

Studying the Influence of Servant Leadership on Employees' Motivation

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Abstract

Today human resources are the most important one in the organizations and human resource managers can be considered as business colleagues for organizations. Therefore making them more motivated by different incentives can affect organizational outputs. The purpose of writing the current paper is to survey the influence of servant leadership on employees' motivation in Asia insurance company (a great one in Iran). The research is applicable from goal view and descriptive from data collection. Also data collection method is library and fieldwork. To measure servant leadership, seven main dimensions contain agapao love, humility, altruism, trust, vision, service and empowerment. A questionnaire include 69 questions was designed and distributed among 334 employees of Asia insurance as statistical sample. The results of applying some non parametric tests illustrated that servant leadership and its dimensions affect significantly on employees' motivation. Meanwhile agapao love, altruism and empowerment were selected as the most important dimensions. No relationship found between employees' demographic characteristics with their motivation. Finally current situation of the variables were surveyed applying Binomial test in which all of them apart from service and altruism were placed in high levels.

Keywords: servant leadership, motivation, human resources

Introduction

The nature of work in the developed world continues to shift away from manufacturing roles typified by clearly-defined objectives and requirements to services and knowledge-based roles where the nature of the work itself involves a much greater degree of variation and interpretation based on changing role, client, or environmental needs (Oldman and Hackman, 2010). As a result of these changes, teams are pervasive in organizations (Campion et al., 1993; Mathieu et al., 2008; Stewart, 2006). The nature of teamwork requires very different approaches to leadership, to support both the execution of work and the effective interaction between team members (Marks et al., 2001). These structural changes in organizations have increased the importance of effective leader coaching and fostered a shift to the use of leadership styles

aimed at developing positive supportive relationships between leaders and team members and positive working relations amongst team members (Mathieu et al., 2008). As a result, relational leadership styles including transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), and more recently servant leadership (Crossman, 2010; Greenleaf, 1991; Russell and Stone, 2002) have risen in prevalence. Relational leadership styles which employ team coaching are especially important in an age where employees are distrustful of employers (Pekerti, 2010; Robinson, 1996), as demonstrated by low employee engagement. Research suggests that only 26% of US workers are actively engaged (Fleming et al., 2005), that only 14% are highly engaged (Towers Perrin, 2006), and that low levels of engagement are also prevalent outside of the US (Attridge, 2009).

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Given the importance of team coaching and relationally-based leadership styles on supporting these changes in work, it is critical that we deepen our understanding of these phenomena. While the prevalence of coaching has increased and has been suggested to positively impact team effectiveness (Wageman, 2001), “except for the many popular books and articles that extract lessons for team leaders from athletics coaches, relatively little has been published that specifically addresses the coaching of task performing teams” (Hackman and Wageman, 2005).

Prior research on coaching has explored ways in which leaders instill common purpose in teams (Kozlowski et al., 1996), how leaders develop team members’ interpersonal skills (Manz and Sims, 1987) and how leaders monitor and provide feedback on team member behavior and performance (Komaki, 1986).

Theory has recently suggested team coaching as a process where the timing of coaching interventions contributes to coaching effectiveness (Hackman and Wageman, 2005). Accordingly, the first research question this paper seeks to consider is how the temporal role of critical coaching milestones (beginning, middle and end) established in Hackman and Wageman’s theory of coaching (2005) impacts coaching effectiveness. This paper considers critical milestones by operationalizing work milestones as beginning, middle and end using a performance management cycle including goal-setting, feedback, and performance appraisal (Budworth and Mann, 2011; Latham and Mann, 2006; Locke and Latham, 1990). As Hackman and Wageman (2005) suggest, when work teams operate in a continuous rather than project capacity, the arbitrary demarcation of work cycles based on beginning, middle and end of a work year should act as the intervals representing the most effective coaching opportunities for leaders.

Literature review

Studies on leadership had begun since the days of Greek philosophers and it was one of the most popular research topics in organizational behavior. Leadership itself is defined as a process whereby an individual influences others to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2001). This basic definition of leaders allows for the collaborative nature of servant leadership in the context of leadership and has been supported in many empirical studies. In this paper, a servant leader could be defined as a leader whose primary purpose for leading is to serve others by investing in their development and well being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good. Being just a service-oriented person, in the traditional notion of servanthood, does not qualify one as a servant leader. Arlene Hall (1991) has observed “Doing menial chores does not necessarily indicate a servant leader [but instead], a servant leader is one who invests himself or herself in enabling others, in helping them be and do their best”. In addition, servant-leadership should not be equated with self-serving motives to please people or to satisfy one's need for acceptance and assuming a position. At the very heart of servant-leadership is the genuine desire to serve others for the common good of the organization. In servant-leadership, focus on the goodness of others gives way to collective human development. Leadership is a relationship which reflects in a set of attributes or traits which can be seen in servant leaders. Mullins (2005) explains that leadership is essentially the relationship through which one person influences the behavior or actions of other people. In addition, Hellriegel and Slocum (2004) are of the opinion that “leadership is the process of developing ideas and a vision, living by values that support those ideas and that vision, influencing others to embrace them in their own behaviors, and making hard decisions about human and other resources”. In other words leaders must create vision and develop strategies,

