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# **SERVANT LEADERSHIP: GENDER ANALYSIS IN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

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**“Having people that work for you does not make you a leader of them, it makes you a servant to them. A great way to serve is to lead. Another great way to serve is to follow when they lead”**

**- Daniel Buhr**

*Analyst*

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the years, different leadership styles have been identified in organizations. Recently, this topic has been gaining importance due to the diversity of opinions about the effectiveness of each of the styles in work environments. Servant leadership has been the only one that, according to several authors, has proven to be effective and sustainable over time. Great management personalities have devoted themselves to the study of servant leadership and its implementation in organizations, concluding its numerous benefits in terms of employee retention, job satisfaction and happiness, better customer service quality, etc. The main objective of this paper is to confirm another of the benefits of servant leadership, which is its role as an integrator and creator of opportunities for the promotion of women to leadership positions. Because it combines both masculine and feminine characteristics, it allows the disappearance of the gender gap in the leadership role, being a leadership that allows women leaders to reach their full potential without discrimination. For this purpose, a theoretical review of the servant leadership variable and its subsequent review from a gender perspective will be carried out. Second, the concepts reviewed will be put into practice in the case study, to see if indeed, both women and men are capable of integrating into servant leadership. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

**Keywords:** servant leadership, gender, female role, leadership role.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, interest in servant leadership and its impact on organizations and their people has been growing. An increasing number of authors are betting on the empirical study of the benefits of servant leaders on the people around them. Within a work organization, Robert K. Greenleaf was the first to delve into the area of servant leadership in his work *The servant as leader*. Since then, many researchers have turned to the development of a solid and empirically studied theoretical basis on the subject, concluding that servant leadership has a positive impact on several variables, such as employees' trust in their leaders and companies, job satisfaction or happiness.

The most representative servant leaders have been those who throughout history have mobilized against social injustices, such as Nelson Mandela, M.K. Ghandi or Gautama Buddha. They are people who have managed to create important collective power, based on interpersonal relationships of pure solidarity and energy. They have used their brains and hearts to carry out effective tactics and strategies in the face of unimaginable adversities today.

Over the last decade, leadership has undergone a number of changes, with many researchers claiming to have seen a transition from command and control leadership to one centered on people and human relationships. As Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2010) explain: "The ideal of heroic, hierarchical-oriented leader with primacy to shareholders has quickly been replaced by a view on leadership that gives priority to stewardship, ethical behavior and collaboration through connecting to other people". Servant leadership is gaining attention for integrating attributes focused on satisfying people's needs, where servant leaders are those who emerge from the role of service to their followers. This type of leadership may be the answer to the demand for people-centered leadership, since ethics, humility, service and contribution are the basis on which servant leadership is built.

The third section of this paper discusses the relationship between servant leadership and gender. The emphasis in this case would be on the fact that servant leadership includes both feminine and masculine attributes, being a style with great potential to ensure gender equality in the leadership role. Women's leadership status is positively affected by the introduction of servant leadership, as it allows them to develop both the leadership role and the gender role simultaneously. In addition, the relationship of servant leadership with motherhood and the ethic of care is explored, as it symbolizes

feminine values and experiences. On the other hand, a brief introduction is also made to the views of authors who dismember servant leadership from a feminist lens.

Once the theoretical review of the concept of servant leadership, and its subsequent review from a gender perspective, a case study will be developed in which the relationship between the characteristics of servant leadership and the gender of the company's leaders will be tested. The study will be based on a company located in Almazora (Castellón), dedicated to the commercialization of poultry meat. In order to obtain the necessary information, a questionnaire will be sent to the company's workers. Finally, the conclusions of the work will be drawn at the end of the study, in addition to, including all the bibliographical references through which the theoretical information of this work has been obtained.

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **2.1. Definition of Servant Leadership**

The concept of servant leadership was born as an accumulation of ideas in 1970, when Robert K. Greenleaf (1904 - 1990) began to question the rebelliousness of young adults against American educational institutions. According to Greenleaf, such institutions have not developed their purpose of serving others well, as a consequence, they have not been able to lead people. During this time, the author read Hesse's (1956 - 2003) novel *Journey to the East*, from which he was able to conclude with certainty his ideas about the good leader as a servant of others.

In the same year (1970), Robert K. Greenleaf published his first essay *The Servant as Leader*, in which he presented his vision based on personal experiences in the business world. In this work, the author does not present an exact definition of the term servant leadership, but his own explanation of it as: "the great leader is seen first as a servant, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness". Seven years later, that essay became part of the first chapter of his book *Servant Leadership* (1977), published by Paulist Press, in which he collected this and other essays on servant leadership. In the book, Robert K Greenleaf presents the following definition of a servant leader: "it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice leads one to aspire to lead". The author firmly believes that good leadership is born from the desire of wanting to serve others. This perspective clashes with other

theories (such as transactional leadership) in which good leadership is based primarily on control of the organization. This is why Greenleaf (1977) emphasizes the difference between a person who chooses to serve rather than lead in such a way that: "Such a person is markedly different from one who is a leader first, perhaps because of the need to mitigate an unusual drive for power or to acquire material possessions", referring to the altruistic and people-oriented instinct that characterizes the servant leader.

Basically, the servant leader prioritizes the needs of the subordinates or followers, before its own, so Greenleaf (2002. p.27) proposes a series of questions that one should ask oneself, in order to find a purpose for servant leadership:

*Do those served grow as people? As they are served, do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely to become servants? And what is the effect on the less privileged in society; are they going to benefit them, or, at least, not be more disadvantaged?*

Servant leadership is presented as a set of skills that include a sincere service orientation, a global vision of the situation and the ability to balance the spiritual and the moral. That is why the main difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership lies in the tendency to serve the employees who form the basis of an organizational structure. For Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), "servant leadership is to serve employees, while transformational leadership is to motivate employees to achieve organizational goals". However, for Greenleaf (1977), leadership is more related to the internal intentions of each person, rather than to the particular techniques or skills that can be carried out, the emphasis in this case, would be on the true motivation of the leader: to serve or to lead.

It is essential to mention Greenleaf when talking about the literature behind servant leadership, due to the strength of his original ideas about the concept. Many authors have been influenced by these ideas, among them Laub (1999, p.31), who defines servant leadership as more than a leadership style: "it is a different way of thinking about the purpose of leadership, the true role of the leader, and the potential of those being led", as well as Greenleaf, the author concludes that "the servant leader views leadership as an opportunity to serve others along with the shared goals of the organization" and adds that servant leadership "is not about controlling people, but about liberating them to their full potential".

Therefore, servant leadership is an effective alternative to the authoritarianism and traditional power that continues to operate in organizations today. It is a leadership that cares for its followers and moves towards the development of people's potential, allowing the construction of healthier organizations and a more joyful society. Hawkins (1996) states that servant leaders play an important role in the organization, facilitating their followers the process of identifying a vision and joint objectives.

Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) have concluded that the basis of servant leadership lies in the servant role, and its nature within a leader. They state that this is real leadership, with many instances in organizations, and that it will continue to develop over time. They determine that a servant leader operates with the following mindset: "I am the leader, therefore I serve" which contradicts the following idea that represents the traditional leader "I am a leader, therefore I lead". According to the authors it is obvious that the nature of servant leadership is to serve others, and not to lead, for this very reason: "it is because of this act of serving that leaders lead others to become what they are capable of being".

Larry C. Spears worked for Robert K. Greenleaf's foundation, *Center for Servant Leadership* since 1990, and therefore shares similar ideals about servant leadership. For Spears (2004) "servant leadership is a long-term transformational approach to life and work, in essence, a way of being, that has the potential to create positive change throughout our society".

As for Blanchard (2018), we can say that he takes a religious approach to servant leadership, placing as his main reference the representative of Christianity, Jesus. For the author: "regardless of your religious context, you must admit that Jesus was a leader. In fact, he was the only religious leader I have ever known who built a management team". He explains that the true result of leaders is reflected in their absence, what they have managed to develop in their followers that they can do without their presence. Like him, many authors have taken Mother Teresa of Calcutta as a reference of servant leader par excellence, who said: "He who does not live to serve, does not serve to live".

