1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders and their styles play a vital role in the present organizational context. Therefore, a wide range of leadership studies were conducted to understand the characteristics of leaders, challenges they face and changing behavior of leaders according to situations. Bass [1] strongly argued that the importance of these studies was due to the increased workforce diversity, global competition, technology innovation, increased volatility of businesses and customer requirements.

From the existing literature it is evident that, the leadership approach from early 1900s which focused only on control and the authority lies only with the single individual [2]; shifted to group approach where leader developed a habit of sharing goals with the subordinates during 1950s [3] to situational approach then to transactional and inclined to transformational leadership approach by 21st century. Thus, creating a huge vacuum in the leadership studies with its complexity to fit at all stages of organization and situations.

Lolita [4] stated that, ensuring well-being of the employees across the organizations is treated as a greatest challenge for the contemporary leaders. To ensure this, the leader should be empathetic, patient, an active listener, path provider and above all a steward for his/her followers; thus, providing a way for the inception of servant leadership [5]. The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Robert K Greenleaf [6] in his seminal work. Since then many researchers carried out his anecdotal confirmations towards empirical evidence by adding more strength in the academic literature.

Very few empirical studies like Laub [7], Sendjaya [8] and Dennis [9] developed valid constructs for servant leadership; of which Laub’s [7] Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) stands on top with high standards of measuring the accuracy of servant leadership in organizations. On the basis of Laub’s (1999) SOLA, many researchers studied different relational aspects of servant leadership with emotional intelligence and work related attitudes, and found them statistically significant.
The present study focuses on the employees in various Information Technology firms located in South India to add an empirical evidence for the servant leadership from Indian perspective, which is first of its kind in the Indian context towards development of servant leadership theory.

1.1 Background of the Study

The world being borderless has opened the gateways for varied workforce diversity in the organizations. In order to be successful in the global markets, the organizations focus more on maintaining a healthy and effective workforce which is multi-talented. Therefore, to maintain this workforce to be highly productive, the organizations strive hard to have great leaders for them, who are selfless, empathetic in nature, committed, build community by developing the followers. Bass [1] stated that, leader, to promote healthy leader-follower relationships needs to be a steward him/herself; [10] thus becoming servant leader by him/herself.

Servant leadership has its roots in Christian principles. Jesus Christ was named as the first servant leader in the era of humankind. There were many doctrines about Jesus’ servant leadership behavior. Jesus stated, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28, NKJV) [11]. Therefore, Christ sent a firm message to His disciples; who were called as apostles later; that a leader’s first and foremost responsibility would be an act of service; it’s a mandate not an option. Through His deeds and teachings Jesus led a life of servant leader. There exist many instances where Jesus proved Himself as the best and greatest servant leader; of which washing the feet of His own disciples (John 13); proved Him the best and also trained His disciples to perform similar kind of activities for their followers. Thus, the meaning of being servant among the followers was termed as ‘greatness.’

Pollard [12], interpreted Jesus’ act of washing the feet of His disciples as an act of humbleness a leader should possess irrespective of the designation
he/she holds. There is no scarcity of disciples (followers) whose feet (infirmities and short comings) are to be washed (solved); as there were many towels (process of solving the problems) to wipe off with plenty of water available (solutions available).

Servant leadership counteracted with all the other leadership theories by inverting the leader-follower pyramid from top-down commanding approach to bottom-up approach focusing on partnership, trust and empathy. Thus, enhancing the growth of job related attitudes and effectiveness of the followers in the organizations. Subsequently, the concept of servant leadership and its implications are appreciated and widely accepted in the present corporate world.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness in South Indian IT companies. A very little work has been carried out on servant leadership and job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness. Gibson & Vermeulen [13] and Naquin & Tynan [14] worked on servant leadership and team effectiveness, Drury [15] on servant leadership and team commitment and Hebert [16] on servant leadership and job satisfaction were the pioneers in assessing the effect of servant leadership on various work related attitudes. However, none of the researchers has studied on all the three work related attitudes with servant leadership in the organizational context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kotter [17], stated that, the need of the hour for business which is highly diversified with human resources, more volatile, transparent, competitive with international players in the domestic markets with fast growing technology adoption and development requires healthy leaders for its stakeholders and employees. With the growing workforce diversity, the business organizations are focusing more on learning environment at the workplace for better fulfilment and personal growth of employees [7].
[1] Many a leader started to exhibit different styles of leadership to promote a healthy leader-follower relationship across their organizations; termed most appropriately as servant leadership [10].

