performance of their students (Nguni et al., 2006; Cerit, 2010). Thus, it contributes to school efficiency, but also to teachers' devotion to their profession (Shann, 1998).

### **Greek educational system and levels of autonomy of the school leader**

In spite of the strong centralized context in which Greek schools operate and the centralized nature of the Greek educational system (Antreou & Papakonstantinou, 1994; European Commission, 2015, p. 6.; Katsaros, 2008; Koutouzis, 2008; Koutouzis, 2012; Papakonstantinou, 2007; Yfanti & Vazaitis, 2005)., "*conditions of increased relative autonomy of the educational units and prerequisites of its effective utilization*" (Koutouzis, 2012, p. 214) have been created according to the needs and capabilities of each school unit. Obviously, an essential prerequisite for pursuing such an internal education policy is the general change of mentality and culture, both of school leaders and teachers.

Law 2986/2002 (Official Government Gazette 24 A), with the subsequent amendments (Government Gazette issue 1180/2010, Government Gazette 1340/2002, Government Gazette 820/2014), created a new framework which enables school principals to take on more substantial roles and to operate not only as agents of central education policy, but as scientific pedagogues, by setting high goals for their schools, by being oriented towards the creation of a democratic, creative, pleasant, effective school, and, by putting emphasis on creating the appropriate climate and the conditions for

achieving their goals. Hence, the role of the school principal is to guide, help, inspire, work with school teachers and coordinate their work. In addition, the school principal undertakes educational and pedagogical initiatives with the aim of: providing a high level of education, opening the school to society and strengthening communication with both parents and the wider local community. Moreover, he also cultivates a spirit of solidarity and strengthens the consistency of the Teachers' Association and, strives to mitigate contradictions and encourage initiatives, providing positive incentives to school teachers.

### **Servant Leadership and teachers' job satisfaction**

The principles of servant leadership have been found to have a positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction when they are implemented by the school principals on day-to-day school practices (Al-Mahdy, Y. F., Hal-Harhi, A. S., & Salah El-Din, N. S. 2016; Mayera, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008.). More specifically, servant leadership positively correlates with effective leadership, which is one of the main factors in teachers' job satisfaction (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007). Furthermore, it seems that there is a positive influence of leadership in the efficiency and effectiveness of the team, which also acts as an element of teachers' job satisfaction (Hebert, 2004; Irving, 2004; Laub, 1999; Thompson, 2002).

### **Research objective and research questions**

The purpose of this study is to determine the degree of application of servant leadership principles in the school environment as well as the degree of job satisfaction as perceived by school teachers and, to examine the correlation between these two variables.

The following research questions are formulated based on the purpose of this research.

According to the views of the sample teachers:

Do the principals of public elementary schools in the prefecture of Trikala apply and to what extent the practices of servant leadership?

What are its main characteristics?

To what extent are the teachers of public elementary schools experiencing job satisfaction?

To what extent does the application of principles of servant leadership constitute and correlate to a predictive factor of teachers' job satisfaction?

What is the positive contribution of servant leadership to the proper functioning and effectiveness of the school?

### **Methodological data collection framework**

In order to answer the above research questions, we conducted a quantitative survey, with a sample of 141 teachers from 20 public primary schools in the prefecture of Trikala in central Greece, which emerged using the stratified sampling method.

As a research tool, we used the OLA (Organizational Leadership Assessment) version of Laub (1999), a publication for training units, which reflects the degree of implementation of the leadership principles served by school unit principals, as well as the level of work of teachers in a school organization.

Laub developed the specific questionnaire using Delphi's technique which identified 60 servant leader attributes and grouped into 6 groups that formed the 6 sub-scales of the questionnaire and, according to Laub (1999), outlined the key characteristics of servant leadership. Finally, Laub (1999) added an additional separate tool of six proposals to this questionnaire so as to assess the degree of teachers' job satisfaction so as to be continued with the servant leadership framework. In addition, this questionnaire enables the assessment of the organizational health level of an educational organization based on the six levels of health, as Laub (2003) himself categorized, based on the APS (Autocratic-Paternalistic-Servant) model, according to which there are three patterns of leadership: the authoritarian, the paternalistic, and the servant-leader, which represent the different ways leaders perceive the development of the organization and change.