Finally, Blanchard (2018) defines servant leadership as a process by which the leader must help people to achieve clear objectives, guided by a vision and a joint direction. Therefore, the leader is in charge of working for others, so that the chain of control (or



structural pyramid) is inverted from top to bottom, with managers at the bottom and subordinates at the top. Blanchard (2018) understands that:

*The difference lies in who is responsible and who is accountable. With the traditional pyramid, the boss is always in charge, and the workers are supposed to be accountable to him/her. When you invert the pyramid upside down, your people become responsible for their work, and management's role is to be accountable to its people.*

## **2.2. Characteristics of the Servant Leader**

In the book *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* (Marzano et al., 2005) the authors point out that the main objective of servant leadership is to nurture the people who make up the organization. Therefore, they consider that a servant leader must have skills such as: knowing how to identify and understand the needs of the personnel, solve conflicts, know how to use the organization's resources, know how to listen and develop the abilities of the followers. They also state that: "servant leadership has a unique perspective on the leader's position in the organization. Instead of occupying a position at the top of the hierarchy, the servant leader is positioned at the center of the organization" (2005, p.17).

For Russell and Stone (2002) the main characteristics attributed to a servant leader are classified within the following attributes; "vision, modeling, communication, persuasion, honesty, pioneering, credibility, listening, integrity, appreciation, competence, competence, encouragement, confidence, empowerment, stewardship, service, delegation, visibility and influence", in addition to nine other functional characteristics. However, there are other authors who summarize the most important characteristics of servant leadership in four dimensions such as: empowerment, humility, service and vision (Olesia et al., 2013).

The author Patterson (2003) explains that servant leadership is composed of seven main attributes, which she classifies as: "agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment and service". This author argues that servant leaders have an altruistic and service vocation towards others, creating an environment of compassion and forgiveness, where people strive and grow thanks to the unconditional support of their leaders. The servant leader acts according to "agapao love" or moral love, whose term dates back to the Greeks, and refers to doing the right thing, at the right time and for

the right reasons: "servant leaders love unconditionally, genuinely appreciate their followers, and care about their people" (Russell and Stone, 2002).

After a lengthy and detailed study of Greenleaf's original writings, Spears (2004) compiles a total of ten essential characteristics for a servant leader such as "listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment, and community building". Servant leaders are aware that they cannot provide answers to everything, however, one of the best gifts they can give their followers is the gift of self. The assurance that they will care for, respect and watch over the development of their people, as well as the unconditional commitment they show for the organization and its future.

Servant leaders start from an altruistic, moral and service-oriented perspective. As It was discussed earlier in this paper, servant leaders see themselves as servants first, rather than leaders. Therefore, it is important to address the term "*self-concept*" in servant leadership and its meaning for leaders. Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) explain that, "Leaders' self-concept involves the extent to which they are aware of their thoughts, beliefs, and values"..."servant leaders are servants by nature...servant leadership is not just about doing servant acts but about being a servant ". Therefore, it could be said that the relationship between the servant leader and his follower is similar to that of a consumer with a worker, in this case, the worker ensures to offer a service tailored to the consumers' liking, in order to satisfy their needs with excellence.

According to Laub (1999), the most observable characteristics of a servant leader are the following: values people, develops the potential of others, builds community, provides and shares leadership and exudes authenticity. Servant leaders must know how to identify the diversity of people's talents, in order to understand the needs of each one and work on the personal and collective development of their followers. For Enrhart (2004) servant leaders are so, mainly thanks to the relationship they manage to form with their followers. This can only be achieved thanks to the power they are able to give to their subordinates, the help they offer to make them grow and develop, acting ethically, having conceptual skills, creating value for those inside and outside the organization, and finally putting the needs of subordinates before those of oneself.

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) have identified 5 factors that characterize servant leadership (Table 1):

**Table 1: Characteristics of servant leadership**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Altruistic calling	The leader has a strong desire to leave a positive impact on the lives of others.
Emotional healing	Leaders address traumas and difficulties from a spiritual perspective
Wisdom	The leader is adept at picking up signals from the environment and understanding the consequences.
Persuasive mapping	Leaders are able to encourage others to envision the future of the organization, and are persuasive, offering compelling reasons for others to do things.
Organizational stewardship	The leader acts with values and ethics, seeking the good of the community.

*Source: Adapted from Barbuto and Wheeler (2006).*

Blanchard (2018), assures that being a servant leader does not mean that you have to die for your people, but that you are willing to listen to them, encourage them, appreciate them and help them win. Therefore, to conclude, I will mention the authors Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), whose work has consisted of the analysis of several authors about servant leadership, and the development of eight characteristics related to the servant leader such as: empowerment, autonomy, humility, authenticity, courage, forgiveness, management skills and standing back, or the way in which leaders prioritize the interests of their followers before their own. As we have seen in this section, many authors have tried to clarify the characteristics of the servant leader within the servant leadership model.

In summary, after seeing the different models of servant leadership explained by each of the previous authors, the elements that characterize the servant leader could be grouped as follows: a) valuing people and the community b) having emotional intelligence, c) having the ability to establish relationships based on morality and ethics e) maintaining a balance between the needs of the organization and its workers. In addition, the servant leader must start with a work of self-knowledge, before starting to lead others. Since we live in a primarily interpretative world, leaders must be able to see beyond people and understand the potential they can achieve within organizations. That is why the internal state of leaders can influence their way of interpreting the

realities around them, since it is closely linked to who the leader has been and who it is as a person.

### **2.3. Measurement of Servant Leadership**

As mentioned in the previous section, many authors have tried to explain the most relevant characteristics that describe the behavior of servant leaders. It is true that servant leadership can be measured according to its impact on people; however, in order to validate the construct of servant leadership, there are a series of methods developed specifically for measuring the attributes related to this leadership style.

According to Hammer (1996), when it comes to servant leadership, there has always been an attempt to explain and understand it from an experiential perspective. In most of the writings, servant leadership appears in stories and experiences, where it is described from a personal and subjective perspective. According to the author "there is an enormous difference between an intellectual understanding of an idea and appreciating what it really means. The former is conceptual, the latter is personal and experiential" and that is why he encourages people to see servant leadership from a conceptual perspective and not just as a spiritual one.

Table 2 below, details the different proposals of each author for measuring servant leadership.

**Table 2: Measurement Instruments of Servant Leadership**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Items</b>
Sendjaya et al. (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Voluntary subordination</li> <li>● Authenticity</li> <li>● Alliance relationship</li> <li>● Responsibility</li> <li>● Transcendent spirituality</li> <li>● Transforming influence</li> </ul>	35
Laub (1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Values people</li> <li>● Develops people</li> <li>● Build a community</li> <li>● Exude authenticity</li> <li>● Provides</li> </ul>	52

	<p>leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shared leadership</li> <li>● Job satisfaction</li> </ul>	
Liden et al. (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Empowerment</li> <li>● Helping subordinates to grow and achieve success</li> <li>● Putting subordinates first</li> <li>● Emotional healing</li> <li>● Conceptual skills</li> <li>● Creating value for the community</li> <li>● Acting ethically</li> </ul>	28
Dirk van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Empowerment</li> <li>● Humility</li> <li>● "Standing back"</li> <li>● Knowing how to forgive</li> <li>● Courage</li> <li>● Authenticity</li> <li>● Responsibility</li> <li>● Stewardship</li> </ul>	30
Page & Wong (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Humility</li> <li>● Easement</li> <li>● Integrity</li> <li>● Empowerment</li> <li>● Caring for others</li> <li>● Vision</li> <li>● Developing others</li> <li>● Leadership</li> <li>● Set objectives</li> <li>● "Modeling"</li> <li>● Shared decision making</li> <li>● Teamwork</li> </ul>	97
Dennis & Bocarnea (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Empowerment</li> <li>● Love</li> <li>● Humility</li> <li>● Vision</li> <li>● Trust</li> </ul>	42
Hale & Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Humility</li> <li>● Service</li> <li>● Vision</li> </ul>	18
Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emotional healing</li> <li>● Altruism</li> </ul>	23

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Persuasive mapping"</li> <li>● Wisdom</li> <li>● Organizational stewardship</li> </ul>	
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Source: Own elaboration

The authors Winston and Fields (2015) have conducted a detailed study of servant leadership and have managed to develop a complete measurement model based on contributions previously developed by other authors such as Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Liden et al. (2008) and Page and Wong (2000). A panel of 23 experts focused specifically on the study of servant leadership has been conducted, where the main characteristics of the servant leader and a questionnaire for their measurement have been developed.