Thompson [18], Sendjaya & Sarros [19] stated that Servant leadership lacks empirical evidence in the current academic literature; which focus more on anecdotal observations rather than objective oriented quantifiable research [20].

This shift from anecdotal approach to empirical interest paved a revolutionary movement in the advanced, fast-paced organizational change towards human development at work [7].

Few researchers like Robert S. Thompson [18] confirmed the positive correlation between the perceptions of servant leadership on job satisfaction across administrative levels of employees in a church-related college. Sharon [15] stated that perception of servant leadership and job satisfaction are statistically significant and positive, whereas, organizational commitment is inversely proportional with servant leadership in non-traditional educational institution. Laka-Mathebula [21] found significant relationship between organizational commitment and leadership style and trust in leader in South African educational institutions.

Wally Rude [22] confirmed that the managers with servant leadership characteristics have high levels of job satisfaction and professional efficacy, and also low emotional exhaustion and job burnout. Similarly, Kelly Preston Anderson [23] obtained strong positive correlation between individual job satisfaction and perceptions of servant leadership in religious educational organization. Also, Irving [24] concluded high positive correlation among the key characteristics of servant leadership and job satisfaction on team effectiveness with statistical significance in non-profit organization.

Marilyn [25] performed a multi-level analysis on leaders’ perception of their leadership behavior and followers rating on the behavior of their leader. The results confirmed that leaders’ knowledge and wisdom showed a positive connection with followers, leading to development of followers in
problem solving. Monique Glass [26] opined that nurse’s perception on their leaders’ emotional intelligence and leadership style are strongly correlated with trust in leader. Linda D. Keena [27] studied on the servant leadership characteristics among the faith-based volunteers and their service to county jail inmates. The study revealed that the servanthood of volunteers helped the inmates to be more autonomous and inclination to become servant leaders. Brian Clinton Herndon [28] found statistically significant influence of principal’s empathetic approach on student achievement.

Rynetta R. Washington [29] worked on the levels of employee job satisfaction and commitment towards organization focusing on leadership style in profit and non-profit organizations, the results have shown that the employees were unable to differentiate between the styles the leaders exhibiting. The study also revealed a significant difference between the employees’ perceptions on their immediate supervisors’ leadership style, this confirmed employees led by servant leaders show positive job satisfaction and commitment when compared with other leadership styles. J.P.J. de Jong [30] worked on leadership and innovation in Dutch knowledge-intensive services and obtained a strong positive correlation between the leaders’ behavior and followers’ innovative work behavior. By building a healthy working environment, the leaders develop the innovative work attitude among the employees which confirmed its significance statistically.

Mary Anna Bradshaw [31] conducted a study to investigate servant leadership and treatment outcomes for emotionally troubled young people in residential organizations and concluded that better treatment outcomes not highly influenced by servant leadership behavior as there exist weak negative correlation, as the organizations focused primarily on paternalistic approach.

Kenneth E. Rauch [32] worked on servant leadership and team effectiveness in manufacturing sector and opined that the reduced absenteeism and attrition rates among the employees is due to the supervisor’s support in improvising workplace environment. In the same lines, the results concluded that, the accident rates, producing defective parts were not influenced by supervisor’s leadership behavior. Susan C. Merideth [33] conducted research
study in Phi Theta Kappa, internationally accredited group of colleges, to assess the level of opportunities the institutions providing to its student force in leadership development. The results confirmed that leader’s servant behavior have strong impact on student officers because their goals were aligned with their servant leaders.

Darin R. Molnar [34] explored the association between servant leadership and Hofstede’s cultural topology dimensions across 93 countries, and found a significant correlation between servant leadership and masculinity and no significant correlation with power distance and individualism. The study revealed a significant role the gender plays with servant leadership on culture because of intellectual and emotional bridge between genders. Marieta van Staden [35] confirmed on significant relationship between servant leadership and trust in leader among the employees of media and pharmaceutical organizations in South Africa.

