The Impact of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Servant Leadership on a workplace related outcome (job satisfaction) at a private University in Atlanta, Georgia. The ten characteristics of Servant Leadership previously identified by Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (1998) played a significant role in job satisfaction. Other researchers (Laub, 1999; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Sendjaya et al., 2008) have also contributed in the deeper understanding of Servant Leadership in the workplace. While contributing to this body of work, this research utilized Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) instrument, Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ), and Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Davis et al. (1967) in identifying the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction among faculty and non-faculty employees. The research found that Servant Leadership contributed to a satisfied workforce.

Key words: leadership; job satisfaction; servant leadership; academia; workplace

JEL codes: M10, M19

1. Introduction

The concept of servant leadership is not new (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Spears, 1996). Servant Leadership was practiced for ages and throughout cultures (Nyabadza, 2003) and has been described as a fundamental, timeless principle (Covey, 1977). Laub (1999) defined servant leadership as "An understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader" (p. 81). Contemporary management theory and practice has recently taken cognizance of a new trajectory in management and workplace theoretical perspectives (Borsch, 2009). In essence, workers are an integral part of the part of a management system. Thus, a leader's decisions or actions in the workplace may influence a worker's living conditions to include health, culture, and personality. Northouse (2010) suggests that leadership involves influence, and is concerned with how the leader affects followers. Influence is the sine qua non of leadership (Northouse, 2010). Without influence, leadership does not exist. Theorists in the field have realized that to maximize a leaders' decision-making effectiveness in organizations, leaders need to evaluate and be aware of the perceptions of workers as well as their own perceptions of their inner spirit, moral values, and desires (Northouse, 2010).

2. Problem Background

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Servant Leadership on workplace related outcomes in private university. Whereas many authors have written about servant leadership: Blanchard (1998); Buchen (1998);

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Cerff (2004); Farling et al. (1999); Graham (1991); Hale (2004); Jennings and Stahl-Wert (2003); Laub (2004); Ndoria (2004); Nwogu (2004); Page (2004); Parolini (2004); Patterson (2003); Patterson and Stone (2004); Quay (1997); Rude (2003); Russell (2001a, 2003); Russell and Stone (2002); Sendjaya and Sarros (2002); Smith et al. (2004); Spears (1995, 1998a); Spears and Lawrence (2002); Stone, Russell, and Patterson 2003, 2004); Wolford-Ulrich (2004); Winston (2003); Winston and Hartsfield (2004); and Wong and Page (2003). Russell and Stone (2002), Page and Wong (2000), and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) as well as the development of instruments by Laub (1999), Page and Wong (2000), and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), leaders are beginning to understand more fully the full impact that their behavior has on others and organizations.

Laub's (1999) instrument has received the most use in the current servant leadership research as indicated by its usage in studies by Beazley (2002), Ledbetter (2003), Drury (2004), and Irving (2004). More recently, Hannigan (2008) conducted an investigation on servant leadership, as a predictor of college performance in academic institutions caused by both faculty and administrator leaders. Given these few significant research, the need for this study is evident. In addition, it might appear that since academia is divided into faculty and non-faculty staff, the research may also embark on studying the differences between servant leadership and workplace outcomes between the faculty and non-faculty staff. While numerous workplace outcomes exist, job satisfaction would be the key workplace outcomes for this study.

Spears (1995, 1998) listed, for example, 10 characteristics of a servant leader drawn from Greenleaf's writings, and Contee-Borders's (2003) case study confirmed these characteristics as being critical to servant leadership:

- Listening—servant leaders clarify a group by listening receptively to what is being said;
- Empathy—servant leaders strive to understand and empathize with others;
- Healing—servant leaders have the potential for healing self and others;
- Awareness—servant leadership is strengthened by general awareness, and especially self-awareness;
- Persuasion—servant leaders rely upon persuasion, rather than positional authority, in making decisions within an organization;
- Conceptualization—servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream numerous dreams;
- Foresight—servant leaders could foresee the likely outcome of a situation in the future;
- Stewardship—servant leaders' ultimate commitment is to serve the needs of others;
- commitment to the growth of people–servant leaders are deeply committed to the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of every individual within the institution; and building community–servant leaders seek to identify means of building
- community among those who work within a given institution.

In an essay designed to encourage faculty to train future leaders, Greenleaf (1978) wrote, "The leader leads well when leadership is, and is seen as, serving the dream and searching for a better one" (p. 8).