For the section of the questionnaire related to the multidimensional operationalization of servant leadership, the authors have used seven dimensions investigated by Liden et al. (2008) such as: empowering people, conceptual skills, helping subordinates to grow, putting subordinates first, acting ethically, emotional healing and creating value for the community. These possible servant leadership attitudes are essential to detect whether someone is likely to be seen as a servant leader or not. Thanks to the questionnaire developed by authors Liden et al. (2008), the authors were able to conduct an empirical study using 27 items to measure the seven dimensions mentioned above.

The items used for each of the dimensions in the "multidimensional operationalization of servant leadership" section are detailed below (Table 3):

**Table 3: Items by dimension of Servant Leadership**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Items</b>
Empowering people	4
Conceptual skills	4
Helping subordinates to grow	3/4
Putting subordinates first	4
Acting ethically	3

Emotional healing	4
Creating value for the community	4

Source: Winston and Fields (2015).

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), take as a reference 11 characteristics of servant leadership provided by different authors such as: "calling, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, community building", to later group them into 5 dimensions, which they consider essential to capture the essence of servant leadership (see Table 2). This construct of characteristics will later be used by Barbuto and Gifford (2010) to measure servant leadership from a gender perspective, and will therefore be used as the basis for the case study of the present paper.

#### **2.4. Antecedents of Servant Leadership**

Historically speaking, leadership has always been identified as a way in which leaders act with authority and power over others, as explained in the work *Great man myth* by the authors Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn and Lyons (2011). This has made attributes such as humility, knowing how to forgive or the meekness of a leader, "seen as a weakness or ineffective in a society where domination, oppressive strategies and individualism are stronger than the values of humility, collectivism and sharing of power and authority with others" (Gandolfi and Stone 2018; Mcfarlane, 2011). Many have been led to believe that servant leadership is related to a laissez-faire style, where leaders do not engage with the organization and its people, with enthusiasm and determination. However, Gandolfi et al. (2017) state that "servant leadership is neither weak nor lacks commitment and determination...It also does not let things flow according to their course without interfering". Servant leaders have their own way of leading and making decisions, always putting the needs of their followers before their own. The true focus of servant leadership is on empowering subordinates and helping them achieve success, which will be reflected in the fulfillment of the organization's mission.

Servant leadership has been gaining importance over the years, where many authors have opted for its study within the organizational context, and develop the appropriate tools for its measurement and subsequent validation as a leadership style with great potential, or as identified by Collins (2011) "the highest level of leadership" (Gandolfi et

al., 2018). Andersen (2009), states that servant leadership has been long unexplored, with uncertified measurement instruments, which has made it not entirely clear whether it is a leadership based on personality, or on behaviors and attitudes that can be learned.

Greenleaf (1998) explains that for some people, the term servant has a negative connotation associated with the oppression suffered by a particular section of society such as women or people of color, and that is why he mentions Juana Bordas, who wrote:

*Many women, minorities and people of color have a long tradition of servant leadership in their cultures. Servant leadership has ancient roots in many indigenous cultures. Cultures that were holistic, cooperative, communal, intuitive and spiritual. These cultures focused on being guardians of the future and representing the ancestors who walked before.*

Some authors claim that there are a number of characteristics, behaviors and lived experiences, which can be related to the antecedents of servant leadership in society. Andersen (2009) mentions Graham (1991), who wrote: "characteristics of a leader such as low need for power, genuine humility, high empathy and communication skills are likely antecedents of servant leadership". These characteristics make leaders closer to their subordinates, which makes them able to motivate in a natural way, managing to create a corporate vision through their own personal vision that they transmit to their followers.

According to a study carried out by Beck (2010) in his thesis entitled *Antecedents of Servant Leadership: A Mixed Methods Study*, he explains the existence of certain attitudes, characteristics and behaviors that serve to identify and predict the emergence of servant leadership in organizations. The role of mentor, reflection, self-awareness and self-efficacy are factors that, according to Beck, characterize the experience of a servant leader. He also assures that servant leaders influence their followers by building trusting relationships, congruent behaviors, consensus building, honest feedback and communication, altruistic orientation, desire to make a difference in the lives of others and wanting to help others. On the other hand, he found a relationship between interpersonal competencies and servant leaders, characterized by practicing active listening, empathy and perception of nonverbal communication, where nine of the twelve participants in his study, claim to be alert to the signs of nonverbal communication in others, as a fundamental element in the relationship. Finally, Beck



(2010) concludes that servant leaders do not necessarily lead from the top of the organizational pyramid, but generate intrinsic motivation in the followers, in addition to leading by example, which they themselves fulfill within the organization.

Thanks to Beck (2010), we have a clear idea about those aspects that best describe the background of a servant leader. Table 4 below details each of the data that have emerged from the study carried out by the author, in a total number of 12 participants.

**Table 4: Summary of data on servant leadership antecedents**

Findings about servant leaders	Main aspects
<i>Finding 1:</i> The longer a leader is in a leadership role, the more frequent the servant leader behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Role of a Mentor</li> <li>● Reflection</li> <li>● Self awareness</li> <li>● Self-efficacy</li> </ul>
<i>Finding 2:</i> Those leaders that volunteer at least one hour per week demonstrate higher servant leader behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sense of purpose</li> <li>● Giving Back</li> <li>● Spirituality</li> </ul>
<i>Finding 3:</i> They build trusting relationships with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Valuing relationships</li> <li>● Congruent behavior</li> <li>● Consensus builder</li> <li>● Honest Feedback and Communication</li> </ul>
<i>Finding 4:</i> Altruistic Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ethical altruism</li> <li>● Desire to make a difference in the lives of others</li> <li>● Leading to help others</li> </ul>
<i>Finding 5:</i> Interpersonal competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Active listening</li> <li>● Being empathetic</li> <li>● Perceptive to non-verbal communication</li> </ul>
<i>Finding 6:</i> They may not necessarily lead from the front of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intrinsic motivation</li> <li>● Leading by example</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Beck (2010)

One of the most important factors in achieving an environment in which servant leadership is developed, is the organizational culture of a company. According to Robbins and Judge (2009), organizational culture refers to the meaning shared by the members of an organization, which makes each one especially different from the others. The author distinguishes between different organizational cultures, among

which the people-oriented culture stands out, based on values such as concern, respect and care for its employees and customers. For Van Dierendonck (2010), a culture characterized by its people orientation and decentralization of power, together with leaders who share the ambition to both lead and serve, is the perfect basis for the proliferation of servant leadership characteristics.

## **2.5. Consequences of Servant Leadership**

Many organizations have decided to adopt the servant leadership model as a way of conducting business. The fact that it is a model that provides for the spiritual, professional and intellectual growth of subordinates makes it easier to create a workforce that is better qualified and stronger in the face of adversity in the business world. Servant leadership has proven to be an effective and sustainable model over time, since the effect it has on individuals goes beyond the professional, where a state of well-being and collective happiness is achieved, which is reflected in the results of the organizations.

Servant leadership arises from the generosity of the leaders and their desire to facilitate work environments based on well-being, happiness and harmony among their followers or workers. Leaders become managers of their own expectations and dreams, when they realize that the well-being of others becomes their personal well-being. Servant leaders work to achieve long-term results by focusing their attention on getting people to reach their potential within a work environment, by aligning individual and organizational objectives, establishing spaces where people can exercise their freedoms with responsibility and commitment. As writer Simon Sinek (2019) comments, leadership goes beyond seeing instant results, it is about believing and nurturing that belief that there is something in people that can be developed through a commitment to serve them regularly and consistently.

Companies bet on a model based on service to subordinates, that stabilizes labor relations and fosters a productive work environment, where people can develop and reach great levels of qualifications, to be able to achieve goals on their own. According to Spears (2004): "a large number of companies have adopted servant leadership as part of their corporate philosophies or as part of the foundation of the mission statement". Due to the increasing rise of large corporations worldwide, a new responsibility has arisen for such organizations to serve the people in them.

The leadership style used by a manager in the organizational environment clearly conditions the relationship between employees and the leader. Several studies affirm that an employee's productivity is affected by the relationship they have with a leader. Mulki et al. (2006) mentions in their studies the high probability that employees choose to leave their jobs, because they feel they can no longer trust their leaders or are dissatisfied with them (Ding et al., 2012; Mulki et al., 2006).