With regard to the validity and reliability of the OLA tool, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was verified by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient and found to be  $\alpha=0.98$  (Laub, 1999, p. 23). In particular, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the

six sub-scales ranged from  $\alpha=0.90$  to  $\alpha=0.93$  Laub (1999, p. 20) and the occupational satisfaction scale was found to have a Cronbach Alpha coefficient,  $\alpha=0.81$  (Laub, 1999). In addition, the correlation between the proposals of the total OLA scale ranged from  $r=0.41$  to  $r=0.79$ , demonstrating a strong correlation of all the questionnaire proposals (Laub, 1999, p.19). In addition, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between the overall OLA scale and the occupational satisfaction  $r=0.635$  (Laub, 1999, p. 22).

### Research process

As far as the research process is concerned, we have obtained the necessary licenses and followed undivided and standardized procedures, thus avoiding bias in research (Creswell, 2011, p. 207).

### Data analysis

The data analysis started with the completion of the questionnaire collection and took place using the statistical program IBM SPSS statistics 24. Initially, we applied descriptive statistic, then checked for a normal or not distribution of the values of the scales and sub-scales measuring tool, both with frequency diagrams and with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, demonstrating their abnormal distribution, using non-parametric induction statistics.

In particular, statistical controls include: a) non-parametric Spearman tests to test the relationship between the "OLA total scale" and "professional satisfaction scale" as well as among the six OLA sub-scales with "the job satisfaction scale" and b) single and multiple regression analysis to check whether and how the sample teachers' perception of the existence of certain attributes of servant leadership in their school's leading figure contributes significantly in the prediction of the level of their job satisfaction (Creswell, 2011).

### Internal Reliability (Cronbach Alpha)

Internal reliability was measured by using Cronbach Alfa coefficient resulting in  $\alpha= 0.89$  for job satisfaction to  $\alpha= 0.99$  for total servant leadership (OLA) (see Table 1). The present study's finding confirmed the reliability of OLA subscales. According to the result, the OLA instrument is a reliable instrument for measuring servant leadership and for measuring teachers' job satisfaction as well.

Table 1- *Reliability Scores on Job Satisfaction, Total Servant Leadership (OLA) and six OLA Subscales*

Scales and Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha of this study	Cronbach's Alpha Laub (1999)	N of Items
Total Servant leadership (OLA)	0.99	0.98	60
Values People	0.90	0.91	10
Develops People	0.96	0.90	9
Builds Community	0.92	0.90	10
Displays Authenticity	0.94	0.93	12
Provides Leadership	0.93	0.91	9
Shares Leadership	0.96	0.93	10
Job Satisfaction	0.88	0.81	6

### Results

#### Degree of implementation of Servant Leadership principles

We first calculated the mean of the scale, the standard deviation; the variance and the range of values (see Table 2). The average of the total OLA ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $S.D. = 0.75$ ), which was above the midpoint of 3.0 on the rating scale, classifies the leadership of school principals of the sample, according to Laub (2003), at the paternalistic level of leadership and not at the level of servant leadership.

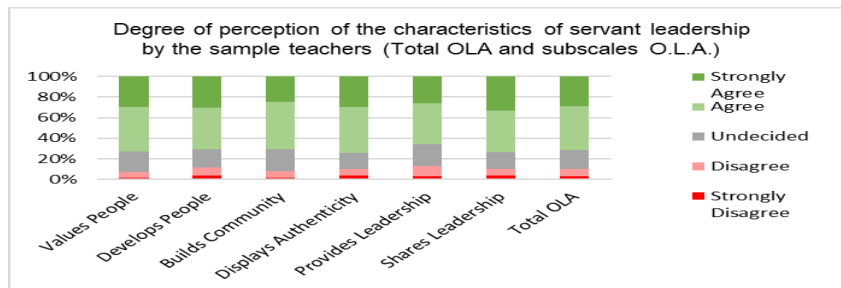
Table 2- *Descriptive statistics for Total OLA end for subscales OLA*

	N			S.D.	Variance	Range
	Valid	Missing	M			

Total servant leadership (OLA)	141	0	3.87	0.75	0.56	3.38
Values People	141	0	3.93	0.65	0.42	3.10
Develops People	141	0	3.86	0.88	0.78	3.78
Builds Community	141	0	3.79	0.70	0.49	3.40
Displays Authenticity	141	0	3.91	0.79	0.63	3.50
Provides Leadership	141	0	3.76	0.80	0.64	3.78
Shares Leadership	141	0	3.93	0.88	0.78	3.80