Spears (2004) claimed that servant leadership has made a profound impression on leaders, educators, and many others interested in improving in the areas of leadership, management, service, and personal growth. Lubin's (2001) work validated nine of these 10 servant leadership characteristics as being congruent with visionary leader behaviors. Servant leaders in education administration to compose an educational environment founded on equality and integrity, which used the 10 characteristics (Taylor-Gillham, 1998). The researcher will demonstrate how Spear's view on servant leadership affects workplace outcomes in academia.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the Impact of Servant Leadership on workplace related outcome at a private university. The researcher is seeking to increase the understanding of servant leadership in academia. To serve this purpose, numerous articles and books have been devoted to leadership styles in the realm of scholastic. The specific research population is the campuses of the selected university. The researcher examined if any relationship exist between the level of servant leadership and job satisfaction in academic circles. The study examined the influence of servant leadership, at the faculty and staff level. The study measured the level of servant leadership at a selected university to determine the level of the relationship, if any, between the workplace outcome of faculty, and their servant leadership. The purpose of servant leadership is to make sure that the leader's priority is to serve others, and to make sure that other people's needs are served before the leader's (Greenleaf, 1991). Interest has grown in the education community about the promise and influence of servant leadership. Servant leaders are special because their type of leadership skill set can inspire others to join in on their special vision of what a college or university should look like (Senge, 1998). The servant leadership model for leaders can have a far-reaching impact, which could affect the leader, the staff, and the entire school. Brown said that he purposefully goes around his school every morning to ask his faculty (Brown, 2009). In today's academics, servant leadership is vital because the academic leader has to have an eye on different aspects of the building. Brown believes that servant leadership will allow him and other leaders to take full advantage of the power in numbers that a school's staff has (Brown, 2009).

4. Theoretical Framework

Northouse (2010) delineates several of the more important leadership approaches, styles, which have been developed over the past century, such as Trait Approach, Situational Approach, Leader-Member Exchange Theory, and Path-Goal Theory. In choosing which of the leadership theory to use in this study, two or more variables influence the choice: Job satisfaction, Job Commitment. Drawing heavily from research on what motivates, inspired employees, path goal theory first appeared in the leadership literature in the early 1970s in the works of Evans (1970), House (1971), House and Dessler (1974), and House and Mitchell (1974). The goal was to enhance employee satisfaction and performance by focusing on employee motivation Northouse. Path-goal theory was developed to explain how leaders motivate subordinates to be productive and satisfied with their work. This theory is a contingency approach to leadership because of effectiveness, which depends on the fit between the leader's behavior and the characteristics of subordinates and the task. House (1996) presented a retrospective review of the development and history of the Path-Goal theory of leader effectiveness. He briefly described the origin of the theory. House (1996) the various methodologies that have been used to test the theory and lessons learned from empirical testing are discussed. The original publication was examined over 25 years ago concerning the path-goal theory of leader effectiveness (House, 1971). According to House (1996), the scope of path-goal reflects the dominant paradigm of the study of leadership.

According to House and Mitchell (1974), the first proposition of the path-goal theory is that leader behavior is acceptable and satisfying to subordinates to the extent that subordinates see such behavior either as an immediate source of satisfaction or as instrumental to future satisfaction. The second proposition of this theory is that the leader's behavior will be motivational, e.g., increase effort, to the extent that (1) such behavior makes

satisfaction of subordinates' need contingent on effective performance and (2) such behavior complements the environment of subordinates by providing the coaching, guidance, support, and rewards necessary for effective performance. These two propositions suggest that the leader's strategic functions are to enhance subordinates' motivation to perform satisfactory with the job and acceptance of the leader. The servant leader serves others, rather than others serving the Leader. Serving others thus comes by helping them to achieve and improve (Greenleaf, 1977).

Northouse (2010) suggests that path-goal theory offers a large set of predictions for how a leader's style interacts with subordinates needs and the nature of task. The directive leadership for repetitive tasks, which participative leadership is effective when tasks are unclear and subordinates are autonomous and that achievement-oriented leadership is effective for challenging tasks. House's theory advocates servant leadership. As per servant leadership theory, leadership is not viewed as a position of power. Rather, leaders act as coaches and facilitators to their subordinates. According to House's path-goal theory, a leader's effectiveness depends on several employee and environmental contingent factor (House, 1971).

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Servant Leadership on workplace related outcome at a private university in Atlanta, Georgia. The researcher aimed to achieve a clearer view of Servant Leadership in academia. The study examined the relationship that exists between the level of Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction in academic circles. The significance of examining empirical research related to Servant Leadership in academia was important in the workplace. The research streamed on the theory of Servant Leadership developed by Greenleaf et al. (1970), Spears (2005), Savage-Austin and Honeycutt (2011). The high response rate from the respondents of the survey (51.9%) validated the significance of this research from the data collection. The overall effect is that this study has the potential to generate increased interest in academia and business. The major distinction of this research was the establishment of a strong relationship between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction for Faculty and non-faculty in the academic settings. This study included three research questions pertaining to the relation of Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction for Faculty and Non-Faculty. This study provided significant insight into the practices and experiences of servant leaders in the academic area, and findings of this study support the beliefs of Greenleaf.

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