Laub (1999) mentions Max De Pree (1989) who asserts that a business exists because of the people who work in it. He proposes that organizations place their full trust in people, with leaders who bet on an understanding of talent diversity. De Pree explains that servant leaders know how to recognize their weaknesses and also be accountable to their people: "leaders are to become vulnerable by sharing with others the marvelous gift of being personally accountable". Thanks to this, a strong leader-subordinate bond of trust is created, which helps the leader to understand and nurture the talents of each person in the team, and to develop them to their full potential. Seeing how the company is committed to the talent of its people, with leaders who work to build the future of each employee, makes them feel identified and united to the company's purpose and choose to stay for the long term.

Thanks to a study by Ding et al. (2012), we can affirm the existence of a positive correlation between servant leadership and employee loyalty. The fact that servant leaders put employees before themselves, where they are allowed to develop and achieve success while pursuing the company's goals, in addition to showing special care for each other's needs, causes employees to form a psychological bond of trust with the team leader, which enhances their loyalty.

Thier (2019) in his doctoral thesis, has conducted a study based on several variables, in which the following hypothesis is found: "There is a significant relationship between servant leadership and turnover intentions". He mentions that servant leadership is positively associated with variables such as motivation, engagement, creativity and worker productivity, which affect turnover intention in a negative way, decreasing the probability that employees decide to leave their jobs voluntarily. However, he asserts that leaders must take into account the level of stress to which employees are subjected, in order to eliminate the barriers that interfere with how they are perceived by them. In that thesis, he mentions two studies (Chen, Yonghong and Zhonghua, 2016; Kashyap and Rangnekar, 2016) that demonstrate the existence of a significant impact of servant leadership on turnover intention. It explains that the servant leader

manages to integrate the three fundamental pillars of employee retention, such as recognition, reward and growth of team members. Jaramillo et al. (2010) indicate that servant leadership greatly influences aspects such as the ethical climate of the organization. Employees who perceive their organization to be more ethical, increase their intentions to stay with the company to work.

In turn, Avolio et al. (2009), explain that servant leadership is positively related to employee satisfaction, job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation at work, concern for the safety of others and commitment to the organization. They also mention Joseph and Winston (2005), who examined the relationship between employees' perception of servant leadership and trust in organizations, and concluded that there is a positive relationship between both variables, where employees showed a high level of trust in both their leaders and organizations.

Gosling and Marturano (2008) mention Beazley (2003) who identifies a series of results that derive from servant organizations: "mission and value focus, creativity and innovation, responsiveness and flexibility, a commitment to both internal and external service, a respect for employees, employee loyalty and celebration of diversity". As we have seen, there are many authors who emphasize the positive results of servant leadership in terms of employee trust.

Finally, Van Dierendonck (2011) explains that servant leadership goes through three levels: the individual level, the collective level and the organizational level. Once it begins with the emergence of a combined motivation to lead and serve, the characteristics of servant leadership begin to emerge, which at the individual level influence in a way that allows people to self-actualize, maintain a positive attitude at work and improve their performance. At the collective level, it increases team effectiveness and finally, at the organizational level, it creates a strong relationship with sustainability and corporate responsibility.

### **3. SERVANT LEADERSHIP FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

Does gender have any influence on servant leadership? The interpersonal relationships that exist between leader-subordinates greatly influence the capacity for development and productivity of the workers in the organization. The servant leaders serve, guide, support and inspire their people to reach the maximum potential (individual and collective) of each one. Leaders in this case, are seen by their

subordinates as the main representatives of the organization and play a fundamental role in the job satisfaction of employees. This leads me to question the importance of approaching leadership from a gender perspective, in order to understand the relationship that may exist between the leader and the followers, based on the nature of the leader.

The huge inequality between men and women in positions of responsibility and leadership has made me question the need to incorporate greater gender diversity in organizations. Until recently, women were often not credited with leadership qualities, yet they played essential roles in sustaining families and caring for the people around them. Service to others was, and still is, a moral obligation that many women feel they must do. In this case, servant leadership gains attention for integrating attributes that are related to feminine characteristics associated with women, but which unfortunately have been little explored.

With the rise of women in the workforce and therefore in positions of responsibility, there is a clear trend towards the adoption of a masculinized leadership style, which in many ways limits them from developing their full potential as leaders. This has inspired me to believe that servant leadership has the potential to open up opportunities for women to lead effectively, fostering a leadership style that combines both the leader and gender roles simultaneously.

In this section of the paper, I will approach servant leadership from a gender lens. First, I will briefly review the concepts of gender and leadership to demonstrate the need to reinvent the leadership role in organizations, in order to improve the leadership status of women and create opportunities for growth within diversity. Secondly, I will study the relationship between the characteristics of servant leadership agreed upon by various authors, and its relationship with women, in order to understand the compatibility of the female role with leadership. Thirdly, I will try to examine the similarity between servant leadership and motherhood. And finally, I will try to study the construct of servant leadership explicitly from a feminist point of view.

### **3.1. Gender and Leadership**

Throughout history, the role of leader has been associated especially with men in various fields, such as politics, corporations, etc. Eagly (2002) comments that:

"although women have gained access to supervisory and middle management positions, they remain outsiders as elite leaders and senior executives". In fact, during the 1970s, women who held top management positions had to act and express themselves like men if they wanted to reach those positions. For Harragan (1977) business was "the land of no women", where he stated that the structure of business bore similarities to military structural models and men's sports teams. Therefore, women had to indoctrinate themselves in military thinking and knowledge of the fundamental dynamics of confrontational games such as soccer.

Leadership has been associated with a primarily masculine objective, where if we focus on the main differences in how women and men relate, we observe that women have a clear tendency to dialogue, to describe expressions with detail and feelings, while men tend to stand shoulder to shoulder in a less sentimental but more committed way. This may be due to innate/natural factors, or to learned habits, which condition the creation of gender roles. The fact that positions of responsibility have been mainly held by men for years, means that the mental image created when leadership is mentioned is mainly represented by masculine attitudes. The leader is seen as an independent, assertive and aggressive person, which causes many women who want to enter leadership to adopt these attitudes, which limit them in many ways.

As a consequence, women who try to lead as men face the so-called "gender congruency" or discrimination. Celis (2006) in a study based on the findings of Carl Rogers explains that incongruency occurs when the "I am" does not coincide with the "I should be", that is, something is congruent when it is aligned with what we think it should be. In gender congruency, women should act according to what we have been taught they should be. Therefore, it is incongruent with the female role for women to try to act in an assertive, dominant or independent manner, which leads to them being judged as less efficient, less effective or less favorable than men who act in exactly the same way. In this case, the importance of servant leadership lies in the fact that it allows women to step into leadership, and act in a congruent manner with the female role.

Eagly and Karau (2002) in the paper *Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders*, mention two types of prejudice related to the female role and leadership: "a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescription of a leader role less favorably when enacted by a woman". This greatly hinders women's success in leadership,

especially in situations where the incongruence between the female role and the leader role is greater.

A person's gender has an important impact at the psychosocial and sociological levels. Eagly and Johnson (1990) in their meta-analytic study, state that gender difference in leadership does exist. In fact, they state that with the increasing presence of women in senior organizational positions, women feel less compelled to adapt to traditionally male leadership attitudes. Organizational studies affirm that leadership styles that include feminine attitudes are more likely to achieve success. For Burns (1978) the error lies in the false conception of male leadership as primarily based on control and command. When leadership is seen as a process essentially based on leaders willing to mobilize for the needs and aspirations of people, women will be better recognized as leaders.

Helgesen (2001) in her book *The advantage of being a woman*, mentions Anita Roddick, founder of the natural cosmetics retail chain, The Body Shop. Anita states that she is trying to move away from a traditional leadership style to one where her work is integrated with her private life, describing it as a leadership based on "principles of protection, of solicitation, of intuitive decisions, of not submitting to hierarchies or to the extremely tedious criteria of traditional management". For Hennig and Jardim (1977), gender is a significant variable that determines the different leadership styles. As a result of the socialization that women have received throughout their lives, they develop different ways of being, thinking and feeling that do not prevail in the role of leader. However, these authors emphasize that these differences are precisely the source of the success of female managers.

