

The Efficacy of adopting Servant Leadership to Improve Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction. Empirical Study of Higher Education Sector in Kuwait.

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study to test the impact of servant leadership (SL) on employee's job satisfaction and to understand the deeper nuances and benefits of Servant Leadership style on employee engagement precisely after Covid 19 pandemic crises .Several studies explained and clarified the effect and the relationship between the leadership and the employee engagement, employee performance in corporates and how the leadership styles can influence on the institutions culture, employee engagement and satisfaction, and motivation. (Yang & Islam, 2012). The research methodology followed simple random technique, survey questionnaire designed and distributed with 320 employees working in private higher education organizations in Kuwait. The finding spotted that there is a significant , strong, and positive relationship between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis highlighted the role of leader member exchange in moderating the relationship between servant leadership and increasing employee engagement.

Keywords: Higher education, Pandemic, Servant leadership, Job satisfaction , Leadership style.

1 Introduction

The main idea of leadership shaped and developed due to a lot of changes in the organizations and their environments.(Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016) Several studies explained the relationship between the leadership and the employee engagement, employee performance in the organizations and how the leadership styles can influence on the institutions culture, employee engagement , satisfaction, and motivation. (Yang & Islam, 2012) This research in particular focused on servant leadership and employee satisfaction, in higher education in Kuwait after pandemic situation. The study used the leader member exchange LMX theory along with mediating variable to show the effect of servant leadership on employee performance and a mediating variable. The notable point of this research about using leader member exchange as

a mediating variable and conducting the research in the Middle East and GCC Region as there is a lack of this type of research in this region unlike in Europe and western countries. Additionally, the majority of previous studies looked at the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction in general without distinguishing between internal and external satisfaction. This study bridges the gap in the literature and shed the light on this relationship in a more rigorous way (Liden, et al., 2008)

2 Literature Review

2.1 Servant Leadership

The notion of servant leadership has received growing attention and recognition in recent years (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Various researchers have espoused servant leadership as a valid theory of organizational leadership with great promise for theoretical and practical development

(Russell & Stone, 2002). the word “servant” has specific meaning which indicates to the leadership way that supports the ethical behaviors and empowerment of the followers, and this is the most essential element to be a servant leader. According to Greenleaf, leadership without serving others will be less fundamental, meaningless, and useless, instead of being more ethical, community based and altruistic. This is the main concept and idea of Greenleaf’s style of servant leadership. Therefore, Servant leadership style is not self-centered or based on power and giving orders to the followers, but it is all about giving services and using motivation tools based on community centered principles, ethical behaviors, and ethical empowerment to improve the performance of the followers. (Taylor-Gillham, 1998) Leaders who follow servant leadership believe on mental health in the workplace in general as one of their roles. So, when people get good advising and services from others, in return they will do their best for themselves and for the maximum number of people around them in their society. (Chan & Mak, 2014)

2.2 *Servant Leadership and Satisfaction*

Numerous studies have conducted to examine if a relationship exists between servant leadership and job satisfaction. These studies show similar findings and most of them are consistent regarding the fact that there is a strong relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

The two famous researchers Hebert (2003) and Johnson (2008) conducted a study and examined the intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction scale score by using OLA along with the Mohrman-Cooke-Mohrman Job Satisfaction Scale (MCMJSS) (Mohrman, et al., 1978) survey instrument (Hebert, 2003) (Johnson, 2008). Another researcher, Amadeo (2008), Anderson (2005), Chu (2008), and Salie (2008) examined the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction in certain types of companies/institutions. All of them found out a considerable relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction in each

company/institution (Amadeo, 2008) (Anderson, 2005) (Chu, 2008) (Salie, 2008).

Research applied in a private University in Atlanta, Georgia and examined the correlation between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction and it demonstrated that servant leadership leads to employee satisfaction (Guillaume, et al., 2013). Another study that found out the correlation between servant leadership and core self-evaluation and job satisfaction, (Tischler, et al., 2016).