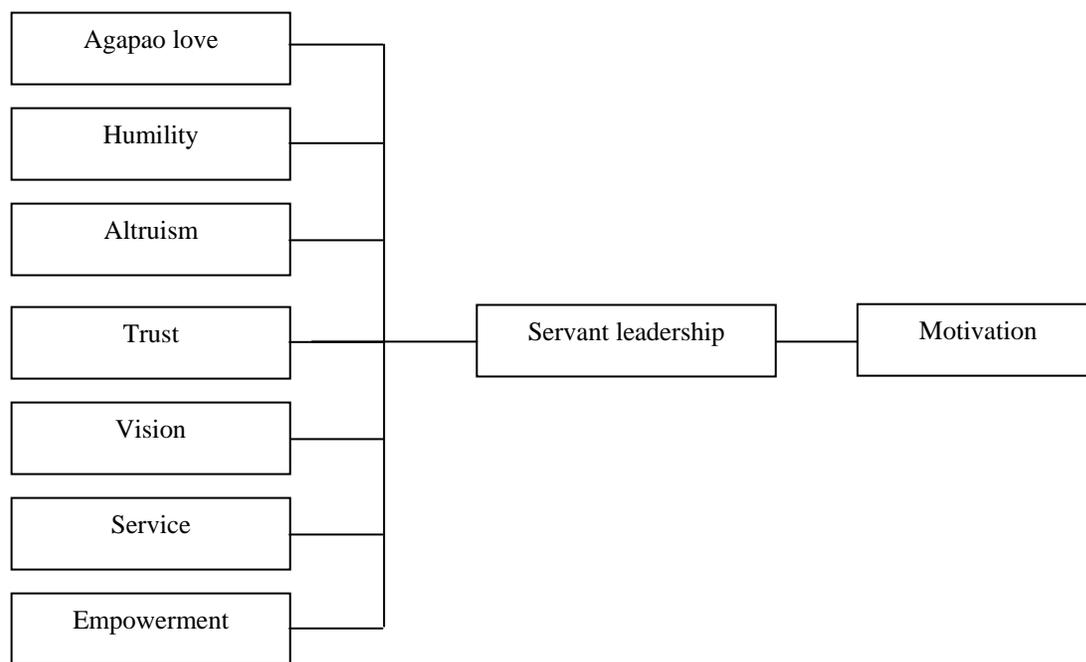
engage, motivate and inspire people, build trust and have courage.

Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of research and has been derived Patterson (2003) and Jamaludin (2008) models. It presents the influence of servant leadership and its indices on employees' motivation in Asia insurance. Servant

leadership has 7 main criteria include agapao love, humility, altruism, trust, vision, service and empowerment.

In the model, servant leadership and its indices (agapao love, humility, altruism, trust, vision, service and empowerment) are independent variables and motivation will be considered as dependent variable.



Conceptual framework of the research

1. Servant leadership affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.1. Agapao love affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.2. Humility affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.3. Altruism affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.4. Trust affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.5. Vision affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.6. Service affects significantly on motivation.
 - 1.7. Altruism affects significantly on motivation.

3. Research methodology

The study was done in a society involving 2282 employees of central branch of Asia insurance. Whereas this number seems to be too much, the sampling was done through an integral counting method.

$$n = \frac{NZ^2_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}pq}{(N-1)\epsilon^2 + Z^2_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}pq} \Rightarrow \frac{2521 \times (1.96)^2 \times (0.5)^2}{2520 \times (0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2 (0.5)^2} \cong 334$$

So the sample is 334 employees. Also the sampling strategy is simple sampling.

Current study can be considered as a descriptive survey if to view from data collection aspect and as an applied research if to investigate the goals of the study. To collect the data library method (to refer to books, articles, libraries, etc...) and fieldworks (questionnaire) was being used.

For gathering data, 2 questionnaires were designed.

The first one was about servant leadership includes 39 questions with 5 point likert scale. Distribution of each dimension is presented in table 1:

Table 1: distribution of each servant leadership dimension questions

| Servant Leadership | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| SL dimension | Questions |
| Agapao love | 1-5 |
| empowerment | 6-10 |
| Vision | 11-15 |
| Service | 16-21 |
| Humility | 22-28 |
| Trust | 29-34 |
| Altruism | 35-39 |

To measure motivation, 3 main dimensions were considered: affective motivation, normative motivation and continuance motivation.