In order to break social stereotypes and prejudices about the role of leader, it is necessary to bet for more diversity in the positions of responsibility in the companies. Women are often involved in the so-called "double bind dilemma" (Jamieson, 1995), where if they act as leaders, they are not accepted as women, and if they act as women, they are automatically seen as incompatible and incompetent as leaders. Jamieson (1995) mentions Nichols (1993) who interprets the dilemma as follows: *Women who attempt to fit themselves into a managerial role by acting like men...are forced to behave in a sexually dissonant way. They risk being characterized as 'too aggressive', or worse, just playing 'bitchy'. Yet women who act like ladies, speaking indirectly and showing concern for others, risk being seen as 'ineffective'.*

Therefore, in conclusion, the importance of men's role in disintegrating leadership biases must be highlighted, as if all those in leadership positions, predominantly men, embrace servant leadership, it would allow many women to create a mental representation of leadership that is different and more aligned with their attitudes. In this way, women would be able to see leadership from another perspective, and would be more willing to step into the leadership role.

### **3.2. Gender and characteristics of Servant Leadership**

Without being fully aware of it, servant leadership is present in the personal lives of many people, especially in those where religion and spirituality are more important. Attributes such as integrity, honesty or active listening are part of the daily lives of many, where in situations where support for friends, family, or co-workers is required, people find themselves carrying out these practices without realizing it.

From a gender perspective, the concept of serving is closely linked to femininity, and leadership to masculinity (Reynolds, 2011). In fact, servant leadership stands out for including feminine attitudes to the construct of leadership, so that it becomes a leadership style that fosters gender integration. It is much more common for women to display certain attitudes of servant leadership, since they are more prone to the nature and innateness of these attitudes.

Servant leadership distinguishes between "agentic servant leadership behaviors" and "communal servant leadership behaviors". The "agentic behaviors" refer to all those attitudes related to the task and the give-and-take like: persuasive mapping and wisdom. As for "communal behaviors", they are linked to attitudes focused on interpersonal relationships, in this case, servant leadership attitudes that would be classified within this concept are: altruism, emotional healing and organizational stewardship (Barbuto and Gifford, 2010). Reynolds (2011) comments that activities associated with leadership, such as assertiveness, risk taking, foresight or conscientiousness, are more characteristic of the male social role, on the other hand, activities focused on the needs and interests of others are strongly linked to the female social role.

Authors Weinberg et al. (2015), mention Eagly and Carli (2007), who describe the female leader as "especially affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic, as



well as an interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken". Women tend to project authority in a different way, where, without using autocratic attitudes, they are able to create bonds of trust with their followers that encourage an approach based on participation and collaboration. They also mention Pearson (1981), who asserts that women tend to include others in conversations, showing more receptive attitudes that invite others to elaborate their own thoughts (Winberg et al., 2015). This coincides with the characteristics of servant leadership mentioned by Spears (2004) related to active listening and empathy, these being the basis for improving leader-follower interpersonal relationships.

Gadow (2013) assures that women show attitudes linked to interpersonal skills: "aptitude to develop good working relationships, empathy, understanding of followers' needs, sensitivity towards people and ability to use confrontation as a tool for building commitment and unity". Thanks to this, they are able to build and create value in the community they lead, in a way that coincides with one of the main characteristics of servant leadership agreed by authors such as Spears (2004), Laub (1999) or Enrhart (2004).

In turn, Grant (1988) has found a series of characteristics especially relevant for organizations, which can be contributed by women. In his study, he identifies psychological attributes present in women such as: cooperative behavior, the need for relevance rather than self-realization, the ability to express vulnerability and emotions, as well as the perspective of power as a liberating force rather than a method of domination. Thanks to this contribution, we can link up the feminine gender to a leadership based on emotional healing, in addition to including an essential skill expressed by Max De Pree (1989), which refers to the servant leaders capable of expressing vulnerability and being accountable to their people (Laub, 1999).

Barbuto and Gifford (2010) in their study mention Eagly et al. (2003), who state that leaders who use more "communal behaviors", score better results in the satisfaction of followers, besides stimulating their growth at a personal and professional level, thus qualifying themselves as effective leaders. They also mention the studies carried out by Eagly et al. (2003), where they found that men use more "agentic behaviors" and women use more "communal behaviors" in leadership. However, they conclude the study by noting that both women and men are able to use communal and agentic behaviors as servant leaders. This reinforces the theory about the potential of servant

leadership to minimize gender gaps by integrating both masculine and feminine attributes into the leadership role.

### **3.3. Servant Leadership and Motherhood**

To date, there have been few studies addressing the relationship between motherhood and leadership, especially in the Eastern countries, where only the negative aspects and difficulties of motherhood are discussed. However, the ethic of caring and service to others, closely connects servant leadership with women, since both the term caring and service are present in qualities associated with femininity and therefore with motherhood.

Ngunjiri (2009) in her study attempts to link the concepts of servant leadership with motherhood from the perspective of women of African origin. She comments that: "women leaders articulated the source of their self-determination, resilience and leadership motivation derived from their roles as mothers and learned from their own mothers and grandmothers". In this way, women are able to extend their private roles of mothering into the public roles of care, nurturing and life development. She adds, "women leaders explained that their roles as mothers have enabled them to become servant leaders, leaders who care about social justice, for those who are economically, educationally, culturally and socially marginalized." Through servant leadership, women gain social credibility, and are able to function as leaders in the public domain, as Ngunjiri (2009) concludes: "the fact that the women in this study not only lead 'women's' organizations, but also in mainstream educational, governmental, non-profit and other institutions, may demonstrate that, in fact, women who lead as women, retaining their femininity and, in this case, their maternal roles as nurturers, caretakers and servants of people can and are effective as leaders".

Women's identity is closely linked to the nature that drives her to develop her role as a mother. Servant leadership has caring for others as its main objective, which makes it largely similar to motherhood. Noddings (1984) proposed the term ethic of care, describing it as the ethical motivation to make decisions based on the needs of others. Servant leaders seek to care for and satisfy the interests of their followers, as do women who exercise maternal care. Furthermore, the author adds that "natural caring is the motivating force behind ethical caring," so that it connects the naturalness of human beings with the ethics that follow.

Therefore, there is a certain relationship between the servant leader and the woman who cares for her children. However, Noddings (1984) asserts that both women and men can benefit from the ethic of care in the leadership role.

### **3.4. Feminist perspective of Servant Leadership**

The concept of servant leadership includes characters that refer to traits socially associated with women, as in the case of "service", and characters socially associated with men, as in the case of "leadership". Therefore, the author Eicher-Catt (2005) proceeds to carry out a feminist deconstruction of this type of leadership, beginning by arguing that the term "servant leadership" itself has an aggressive connotation. She explains that the pairing of the characters "leadership" and "servant" poses a problem, since the leader will always be driven to prevail "leadership" over "service", this being a manipulative concept that incites to perpetuate the domination of the masculine gender over the feminine. This is why authors such as Rhodes (2001) choose to avoid the inclination to relate servant leadership and gender, in order to make it more neutral and integrative for both men and women, without distinction (Eicher-Catt, 2005).

The term servant leadership, by including the term "servant", automatically relates to a subjugating connotation of one subject to another, as well as being associated with oppressive behavior and a significant imbalance of power. For a long time, the highest positions in business hierarchies have been held by men, and middle and lower management positions by women. This results in leaders at the top of the chain of command encouraging a more servant role for lower-middle managers, while they engage in essentially leadership roles (Eicher-Catt, 2005).

Many women who want to be introduced to the concept of servant leadership are enveloped in an overly optimistic environment that doesn't match the realities of the work environment. The current organizational environment situation in most companies can be a problem when it comes to implementing servant leadership attitudes, since a major change in the mentality of society is needed to make it effective. This change of mentality refers to the social convictions associated with some characteristics of servant leadership related to emotion and feelings, where most believe that these are attributes naturally inherited in women but not in men. Unfortunately, we as a society are not yet prepared to address leadership styles without assumptions that position men and women as opposite poles.

## **4. CASE STUDY**

After the theoretical review of servant leadership and its subsequent analysis from a gender perspective, in this section of the work, the methodology, analysis and results obtained from the case study will be shown.