Lolita Regina Johnson [4] opined that the practice of servant leadership improves the health of organization and obtained statistically positive correlation between servant leadership characteristics and job satisfaction with the high-tech employees of aerospace engineering,

John B. Hannigan [36] worked and tested the level of servant leadership on the overall colleges’ performance in California, the results showed that the organization do not practice servant leadership, and servant leadership inversely proportional to the college performance focused on students’ achievement of awards and certifications. Rebecca L. Herman [37] revealed that servant leadership showed a strong positive impact on workplace spirituality as leaders focus more on healthy and transparent environment to work for. The results proved that members with servant leader characteristics are more focused on developing the members to become servant leaders.

Aaron Matthew Metzcar [38] mentioned the strong influence of servant leadership in classroom teaching, and found that the greatest strength of servant leader in this context was providing leadership for the students to excel. Also found a statistical significance between the experience levels and
level of servant leadership the leaders displayed. Curtis D. Beck [39] confirmed that the leaders with long tenure in leadership roles are more likely to exhibit servant leader behavior, also builds trust among the followers and in their leaders.

Kenneth N. Thompson [40] confirmed the existence of strong correlation between the completion of projects and servanthood of the leader and stated that that the successful completion of project mainly reciprocates with the belief of followers on their leaders and his/her servant leadership attributes. Robert W. Hayden [41] stated a significant and positive correlation among the characteristics of servant leadership across the levels of a utility based organization. Laura Juliet James [42] opined a positive correlation between trust and perceived organizational support and also a significant proportion of perceived organizational support on trust in coworkers among South African organizations.

W. Kohle Paul [43] measured advisors’ behavior on servant leadership behavior and developed an assessment of servant leaders based on advising, training and development programs in academics. Danon R. Carter [44] opined that servant leadership positively contributes for enhanced employee engagement and loyalty in hotel industry. The enhancement of engaged workplace culture has its base on servant leader’s commitment in building the community and employees’ readiness and active participation in transforming the work culture.

Most of the studies were on academic leadership and few on aerospace, manufacturing and project management in various parts of the globe. With this research evidence, the researcher opted for Indian Information Technology (IT) sector for performing the study, which is one of the untapped sectors in India.

Irving [45] pioneered the empirical study to examine servant leadership and team effectiveness across different sectors, viz., non-profit, church and business firms, as the sample size of each sector was low, led to a
research gap to study the influence of servant leadership on team effectiveness according to the sector of operation.

Herbert [46] and Laub [7] studied the effect of servant leadership on job satisfaction in non-service-related organizations, but there exist no research that has explored the relation between job satisfaction and servant leadership in Information Technology sector. Carmeli & Freund [47] observed a significant correlation between job satisfaction and productivity but perceived passive servant leadership behavior in non-service-related organizations. A high level of job satisfaction was observed among the employees where the organization promotes servant leadership [18]. The IT sector being a purely service oriented business sector, requires prompt delivery and service support to the clients, hence organizations focus more on maintaining qualified, multi-skilled workforce for higher productivity and commitment towards the organizations.

Chan and Wan [48] opine that employees’ attitudes influence their commitment towards organization. The increased commitment towards the organization increases employee trust in leader, loyalty towards organization [49]. Carlos & Filipe [50] augmented that, organizational leaders play a major role towards establishing the employees’ commitment level; [51, 52] which can be promoted on high note by servant leaders displaying honesty, integrity and trust.

Despite many advances in technology, organizations face hurdles like leadership approach which directly effects team commitment, team effectiveness and job satisfaction. It is observed from many studies, that the attrition rate of the organization is not on the remuneration perspective, but on the leadership style of the supervisor. Hence, this paved a way for understanding the need of the hour for business to be successful on leadership perspective. The study used a quantitative descriptive approach to determine whether a relationship exists between team commitment, team effectiveness and job satisfaction with trust as a psychological medium to drive servant leadership as a successful leadership approach.
1.3 Need for the Study

Russell & Stone [53] stated that, the concept of servant leadership can widely be practiced across organizations irrespective of the sectors. Many studies were carried out extensively in hospital, educational, non-profit, manufacturing sectors, but studies on Information Technology industry still remain as an untapped zone to examine the existence of servant leadership. IT sector also falls under service sector providing technological solutions to the clients that require leaders with a desire to serve the subordinators; in return developing the subordinators to follow the footsteps of their servant-led leaders giving rise to high levels of job satisfaction, team commitment and finally developing a healthy and trustful working environment resulting in successful effectiveness of teams.