So the other questionnaire includes 30 questions with 5 point likert scale too. Distribution of each motivation dimension is presented in table 2:

Table 2: distribution of each motivation dimension questions

| Motivation | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Motivation dimensions | Questions |
| Nature of work | 1-5 |
| Payment | 6-9 |
| Promotion | 10-13 |
| Relation with colleagues | 14-18 |
| Accountability | 19-22 |
| Success | 23-26 |
| Work condition | 27-30 |

To analyze the data SPSS 19 and Spearman, Friedman, Chi-square and binomial tests were utilized. The management experts were being asked to evaluate the validity of questionnaires. For this mean, the questionnaires were given to some professors and experts in management, and after their modifications were being applied and they confirmed it, the questionnaires were given to the participants. To determine the questionnaires' reliability, the 'Cronbach Alpha technique' was applied. For this purpose, 35 people were chosen by random (from the statistical samples) and the questionnaires were given to them. The 'Cronbach Alpha' values for all variables were calculated:

Table 3: the results of reliability

| Variables | Cronbach |
|--------------------|----------|
| Servant leadership | 0.785 |
| Motivation | 0.833 |

These values support the reliability of questionnaires, because the calculated results for Cronbach's alpha are more than (0.7).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

The test was applied to survey normality of data distribution in statistical society.

Table 4: the results of applying Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

| Variables | Sig |
|--------------------|-------|
| Servant leadership | 0.000 |
| Motivation | 0.000 |

Table 4 shows that test error is less than research error. Therefore normality of data distribution in statistical society was rejected.

4.2. Spearman test

To investigate the relationship between servant leadership and its indices with motivation, this test was used. The results are shown in table 5:

Table 5: the results of using Spearman test

| Relationship | Statistic | Sig | Result |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|--------------------------|
| Servant leadership | 0.724 | 0.000 | Significant relationship |
| Agapao love | 0.765 | 0.000 | Significant relationship |
| empowerment | 0.592 | 0.000 | Significant relationship |
| Vision | 0.644 | 0.015 | Significant relationship |
| Service | 0.819 | 0.031 | Significant relationship |

| | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| Humility | 0.829 | 0.000 | Significant relationship |
| Trust | 0.622 | 0.022 | Significant relationship |
| Altruism | 0.736 | 0.000 | Significant relationship |

As table 5 shows, there are positive and meaningful between servant leadership and its dimensions with employees' motivation (sig<0.05).

4.3. Friedman test

To prioritize servant leadership dimensions, Friedman test was applied. The results are presented in table 6:

Table 6: results of using Friedman test

| Influence | Research error | Sig | Result |
|-------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Servant | 0.05 | 0.000 | Significant influence |
| Agapao love | 0.05 | 0.000 | Significant influence |
| empowerment | 0.05 | 0.000 | Significant influence |
| Vision | 0.05 | 0.000 | Significant influence |
| Service | 0.05 | 0.034 | Significant influence |
| Humility | 0.05 | 0.035 | Significant influence |
| Trust | 0.05 | 0.000 | Significant influence |
| Altruism | 0.05 | 0.000 | Significant influence |

As table 5 shows, servant leadership and its dimensions affect significantly on

4.4. Chi-square

To survey the relationship between employees' demographic characteristics and their motivation, Chi-square test was utilized as:

Table 6: the results of using Chi-square test

| Demographic | Standard error | Sig | Result |
|-------------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Age | 0.05 | 0.053 | Positive relationship |
| Gender | 0.05 | 0.185 | Positive relationship |
| Educational level | 0.05 | 0.132 | Positive relationship |
| Job experience | 0.05 | 0.128 | Positive relationship |

Table 6 shows that there no relationship between employees' demographic characteristics with their motivation.

4.5. Binomial test

Binomial test has been applied to measure the "motivation", "servant leadership" and its dimensions in statistical society. The results are shown in table 7:

Table 7: The results of applying Binomial test

| Variables | Observed prop | Test prop | Sig | Result |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|-------------------|
| Servant leadership | 0.72 | 0.5 | 0.000 | Favorable level |
| Agapao love | 0.63 | | 0.000 | Favorable level |
| empowerment | 0.59 | | 0.000 | Favorable level |
| Vision | 0.61 | | 0.036 | Favorable level |
| Service | 0.37 | | 0.000 | Unfavorable level |
| Humility | 0.56 | | 0.000 | Favorable level |
| Trust | 0.62 | | 0.000 | Favorable level |
| Altruism | 0.40 | | 0.016 | Unfavorable level |
| Motivation | 0.75 | | 0.000 | Favorable level |

4.6. Entropy technique

Entropy technique has been applied to rank servant leadership dimension. The results are shown in table 8:

Table 8: the results of applying Entropy technique

| Dimensions | Weight | Rank |
|-------------|----------|------|
| Agapao love | 0.183235 | 1 |
| empowerment | 0.153738 | 3 |
| Vision | 0.143505 | 4 |
| Service | 0.122325 | 5 |
| Humility | 0.119951 | 6 |
| Trust | 0.107516 | 7 |
| Altruism | 0.169729 | 2 |

Table 8 illustrates that agapao love is selected as the most important one and altruism and empowerment were posed in second and third places.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

In the current paper we tried to survey the influence of servant leadership on employees’ motivation. The results showed that servant leadership and its dimensions affect significantly on employees’ motivation. Meanwhile agapao love is the top one. Attending to the results managers are advised to:

- Reinforcing relations with employees by some activities out of organization like social trips
- Formulating comprehensive vision for the organization in terms of employees’ excellence
- Aligning employees’ goals and organizational goals

- Institutionalizing service culture in all parts of organization
- Encouraging employees to service together
- Delegating and depositing new responsibilities to employees
- Trying employees to achieve more success

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