### **4.1. Methodology**

#### **4.1.1. Objectives**

The following questionnaire takes as a reference the study carried out by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), who developed a model of 5 fundamental factors that characterize servant leadership. Based on 11 potential characteristics provided by different authors, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) proceed to group the attributes into five essential concepts, conceptually and empirically distinct.

As mentioned in section 3.2 of this paper, Barbuto and Gifford (2010) studied the impact of the 5 attributes from a gender perspective. They distinguish between "agentic behaviors" and "communal behaviors". The "agentic behaviors" refer to all those attitudes related to the task and give-and-take, in the case of servant leadership they would be persuasive mapping and wisdom. As for "communal behaviors", they are linked to attitudes focused on interpersonal relationships, such as altruism, emotional healing and organizational stewardship. Barbuto and Gifford (2010) mention several authors who believe that "agentic behaviors" are more present in men and "communal behaviors" in women, however, after the study, they discover that there is no such difference, and both women and men are capable of developing both agentic and communal behaviors in their leadership.

The main objective of the questionnaire is to check if indeed, women are more likely to develop communal behaviors and men are more likely to develop agentic behaviors. Or on the contrary, there is no such difference, and both women and men meet all the characteristics without a significant difference, confirming the fact that servant leadership is essential to ensure a leadership style that combines both masculine and feminine characteristics, which allows the disappearance of the gender gap in the leadership role.

#### **4.1.2. Choice of procedure and evaluation**

The questionnaire will consist of 25 items, grouped five by five according to each of the characteristics of servant leadership provided by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006). It will be distributed throughout the different departments of the company, and participants will be asked to respond anonymously about the qualities of their supervisors or managers. In the questionnaire they will indicate the gender of the superior they will evaluate and a brief description of him/her. They will then answer the items on a scale of 1 to 6. In addition, for a better contrast of opinions, the same questionnaire will be passed to the company's supervisors and bosses, so that they can make a self-evaluation of themselves, only changing the expression "my boss" for first person questions (see Annex 2).

To evaluate each of the items, a likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) will be used. The questionnaire is completely anonymous, so the gender of the supervisors will be evaluated, and an average evaluation of the results obtained will be made, contrasting between women and men.

#### **4.1.3. Organization choice**

The company Productos Florida S.A., responsible for the production and distribution of poultry meat, was selected for the study. It is a Spanish company in continuous growth, which has managed to expand enormously in the poultry sector at the national level by using its excellence and sustainability in business management. Productos Florida S.A. stands out for marketing both fresh and processed products under two of the company's brands, "Señor Pollo" and "Pico de Oro".

It is a company that is committed to continuous innovation and effort to offer high quality products and food safety, with a diverse and young staff, with more than 50 workers in offices. It also has its own factory for the production of poultry feed, so that it supplies its own feed for chicken breeding.

Productos Florida S.A. has managed to expand enormously during its history, and that is why I have chosen it for the study of servant leadership from a gender perspective, as it would be interesting to get first-hand information from the leaders of a real company.

#### 4.1.4. Participation

The company where the case study will be carried out has two offices located in Vila Real and Almazora. The questionnaire for this study was distributed online in the Almazora office, where employees were free to answer the questions. The period of time in which the survey was open lasted three weeks, where a reminder was also sent to the company to expand the answers.

The participation rate was approximately 55%. Twenty-two people answered the questionnaires, so the margin of error is +/-14.5% for a confidence level of 95%.

#### 4.2. Analysis of the results

##### 4.2.1. Results of the Subordinates Questionnaire

The items of each of the five dimensions of servant leadership will be analysed below,, based on the responses of the employees who rate their managers. To this end, the following tables show each of the questions asked, the minimum (Min) and maximum (Max) scores they have answered, and the average of the responses obtained (Average), differentiating between men (Average M) and women (Average F).

In this case, the results obtained by the managers are compared, regardless of the gender of the subordinates who evaluate them.

**Table 5: Questions about altruistic calling (subordinates)**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Average M</b>	<b>Average F</b>
1. My boss puts my needs before his own needs	2	5	3	4
2. My boss takes care of his people	3	6	4.3	5.1
3. My boss spends extra time resolving personal questions.	4	6	4.1	4.8
4. My boss gives me attention	3	5	4.1	4.6
5. My boss cares about me	4	6	4.1	4.7

Source: Own elaboration

The characteristic of altruistic calling has a total of 5 questions. The lowest mean obtained is 3 in question 1, and the highest mean obtained corresponds to question 2 with 5.1. We can observe a slight tendency for subordinates to give higher scores to women than men in this dimension. The question that stands out the most is question 2, where women obtain the highest mean of 5.1 and men obtain a mean of 4.3.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings is significant between both genders, for altruistic calling.

**Table 6: Questions about emotional healing (subordinates)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
6. If I have a personal trauma, my boss would be one of the people I would go to.	3	6	4.1	4.4
7. My boss is willing to listen to me when I need him/her to.	4	6	4.5	5.1
8. My boss understands my opinion and does not judge me.	4	6	4.3	4.7
9. My boss is good at empathizing with others.	3	6	4.1	5
10. My boss knows how to make me feel good	4	5	4.1	4.8

Source: Own elaboration

The emotional healing characteristic also has a total of 5 questions to be assessed. This dimension is mainly related to active listening, empathy and emotional intelligence, as the basis for carrying out a healing process. The lowest mean obtained is 4.1, which corresponds to the mean ratings of male managers in questions 6, 9 and 10. The highest mean obtained is 5.1, which corresponds to the mean rating of women in question 7.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings is significant between both genders, for emotional healing.

**Table 7: Questions about wisdom (subordinates)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
11. My boss is good at anticipating the	4	5	4.8	4.6

consequences of decisions.				
12. My boss knows how to organize ideas in times of chaos.	4	6	5	4.6
13. My boss is good at observing	4	5	4.6	5.1
14. My boss is aware of the environment in the organization	4	5	4.8	4.7
15. My boss facilitates quick and effective solutions	4	6	5.3	5

Source: Own elaboration

As for the wisdom characteristic, it has a total of 5 questions. Leaders with high levels of wisdom are characterized by knowing how to observe and anticipate environmental situations. The lowest average obtained is 4.6, where men have obtained lower scores in question 13 and women lower scores in questions 11 and 12. The highest average obtained is 5.3, which corresponds to the average score of men in question 15. In this dimension, we can observe a slight decrease in the evaluation of women compared to men.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between both genders is not significant, for wisdom.

**Table 8: Questions about persuasive mapping (subordinates)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
16. My boss encourages me to dream big in the organization.	4	6	4.6	5
17. My boss inspires me to achieve my goals within the organization.	4	6	4.5	5
18. My boss understands my needs and goals in life.	4	5	4.5	4.5
19. My boss gives me opportunities to improve	4	6	4.8	4.7
20. My boss is able to create a productive work environment.	4	6	5	4.8

Source: Own elaboration

For the persuasive mapping characteristic, 5 questions have also been formulated, in order to obtain information about the leader capable of conceptualizing future opportunities and motivating his followers to achieve them. The lowest mean obtained is 4.5, which corresponds to questions 17 and 18. The highest mean obtained is 5, in



questions 16 and 20. In this case, the most interesting data to highlight is that women obtain a better score in questions 16 and 17, related to knowing how to inspire and persuade followers, while men obtain a better score in questions 19 and 20, related to the leader who knows how to provide opportunities and tools for growth.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between the two genders is not significant, for persuasive mapping.

**Table 9: Questions about organizational stewardship (subordinates)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
21. My boss believes that the organization needs to play a moral role in society.	4	5	4.5	4.8
22. My boss tries to leave a positive legacy in society.	4	6	4.3	4.5
23. My boss knows how to act ethically	4	6	4.8	5.1
24. My boss establishes a cooperative work environment.	5	6	5.3	5.5
25. My boss takes responsibility for his decisions	5	6	5.3	5.8

Source: Own elaboration

The organizational stewardship characteristic also has 5 questions. The questions are formulated to obtain information about the leader's ethical and moral commitment to the community and the organization. The lowest mean obtained is 4.3 and corresponds to the mean rating obtained by men in question 22. The highest mean is 5.8, obtained by women in question 25. In this dimension, there is a certain difference between the average rating obtained by both genders, with the most significant difference being that of question 25, where subordinates gave higher scores to women.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between both genders is not significant, for organizational stewardship.