Then we estimated the degree of perception of the characteristics of the servant leadership, categorizing the values of 60 questions in the scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree, depending on the degree they received (positive: Agree + Strongly Agree, moderate: Undecided, negative: Disagree + Strongly Disagree), as to the degree of perception of the characteristics of servant leadership, from the sample teachers in the schools they serve. From the above, a positive trend (71.46%) of the perception of the leadership characteristics of the sample teachers (see Figure 1) was clearly obvious.

Figure 1. Degree of perception of the characteristics of servant leadership by the sample teachers



### Characteristics of servant leadership (Subscales OLA)

Initially, we calculated the average values of each sub-scale separately (see Table 2). The highest average was taken by the sub-scales "gives value to people" ( $M = 3.93, SD = 0.65$ ) and "provides opportunities for leadership" ( $M = 3.93, S.D. = 0.88$ ), whereas the sub-scale "take on leading roles" ( $M = 3.76, S.D. = 0.80$ ) received a lower average.

In more detail, the highest average concentration out of the ten proposals (queries) of the sub-scale was compiled by the sentence "I feel appreciated by my principal for what I contribute" ( $M=4.31, S.D.=0.87$ ), which the majority of the sample perceives to a great extent.

In the sub-scale "Provides opportunities for exercising power", out of the ten statements, the one with the highest average is: "Do not seek after special status or the "perks" of leadership" ( $M=4.09, S.D.=1.07$ ), which is understood by the 82.98% of the sample to a great or big enough extent, whereas the lowest average was comprised of the sentence: "People at school are encouraged by their supervisors to share in making important decisions" ( $M=3.72, S.D.=0.98$ ), which however is perceived by the 63.83% of the sample to a good or great extent. Also, a great deal of perception was made by the proposals: "The principal allows teachers to help determine where the school is headed" ( $M=4.03, S.D.=0.963$ ), (78.01%) and "Uses persuasion to influence others instead of coercion or force" ( $M=3.97, S.D.=0.971$ ), (73.76%).

The highest average out of the twelve proposals in the sub-scale, was the statement "I trust the leadership of this school" ( $M=4.13, S.D.=1.06$ ), which 81.6% of the sample perceives a great deal. Also, the highest level of acceptance was apparent in the sentence: "My principal is accountable and responsible to others" ( $M=4.07, S.D.=1.012$ ), (82.3%).

The highest average out of nine proposals in the sub-scale "Helping to improve people" is found in the statement: "I receive encouragement and affirmation from those above me in the school" ( $M=4.09$ ,  $S.D.=0.93$ ), which is perceived by the 78% of the sample to a great extent. Also, high levels of acceptance noted the statements: "Provide the support and resources needed to help teachers/staff meet their professional goals" ( $M=3.9$ ,  $S.D.=1.05$ ), (73.76%). "Build people up through encouragement and affirmation" ( $M=3.91$ ,  $S.D.=1.03$ ), (73.05%) and "Provide opportunities for all teachers/staff to develop to their full potential" ( $M=3.96$ ,  $S.D.=1.02$ ), (73.05%).

The highest average out of the ten statements in the sub-scale "Forms a sense of community" is developed in the sentence: "The principal works in collaboration with teachers/staff, not separate from them" ( $M=4.03$ ,  $S.D.=1.06$ ), which is perceived highly by 76.6% of the sample, whereas the least average is found in the sentence: "People within this school, work well together in teams" ( $M=3.62$ ,  $S.D.=0.883$ ), which is understood though by the 57% of the sample.

Finally, the highest average out of the nine statements of the sub-scale "Take on leadership roles" is evident in the sentence "The principal provides the support and resources needed to help teachers/staff meet their professional goals" ( $M=4.03$ ,  $S.D.=1.04$ ), which is understood by the 77.3% of the sample to the most. Also, a great deal of acceptance took place with the statement: "My principal takes appropriate action when it is needed" ( $M=4.04$ ,  $S.D.=1.024$ ), (79.4%) as well as with the sentence "Encourages people to take risks even if they may fail" ( $M=3.67$ ,  $S.D.=1.073$ ), (62.4%).