The study sought to determine if there is a relationship between the level of perception of servant leadership characteristics and the participant’s level of job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness in a psychological environment as trust in leader.

In this study, servant leadership served as the independent variable measured on six characteristics defined by Laub (1999), and job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness served as dependent variables and trust performing a role of mediating variable.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The concept of Servant leadership was conceived on the basis of anecdotal observations [10, 20]. There exists little empirical research on servant leadership; still philosophical base stands high for its theoretical development. Sendjaya & Sarros, [19], notified that a strong empirical evidence gives more credibility, thereby reducing the research gap in the area of servant leadership. Thus, a shift from anecdotal perspective to empirical evidence is much required for validating servant leadership across different organizations. Russell & Stone [53] suggested that, servant leadership can draw organizational excellence through an improvised leadership at different horizons.
The results of the study contribute towards the empirical validity of servant leadership both on theory development for academics as well as on practical implications for organizational development and wellness.

The analysis of the data collected through validated SOLA assessment instrument [15], Team Commitment Survey (TCS) [54 & 55]; Team Effectiveness Questionnaire [24] assesses the relationship between servant leadership, job satisfaction, team commitment and team effectiveness.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

- To study the existence of Servant Leadership style in Indian IT sector.
- To study the impact of Servant Leadership on team effectiveness, team commitment and job satisfaction.
- To study the mediating effect of trust in leader on Servant Leadership, team effectiveness, team commitment and job satisfaction.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the software professionals of Indian IT companies located in South India. This study is conducted on the respondents who are software professionals.

In an effort to advance the understanding of leadership influence on team effectiveness, the problem statement considers the correlation between Servant Leadership and Team Effectiveness, Team Commitment and Job Satisfaction within various IT firms of South India.

Servant leadership serves as the independent variable, whereas Team Effectiveness, Job Satisfaction and Team Commitment measurements are the dependent variables of the study.

1.7 Overview of Methods of Analysis

This study has been conducted in three stages. Exploratory study [qualitative in nature] was carried out as the first stage of this research to identify the key characteristics of servant leadership. The identified
characteristics of servant leadership are value for people (VP), developing people (DP), building community (BC), displaying authenticity (DA), providing leadership (PL) and sharing leadership (SL). The next stage of the study is to find out the impact of servant leadership characteristics on job satisfaction (JS), team effectiveness (TE), team commitment (TE) on the employees of IT industry in South India. This study also focuses on the effect of trust (T) on team commitment, team effectiveness and job satisfaction. In the final stage, data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising of 109 statements. The total valid responses collected from five states of South India were 568 out of the 1200 selected sample.

1.8 Underlying Assumptions

- It was assumed that leader’s behavior drives the followers for effective outputs by inculcating a healthy working environment; thereby high standards of team commitment, job satisfaction can be achieved.
- Review of existing literature supports the significance of the study and the empirical analysis will reduce the gap between theoretical and practical implications among academia and industry respectively.
- The formulated constructs can be quantifiable and also show significant relationship among them.
- The terms such as leaders, supervisors and managers were interchangeably used in different contexts.
- The terms such as followers, subordinators and employees were interchangeably used in different contexts.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This section of the thesis explains the overview of the thesis structure in several chapters.

- **Chapter 1** – Background, Statement of the Problem, Need for the Study, Objectives, Scope, Methods of Analysis, Underlying Assumptions and Organization of the thesis.
- **Chapter 2** – This chapter includes a comprehensive profile of Indian Information Technology industry.
- **Chapter 3** – Literature Review comprising, genesis of servant leadership, difference between servant leadership and various leadership theories, development of theoretical model, identifying variables and formulating hypothesis.

- **Chapter 4** – Research methodology of the study, deals with formulation of hypotheses, research design that includes, sampling design, data collection procedure, survey instrument, methods of planned analysis.

- **Chapter 5** – This chapter deals with data analysis and results with reference to the formulated key constructs, tabulations, descriptive statistics, testing of hypotheses using ordinal regression, Chi-square test, Mann-Whitney Rank-Sum U test for estimating the results.

- **Chapter 6** – Interpretation of results

- **Chapter 7** – Conclusions on the study, suggestions, limitations and directions for the continuation of the future research.