#### **4.2.2. Results of the Bosses Questionnaire**

In the following, the items of each of the five dimensions of servant leadership will be analysed, based on the self-assessment of the leaders.

**Table 10: Questions about altruistic calling (bosses)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
1. I tend to put the needs of my subordinates before my own needs.	2	5	3	4.3
2. I take care of my people	4	6	4.4	6
3. I dedicate extra time to resolve personal doubts	4	5	4.2	5
4. I consider that I give sufficient attention to my subordinates.	4	5	4.4	5.3
5. I care about my subordinates	4	6	4.4	4.6

Source: Own elaboration

In Table 10, the managers evaluate themselves in each of the items, in order to obtain information about their levels in the altruistic calling characteristic. The lowest mean obtained is 3, which corresponds to the mean rating of the men in question 1. The highest mean obtained is that of the women in question 3, with a figure of 5. An interesting fact is the coincidence of the subordinates' ratings with that of the male bosses in question 1, since both parties rated this item with a mean of 3.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between both genders is significant, for altruistic calling.

**Table 11: Questions about emotional healing (bosses)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
6. I am certain that my subordinates would come to me in the event of personal traumas.	3	5	4	4.6
7. I am willing to listen to my subordinates	4	5	4.6	5
8. I understand and do not judge the opinion of my subordinates.	4	5	4.6	4.3
9. I am good at empathizing with others	3	5	4	4.6
10. I know how to make my people feel good	3	5	3.8	4.6

Source: Own elaboration

In the dimension of emotional healing, the managers have evaluated themselves according to their own personal criteria. The lowest mean obtained is 3.8, which corresponds to the mean rating of men in question 10. The highest mean obtained is 5,

which corresponds to the mean rating of women in question 7. In this case, female managers are aware that active listening is a strong point, since it also coincides with the highest rating given by subordinates, with a mean of 5.1.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between the two genders is not significant, for emotional healing.

**Table 12: Questions about wisdom (bosses)**

Questions	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
11. I am good at anticipating the consequences of decisions.	4	6	4.8	5
12. I know how to organize ideas in times of chaos	4	6	4.8	5
13. I am a good observer	4	5	4.8	4.3
14. I am aware of the environment in the organization	4	6	4.6	5
15. I provide fast and effective solutions	4	6	4.8	5.3

*Source: Own elaboration*

As for the wisdom characteristic, responses have been varying but without dropping below a score of 4. The lowest mean obtained was 4.3, which corresponds to the mean rating of women in question 13. The highest mean obtained is 5.3 and corresponds to the mean rating of women in question 15. In this case, the mean rating of the women in questions 11, 12 and 14 does not coincide with the perception of the subordinates, since the latter have rated them with lower scores.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between the two genders is not significant for wisdom.

**Table 13: Questions about persuasive mapping (bosses)**

"Persuasive mapping"	Min	Max	Average M	Average F
16. I encourage my subordinates to dream big in the organization.	4	6	4.8	5.3
17. I like to inspire my people to achieve their goals within the organization.	4	6	5.2	5

18. I understand my subordinates' needs and goals in life.	4	6	4.4	5.3
19. I offer opportunities for improvement to my subordinates.	4	6	4.4	5.3
20. I try to create a productive work environment.	4	6	4.8	5.3

Source: Own elaboration

The managers have also self-assessed themselves on the persuasive mapping characteristic. The lowest average obtained is 4.4, which corresponds to the average rating of men in questions 18 and 19. The highest average obtained is 5.3 and coincides with all the average ratings of women, except for question 18. An interesting fact is the high mean score given by women in the questions on persuasive mapping. In addition, the men rated themselves with an average of 5.2 in question 17, which does not coincide with the perception of the subordinates, who rated them with an average of 4.5 only.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between both genders is significant, for persuasive mapping.

**Table 14: Questions about organizational stewardship (bosses)**

<b>Organizational stewardship</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Average M</b>	<b>Average F</b>
21. I strongly believe that the organization needs to play a moral role in society.	4	6	4.8	5.3
22. I would like to leave a positive legacy in society.	4	6	4.6	4.6
23. I always try to act ethically	4	6	4.8	5.3
24. I encourage a cooperative work environment.	4	6	4.6	5
25. I tend to take responsibility for my decisions.	5	6	5.4	5.6

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, Table 14 shows the results of the self-evaluation of managers in the characteristic of servant leadership, related to organizational stewardship. The lowest mean obtained is 4.6, which corresponds to the mean rating of both men and women in question 22, and to the mean rating of men in question 24. The highest mean obtained is 5.6, which corresponds to the mean rating of women in question 25. In this case, both women and men coincide in question 22, with a mean of 4.6.

According to the ANOVA analysis carried out for the comparison of means, the result obtained is that the difference in ratings between both genders is not significant, for organizational stewardship.

### 4.2.3. Evaluation of results

In this section of the work, comparisons will be made of the results obtained in both questionnaires.

### SUBORDINATES QUESTIONNAIRE

To begin with, the following table (Table 15) shows the average number of responses obtained by female and male bosses for each of the characteristics of servant leadership separately. The purpose is to distinguish the differences perceived by the subordinates who evaluate their bosses.

**Table 15: Total average according to dimensions**

<b>DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Altruistic calling	5.1	4.1
Emotional healing	4.6	4.2
Wisdom	4.9	4.7
Persuasive Mapping	5.2	4.7
Organizational stewardship	5.2	4.8

*Source: Own elaboration*

In this case, we can see a clear difference in scores between women and men. Subordinates have rated women higher in each of the five characteristics of servant leadership. However, men have average scores that do not fall below 4, taking into account that the maximum average score is 6, this is a fairly positive assessment that indicates that men also meet the characteristics of servant leadership.

The results obtained in the questionnaires are presented below, taking into account the **gender of the subordinates** who rate their bosses. The results have been extracted from the mean of all responses according to the gender of the subordinates and the gender of the bosses they rate.

- Women rated female bosses with a mean of **4.9** and male bosses with a mean of **4.4**.
- Men rated female bosses with a mean of **4.7** and male bosses with a mean of **4.7**.

In this case, women rated the characteristics of servant leadership in women higher than men. Men do not perceive a significant difference between the gender of their bosses and the characteristics listed.

## **SUBORDINATES QUESTIONNAIRE X BOSSES QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Table 16: Perceptions contrast**

<b>DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>Perception of subordinates</b>	<b>Bosses' perception</b>
Altruistic calling	4.4	4.4
Emotional healing	4.5	4.3
Wisdom	4.8	4.8
Persuasive Mapping	4.7	4.9
Organizational stewardship	5	5

*Source: Own elaboration*

In Table 16, we can see how the subordinates' perceptions coincide with the bosses' self-perception. In this case, the bosses are aware of their capabilities and the subordinates have grasped these attitudes. The development of the 25 items has been done with the aim of explaining each of the five dimensions, and therefore, having averages as seen in Table 16, which do not go below 4.3, we can conclude that there is a high coincidence with servant leadership in the company.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Once both the theoretical review and the analysis of the case study have been carried out, the final conclusions of the work will be drawn. In addition, at the end of this section, the limitations of the case study will be discussed, as well as a brief proposal for improvement and future research on the subject.

Servant leadership turns upside down the traditional pyramid of control in organizations, where leadership becomes an instrument to serve the organization. In this case, the leader has to ask herself/himself: what are the needs of the organization and how can I best respond to these requirements? Teams may require a leader capable of creating a productive work environment, the organization may need an inspirational vision, and individual team members may need ongoing feedback in true and open conversations. Therefore, this is a coaching-oriented servant leadership that moves around the people of the organization. However, we are not simply talking about a brave new world, but about a broader understanding of leadership, where the leader, in addition to strategic and directional fit, is able to exercise servant-oriented leadership in accordance with the needs of the organization.

Leaders begin by understanding the needs of their team and the organization, which throughout their professional career, they learn to manage and respond effectively. As we have seen in section 2 of this paper, servant leaders seek to meet the needs of the followers rather than their own. Servant leadership therefore consists of supporting followers to grow and achieve both organizational and individual goals. As a result, stability and balance is achieved within the work environment, where the leaders manage to create bonds of trust with their people, which improve the levels of happiness and well-being in the long term.