### Degree of Job Satisfaction

We estimated the average of the scale, the standard deviation, the variance and the range of prices (see Table 3) in order to reflect the level of sample teachers' job satisfaction. In more detail, it was found that the sample teachers gained too much or too great satisfaction from their work ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $S.D. = 0.59$ ).

Table 3- Descriptive statistics for job satisfaction scale

	N		M.	S.D.	Variance	Range
	Valid	Missing				
Scale job satisfaction	141	0	4.13	0.589	0.347	2.67

Of the six proposals on the scale, the highest average was the "I feel happy with my contribution to school" ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD= 0.70$ ), and "I have the ability to be creative in my work" ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $S.D. = 0.75$ ) (see Table 4).

Table 4- Descriptive statistics for job satisfaction scale (items job satisfaction)

scale: Job satisfaction						
Items job satisfaction	N		M.	S.D.	Variance	Range
	Valid	Missing				
I am working at a high level of productivity	141	0	4.03	0.676	0.456	3
I feel good about my contribution to the school	141	0	4.21	0.702	0.493	3
My job is important to the success of this school	141	0	4.18	0.581	0.337	2
I enjoy working in this school	141	0	4.06	0.927	0.860	4
I am able to be creative in my job	141	0	4.21	0.745	0.554	3
I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job	141	0	4.08	0.793	0.630	3

**Correlations between total leadership (OLA) and job satisfaction**

A Spearman's correlation was run to determine the relationship between servant leadership (total OLA) and job satisfaction. There was a strong, positive correlation between total OLA and job satisfaction ( $r_s = 0.73, p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 5 and Figure 2).

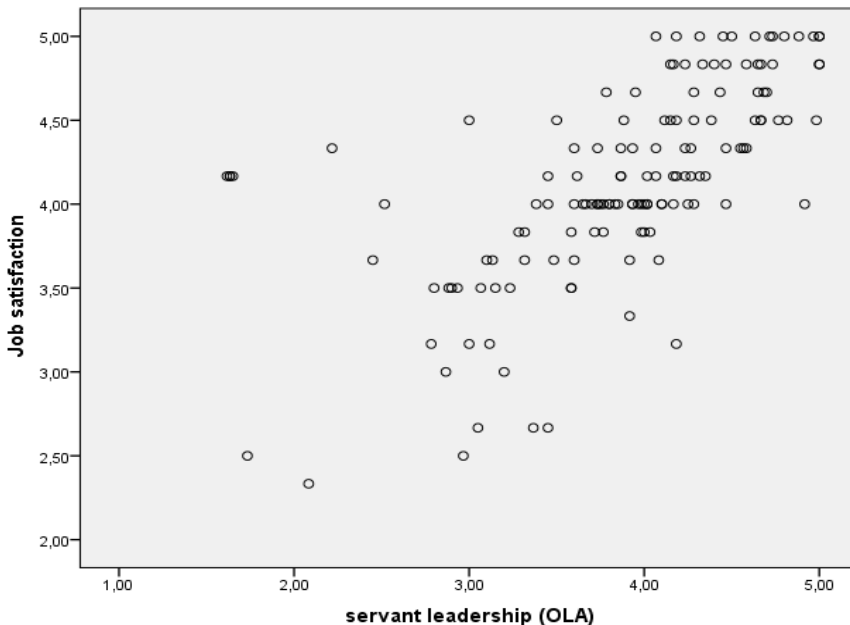
Table 5- Correlations (Spearman's rho  $r_s$ ) between six servant leadership characteristics and job satisfaction

Variables	1.	2.
Total servant leadership (OLA)	1.00	
Job satisfaction	0.73***	1.00

Note: \*\*\*.  $P < 0.001$ .

5.1

5.2 *Figure 2. - Scatter plot: Total servant leadership (OLA) with job satisfaction*



5.3

**5.4 Correlations between job satisfaction and six subscales leadership (OLA)**

A Spearman's correlation was run to determine the relationship between six servant leadership characteristics and job satisfaction. There was a strong, positive correlation between six servant leadership characteristics and job satisfaction (ranging from  $r_s = 0.63$  to  $r_s = 0.72, p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 6 and Figure 3).