2.3 *LMX as a Mediator*

LMX-Leader Member Exchange Theory or the superior-subordinate relationship theory which is assuming that the leader should treat the employees based on their abilities, and leaders should give more privileges and tasks to the employee who gives more and puts more effort. leaders and employees establish and develop special correlation between each other, and leaders should deal with the employees in diverse ways based on two groups of employees/followers. First group called: in-group, and the second one called: out-group. The first group which is the in-group includes a small number of trusted employees, these employees usually the leader trusts them and can establish a special, strong higher quality exchange relationship with them. The second group which is the out-group consists of the remaining employees, leader usually treat them in more formal way. These relationships are always changing and not fixed based on leader’s energy, time, and inability to give equal attention to all followers (Krishnan, 2005).

3 *Methodology*

3.1 *Data Collection & Administration*

A survey designed to evaluate the relationship between servant leadership and employee satisfaction, after designing, it distributed to 320 employees working in private higher education sector in Kuwait. All these employees are working and on a frequent basis to managers/leaders. The data collection stage applied in one phase by using a comprehensive survey. This survey contains three sections. First

one was about collecting data based on follower's gender, education, and age and on the how many years they are serving in their current organization. Second part of the survey consisted of twenty-eight questions about servant leadership model. Third one consisted of eight questions about intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. The last section included seven questions to collect data on LMX leader-member exchange as a mediating variable between servant leadership and employee satisfaction

3.2 Sample Selection and Size

In this paper, the research cases are two chosen private higher education organizations located in Kuwait. The sample of this study consists of employees with full time work which means thirty-two working hours /week. In this study, the stratified approach was not used, but the non-probability approach was used to avoid any random selection (George & Mallery, 2009).

Research Objectives:

- 1- To determine the relationship between Servant leadership and Employees job satisfaction
- H1: There is no significant correlation between servant leadership and employees job satisfaction
- 2- To indicate the function of Leader Member Exchange as a moderating variable between Servant Leadership and job satisfaction
- H2: Leader Member Exchange does not moderate the relationship between Servant Leadership and employee job satisfaction.

4 Research Findings:

Table 1: Correlation coefficient between Servant Leadership, Leader Member Exchange and Employees Job satisfaction:

Spearman's rho			Servant Leadership	Employees Job Satisfaction	Leaders Member Exchange
	Servant Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	-		
	Employees Job Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	0.826**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	-	
	Leaders Member Exchange	Correlation Coefficient	0.337*	-.303*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.013	0.028	-

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

N=320

The first and second null hypothesis (H1) & (H2) was rejected as the correlation coefficient between servant leadership , employees job satisfaction and Leaders Member Exchange was 0.826 , 0.337 respectively. which was significant at the 0.01 level (Table 1). The result of empirical testing showed that, there is a significant strong

positive relationship between servant leadership, employees job satisfaction and leasers member exchange. This result suggests that when a leader engages in servant leadership, this may lead to feelings of personal accomplishment for the employees.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The servant-leader moves beyond the transactional aspects of management, and instead actively seeks to develop and align an employee's sense of purpose with the company mission. The importance of servant leadership and its effect on employee satisfaction in organizations recognized in literature. Unfortunately, most of the previous studies looked at this relationship in isolation of any other variables that may function as mediators and therefore our understanding of this relationship remained incomplete. To address this gap in the literature, the current paper examined the relationship between servant leadership and employee satisfaction with the presence of Leader-Member Exchange as a mediator. The first level of the statistical analysis looked at this relationship in isolation of LMX as a mediator. The second level of the analysis included LMX as a mediator to observe the effect of this variable on satisfaction.

The findings illustrated that :when leaders show no interest in acquiring power and care more about empowering followers, putting subordinate's interests first, and providing support for them, job satisfaction becomes higher. In 2011, Schneider and George carried out research in clubs of a national voluntary service organization in the United States and found that there was a positive impact on the satisfaction of club members as well as their commitment level and the intentions to remain members of the organization (Schneider & George, 2011). The results of this study are also consistent with the findings of (Shaw & Newton, 2014) where they found that teacher's satisfaction and retention were the outcome of servant leadership. Another study that found a positive relationship between servant leadership and satisfaction conducted by (Chan & Mak, 2014) but they used trust in leader as a mediating variable.

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