The author Reynolds (2011), comments that although there are many writings and studies about servant leadership, there is still not enough literature directed from feminist and gender perspectives. She adds that authors such as Liden et al. (2008), Paterson et al. (2012) or Huang et al. (2016), do not even take gender into account in the analysis of servant leadership. In other studies conducted by Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) or Ling et al. (2016), they have listed gender as an insignificant or silent aspect in the study of servant leadership.

Servant leadership has been shown to be a style that includes socially feminine attributes, which diminish the incongruence between gender role and women's leadership role. The introduction of servant leadership within organizations does not guarantee the improvement of the perception of women leaders, but it does contribute to a reconstruction of the prototype of the competent leader. Servant leadership therefore, has the potential to be part of this reconstruction and change of prototypes, where women are given the opportunity to renegotiate gender and leadership stereotypes without losing influence and effectiveness. Furthermore, servant leadership allows women to lead in a way that is consistent with the feminine ethic of care. Therefore, it is interesting to further investigate the intersection between servant leadership and gender, and to conduct a broader exploration on the topic.

The case analysis has shown a high presence of servant leadership characteristics in both women and men. The purpose of this study was to verify whether women were more likely to develop communal behaviors, such as altruistic calling, emotional healing and organizational stewardship, and men were more likely to develop agentic behaviors, such as wisdom or persuasive mapping. The results obtained (see Table 15) indicate a high presence of the five characteristics of servant leadership in women, highlighting the characteristics of persuasive mapping, organizational stewardship and altruistic calling. Men, in turn, have also obtained significant results in the five dimensions, surpassing an average of 4 in the overall ratings.

In this case, women have shown to meet all five characteristics with a slightly higher score than men, however, both genders are able to identify themselves within servant leadership.

### **5.1. Limitations of the case**

One of the most important limitations we encountered in conducting this study was the sample of participants. The questionnaire was distributed in the company with the aim of obtaining responses from all workers, but approximately half of them did not participate, so the results cannot be generalized, and global conclusions can not be drawn. On the other hand, the data obtained are based on personal assessments, so the degree of honesty of the answers is not known with certainty, and the influence of other factors is not taken into account either.



## **5.2. Proposals for improvement and future research**

A proposal for improvement of the present study would be to distribute the questionnaires to a larger sample. It would be very interesting to analyze the data obtained from a larger amount of information that would allow more precise results to be issued.

As Reynolds (2011) mentions, as women continue to advance in the territory of organizational leadership, the number of men with the ability to respect, embrace, and adopt female leadership attitudes is growing. It would be interesting to conduct a comparative study to see the results in other companies as well. This is a little explored and very interesting territory, since, as we have seen in the case study of this paper, servant leadership behaviors are observed in both men and women in a real company. For future research, I suggest carrying out a study with larger samples of population, in different industrial sectors (ceramic industry, textile industry, automotive industry, etc.) and even carry out a comparative study between countries. In addition, it would be interesting to introduce other factors such as the cultural or educational context of the participants as well.

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## **7. ANNEXES**

### **Annex 1. Servant Leadership Questionnaire (Subordinates)**

Questionnaire about the characteristics of servant leadership provided by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006): Altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping and organizational stewardship. The scale used is the Likert-type scale, which indicates the level of disagreement or agreement with the question, with a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 6. This questionnaire is formulated for subordinates to evaluate their bosses.

<b>"Altruistic Calling"</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Mi jefe pone por delante mis necesidades antes que las suyas propias						
2. Mi jefe cuida de su gente						
3. Mi jefe dedica tiempo extra a resolver dudas personales						
4. Mi jefe me brinda atención						
5. Mi jefe se preocupa por mí						
<b>Sanación emocional</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
6. Si tengo un trauma personal, mi jefe sería una de las personas a las cuales acudiría						
7. Mi jefe está dispuesto/a a escucharme cuando lo necesito						
8. Mi jefe entiende mi opinión y no me juzga						
9. Mi jefe es bueno/a empatizando con los demás						
10. Mi jefe sabe hacerme sentir bien						
<b>Sabiduría</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
11. Mi jefe es bueno/a anticipándose a las consecuencias de las decisiones						
12. Mi jefe sabe organizar las ideas en momentos de caos						
13. Mi jefe es bueno/a observando						
14. Mi jefe es consciente del ambiente en la organización						
15. Mi jefe facilita soluciones rápidas y efectivas						
<b>"Persuasive mapping"</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
16. Mi jefe me anima a soñar a lo grande en la organización						
17. Mi jefe me inspira a alcanzar mis objetivos dentro de la organización						
18. Mi jefe entiende mis necesidades y objetivos en la vida						



19. Mi jefe me brinda oportunidades para mejorar						
20. Mi jefe es capaz de crear un ambiente de trabajo productivo						
<b>Mayordomía organizacional</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
21. Mi jefe cree que la organización necesita jugar un papel moral en la sociedad						
22. Mi jefe intenta dejar un legado positivo en la sociedad						
23. Mi jefe sabe actuar de forma ética						
24. Mi jefe establece un ambiente de cooperación en el trabajo						
25. Mi jefe toma responsabilidad de sus decisiones						

## **Annex 2. Servant leadership Questionnaire (bosses)**

Questionnaire about the characteristics of servant leadership provided by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006): Altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping and organizational stewardship. The scale used is the Likert-type scale, which indicates the level of disagreement or agreement with the question, with a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 6. This questionnaire is formulated for the self-evaluation of the bosses.

<b>"Altruistic Calling"</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Suelo anteponer las necesidades de mis subordinados ante las mías propias						
2. Cuido de mi gente						
3. Dedico tiempo extra a resolver dudas personales						
4. Considero que brindo suficiente atención a mis subordinados						
5. Me preocupo por mis subordinados						
<b>Sanación emocional</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
6. Tengo la certeza de que mis subordinados acudirían a mi en caso de que les surjan traumas personales						
7. Estoy dispuesto/a a escuchar a mis subordinados						
8. Entiendo y no juzgo la opinión de mis subordinados						
9. Soy bueno/a empatizando con los demás						
10. Sé hacer sentir bien a mi gente						
<b>Sabiduría</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
11. Soy bueno/a anticipándome a las consecuencias de las decisiones						

12. Sé organizar las ideas en momentos de caos						
13. Soy bueno/a observador/a						
14. Soy consciente del ambiente en la organización						
15. Facilito soluciones rápidas y efectivas						
<b>"Persuasive mapping"</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
16. Animo a mis subordinados a soñar a lo grande en la organización						
17. Me gusta inspirar a mi gente a alcanzar sus objetivos dentro de la organización						
18. Entiendo las necesidades y objetivos en la vida de mis subordinados						
19. Ofrezco oportunidades para mejorar a mis subordinados						
20. Intento crear un ambiente de trabajo productivo						
<b>Mayordomía organizacional</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
21. Creo firmemente que la organización necesita jugar un papel moral en la sociedad						
22. Me gustaría dejar un legado positivo en la sociedad						
23. Siempre intento actuar de forma ética						
24. Fomento un ambiente de cooperación en el trabajo						
25. Suelo tomar la responsabilidad de mis decisiones						

**Annex 3: Results of ANOVA analysis of the subordinates questionnaire**

<b>ANOVA SINGLE FACTOR</b>			
<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F crit</b>	<b>Differences</b>
ALTRUISTIC CALLING	5,95862069	5,317655063	Significant
EMOTIONAL HEALING	15,71962617	5,317655063	Significant
WISDOM	0,4	5,317655063	Not Significant
PERSUASIVE MAPPING	0,7826086957	5,317655063	Not Significant
ORGANIZATIONAL STEWARDSHIP	0,9355509356	5,317655063	Not Significant

**Annex 4: Results of ANOVA analysis of the bosses questionnaire.**

<b>ANOVA SINGLE FACTOR</b>			
<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F crit</b>	<b>Differences</b>
ALTRUISTIC CALLING	5,724223602	5,317655063	Significant
EMOTIONAL HEALING	4,366336634	5,317655063	Not Significant
WISDOM	0,8827586207	5,317655063	Not Significant
PERSUASIVE MAPPING	10,4	5,317655063	Significant
ORGANIZATIONAL STEWARDSHIP	2,039840637	5,317655063	Not Significant