Table 6- Correlations (Spearman's rho  $r_s$ ) between six servant leadership characteristics and job satisfaction

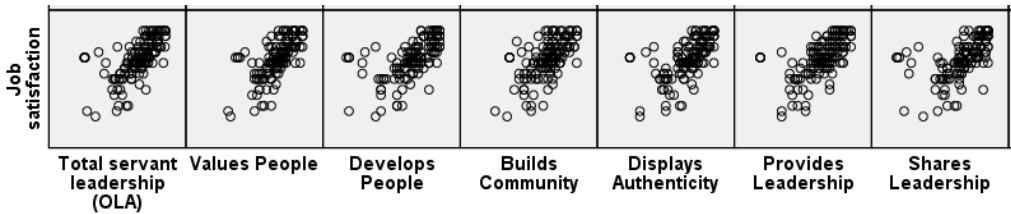
Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Job satisfaction	1.000						
2. Values People	.724***	1.000					
3. Develops People	.716***	.856***	1.000				



4. Builds Community	.625***	.900***	.824***	1.000			
5. Displays Authenticity	.693***	.888***	.928***	.891***	1.000		
6. Provides Leadership	.677***	.858***	.904***	.852***	.895***	1.000	
7. Shares Leadership	.702***	.802***	.939***	.783***	.907***	.865***	1.000

Notes: \*\*\*.  $P < 0.001$ .

Figure 3.- Scatter plot: six servant leadership characteristics (subscales OLA) with job satisfaction



### Regression analysis of total servant leadership (OLA) on job satisfaction

Simple linear regression was used to test if servant leadership (total OLA) significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction (see Table 7). The results of the regression indicated that servant leadership explained 41% of the variance ( $R^2 = .41$ ,  $F(1, 139) = 96.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It was found that servant leadership significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction ( $B = 0.50$ ,  $t = 9.84$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 7- Regression analysis of total servant leadership (OLA) on job satisfaction (N=141)

Predictor: (Constant)	B	SE B	Beta
Total servant leadership (OLA)	0.50	0.05	0.64***

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Dependent variable: Job satisfaction (Method Enter).  $R^2 = 0.41$ ,  $F(1, 139) = 96.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

### Regression analysis of six servant leadership characteristics on job satisfaction

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if the six servant leadership characteristics significantly predicted job satisfaction of teachers (see Table 8). The results of the regression analysis indicated that the six predictors explained 46% of the variance ( $R^2 = .48$ ,  $F(6, 134) = 20.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It was found that the characteristic "Values People" significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction ( $B = 0.66$ ,  $t = 3.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 8- Multiple regression analysis of six servant leadership characteristics (subscales servant leadership OLA) on teachers' job satisfaction (N=141)

Predictor: (Constant)	B	SE B	Beta
Values People	0.66	0.18	0.73***
Develops People	0.35	0.19	0.53
Builds Community	0.03	0.15	0.04
Displays Authenticity	-0.24	0.20	-0.32
Provides Leadership	0.01	0.14	0.01
Shares Leadership	-0.21	0.17	-0.31

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Dependent variable: Job satisfaction (Method Enter).  $R^2 = 0.48$ ,  $F(6, 134) = 20.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

## Conclusions-Discussion

Scholars argue that, school leaders with their complex role and authority may form a culture of efficiency, change and innovation at school (Chatzipanagiotou, 2008, p. 223). Interestingly, servant leadership consists a leadership model which, when it is implemented by school principals, has a positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction which is advantageously related to the effectiveness and quality of the education provided (Al-Mahdy, Y. F., Hal-Harhi, A. S., & Salah El-Din, N. S. 2016; Mayera, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008).

According to the findings of this research, the majority of the sample teachers agree that leadership applied in their schools in the prefecture of Trikala has the characteristics of servant leadership. The above findings are in agreement with previous similar research, both in Greece and abroad as well as Laub's ascertainment (2003, pp. 3-4) that the majority of organizations operate with the paternalistic leadership model. However our research differs from the Anderson (2005) survey, which demonstrated a higher average perceived application of the servant leadership principles employed in its sample schools and Gügnor (2016) which showed low perceptions of implementation of the servant leadership, a result that may have to do with the different cultural environment in which the research is conducted.

