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ABSTRACT

This study addressed whether the existence of servant-leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) in an organization can act as a safety indicator by influencing individuals' propensity to *actively care* for safety (Gellar, 1991). Specifically, this research examined whether the presence of servant-leadership would shape psychological states of employees in a way that promotes engagement in safe behaviors. In addition, this study examined how both servant-leadership and actively caring would influence occupational safety outcomes (e.g., accidents and near misses) in an applied setting.

Participants were 230 male and female sales representatives and district managers in a large pharmaceutical organization. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed to assess perceptions of servant-leadership and actively caring, as well as to obtain self-reported safety data.

Results indicated that servant leadership is predictive of actively caring and each of its three components (i.e., belief that people should actively care, willingness to actively care and engagement in actively caring behaviors), and some items from the servant-leadership and actively caring scales also appeared to predict accidents and near misses. No support was found for the hypothesis that near misses would predict accidents. Finally, some support was found for a proposed path model in which propensity to actively care for safety mediated the

relationship between servant-leadership and near misses, and servant-leadership significantly influenced accidents directly.

Researchers are encouraged to take these findings into consideration when developing future research studies and future research to replicate these findings is suggested. In addition, management in organizations is encouraged to consider incorporating servant-leadership into their corporate leadership model as well as the organizational factors and initiatives that support that model (e.g., leadership performance assessment, reward programs, corporate communications). Finally, safety personnel in organizations are encouraged to consider leadership as a safety indicator and to take these findings into account when developing safety communications, programs, training and interventions.