As for the characteristics, the sample teachers perceive all the six characteristics of servant leadership, of which the highest rate was observed in the following: it gives value to the people, the leadership for the good of those who lead, allotment of the authority, the implementation of the authenticity, and then all the rest come next: it contributes to the improvement and development of the people, the sense of community and shares leadership, a finding that has an accord to previous similar studies of Anderson, (2005); Bovee, (2012); Cerit, (2009); Chambliss, (2013); Drury, (2004); Inbarasu, (2008); Mpantouna, (2011); Patsis, (2011).

Based on the results of this survey, the sample teachers appear to be experiencing a great deal of satisfaction from their work. In particular, they say they are happy with their contribution to school, they believe the work they offer is important to their success and finally that they have the freedom to be creative in their workplace. The above findings confirm once again that teachers' job satisfaction is linked to the "nature of the work itself", i.e. teaching and its results. The results of this research show the decisive role of the school principal, who may, depending on how he chooses to lead his school, contributes or not to teachers' job satisfaction. Servant leadership, when it is implemented by the school principals, seems to contribute positively to school teachers' job satisfaction.

Interestingly, our research revealed that the majority of the principals operate on the principles of servant leadership, without, however, knowing it. It appears that the principals of the primary schools in the prefecture of Trikala are generally considered to apply a model of leadership that largely incorporates harmoniously the basic characteristics of the servant leadership and, positively contribute to teachers' job satisfaction.

Correlation analysis has statistically demonstrated a strong positive relationship between the perceived teachers' job satisfaction and the perceived application of the principles of servant leadership. It has also statistically demonstrated a strong positive relationship between each of the six perceived characteristics of servant leadership and the perceived job satisfaction of the sample teachers. Finally, the regression analysis demonstrated the implementation of servant leadership as a predictive factor of job satisfaction, as well as the significant contribution of the leadership characteristic serving "attaching value to people" in the prediction of teacher's job satisfaction. The above findings are related to previous researches, both in Greece and abroad (Mpantouna, 2011; Patsis, 2016; Cerit, 2009), however, they contradict with Gügnor's results (2016), whose research has shown that the servant leadership contributes negatively to predicting teachers' job satisfaction. One possible explanation for the above differentiation has to do probably with different cultural research environments, but also with the use of different measuring and pre-measuring tools.

The findings of this research clearly reveal the positive contribution of servant leadership to school's smooth functioning and effectiveness. More specifically, according to the perceptions of the sample teachers, the principals of the elementary schools in the prefecture of Trikala, exercise leadership by relying not on command, control and enforcement, but on respect and confidence they have gained by their school teachers, without self pro-claiming and requiring special recognition of "privileges" of leadership, being aware of their personal limits and mistakes, which they admit, making themselves accountable for their actions. The majority of school principals of the elementary schools in the prefecture of Trikala are perceived to clearly communicate their vision towards a future oriented school, showing an articulate orientation towards

the teachers as human beings and encouraging them to participate in both making important decisions and shaping the school's objectives and what is more, urging them on taking leadership initiatives whenever this is required.

In addition, they provide teachers with support in order to fulfill their professional goals and to maximize the professional potential through continuous encouragement and confirmation. It is also noteworthy that sample teachers feel they are encouraged by their principal to risk, even if they are likely to fail. Finally, the school principals are perceived as servant leaders who contribute with their example in shaping a school culture, they are characterized by ethics, integrity, respect and honesty, they foster and encourage open communication, positive organizational behavior, collaboration among teachers, the sense of community and, they reduce competitiveness, contributing to shaping a learning environment that encourages learning.

Concluding, taking into account our findings regarding positive effects and correlations of servant leadership with job satisfaction, organizational effectiveness and innovation, we suggest that servant leadership should receive more attention not only by the scientific community, but also by senior education practitioners and teachers' trainers.

### Limitations- Future research

Although a lot of effort has been made to ensure credibility and validity of the present research, we must say that asking teachers to evaluate their principal raises questions about the sincerity/objectivity of our sample's answers.

Moreover, we suggest that it would be interesting to examine the degree of perception of applying the principles of servant leadership in a more extended sample throughout Greece. Lastly, a research in both public and private schools would reveal possible differences in the perceived degree of implementation of the principles of servant leadership and would give us some interesting ideas for school improvement and efficiency.

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