

The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Executive Organizations of Guilan Province

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ABSTRACT

Now that the importance of citizens as one of the important resources of the organization is realized, their behavior can also be of great importance. That is why many researchers have analyzed citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior is a set of voluntary and optional behaviors which are not part of individual's official duties. However, they are carried out and lead to effective improvement of tasks and roles at the organization. Moreover, research has shown that helping the growth and success of followers is a kind of servant leadership in order to trigger organizational citizenship behavior. It is said that servant leadership predicts organizational citizenship behavior. Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. According to what was said, four hypotheses were formed: there's a relationship between dimensions of servant leadership (service, humility, trusty, kindness) and organizational citizenship behavior. The population consisted of all Guilan province executive organizations, and the simple random sampling method was used. Questionnaire was used as the instrument making use of field data collection method. In order to test the hypotheses Pearson Correlation Coefficient and regression were used with the help of SPSS software. In the end all hypotheses were confirmed.

KEYWORDS: Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Servant Leadership, Executive Organizations, Guilan province

INTRODUCTION

The totally changed conditions, increased competition, and necessity of organizations to be effective has pointed out the need for a valuable generation of employees. Today's organizations are in need of people who are willing to challenge the existing norms, do not accept the usual procedure of activities, and are responsible for their actions (Thompson, 1999).

It's obvious in the literature of management that organizations need individuals that would like to go beyond their official job requirements. Going beyond the job duties refers to organizational citizenship behavior which has drawn much attention from researchers in recent years (Morrison, 1994).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The early studies on organizational citizenship behavior mostly included the identification of responsibilities or behaviors of employees in an organization. However, they were ignored. Although, they were measured partially or were even neglected in traditional evaluations, these behaviors were effective in improving organizational effectiveness (Biestock et al., 2003). These actions which happen at the work place are defined as follows:

A set of voluntary and optional behaviors which are not part of individual's official duties; however, they are carried out and lead to effective improvement of tasks and roles at the organization (Appelbaum et al., 2004). Organ believes that organizational citizenship behavior is an individual and voluntary behavior which is not directly designed by the company's formal reward systems; however, it improves the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational performance (Cohen & Kol, 2004).

Organnames the five dimensions of citizenship behavior as follows: (Appelbaum et al., 2004)

Conscientiousness, Altruism, Civic virtue, Sportsmanship, Courtesy

The dimension of conscientiousness includes different instances, in which members' behaviors go beyond the minimum role requirements of the organization for the task. The second dimension of citizenship behavior, i.e. altruism, refers to beneficial behaviors such as building intimacy, empathy, and compassion between coworkers, which directly or indirectly helps those with work-related problems. The third dimension of citizenship behavior

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which is called civic virtues, includes behaviors like participating in extracurricular activities (esp. when not obligatory), supporting improvement and changes presented by organization managers, having a tendency to read books, and magazines to increase general information, and showing concern for the use of posters and announcements. Sportsmanship is the fourth dimension which signifies the tolerance of employees to unpleasant and unfavorable circumstances without complaining and discontent (Appelbaum et al., 2004).

The last dimension of citizenship behavior is courtesy. It indicates the sort of behavior one has with coworkers, supervisors, and audiences. Those individuals who treat others with courtesy have advanced citizenship behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2004).

Servant Leadership

Robert Greenleaf was the first among modern management theorists to speak of the concept of servant leadership. According to him a leader has to first consider the needs of others. There have been many others to approve servant leadership as a reliable and modern theory in the field of organization leadership. Servant leadership appreciates human equality, and seeks the individual improvement of the members in an organization (Russel, 2001).

Therefore, servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader (Laub, 2004).

Patterson (2003) presented a functional theory of servant leadership. Her defining the servant leadership virtues, which she calls constructs, has led to a great deal of research in the field. According to Patterson and Russel, servant leaders are those who focus on their followers, so that the followers are considered as one of the primary concerns of the organization and the organization concerns are secondary. According to Patterson servant leadership constructs are: Agapao love, Humility, Altruism, Trust, Vision, Service, and Empowerment.

Through moral use of power, servant leadership increases trust among employees. The followers of a servant leader are free, thoughtful, and independent (Vadell and Ewing, 2011, p. 249).

According to Greenleaf (1977) servant leaders put others' needs, wishes, and interests in their priority.

Servant leaders want to imply to their followers to move towards becoming healthier, more intelligent, and independent individuals, and grow to become more servant (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002, pp. 57-58).

Most types of leadership concentrate on the well-being of the organization, while in servant leadership the focus is on followers who are the most important (Kool and Dierendonck, 2012, p.423).

Servant leadership is not much about leading itself, but about serving as a leader (Senjaya and Peckrti, 2010, p. 645).

Servant leaders believe that it's their duty to keep in mind and consider all mental and spiritual well-being of those who are dependent on them. They want to create an environment in which employees can blossom; unlike oppressive leaders who are afraid of their employees' progress and development (Oner, 2012, p. 303).

In the present study, according to the conducted research in Iran to explain measurement of servant leadership, four constructs (service, humility, trust, and kindness) have been used. An effort has been made to present an instrument for the measurement of servant leadership, according to the literature and the characteristics presented by various theorists and authors. In order to uncover the factors, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was used, and in the end the four mentioned constructs were attained (Gholipour and Hazrati, 2009, 5).

Servant Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Ehrhart (2004) showed that helping the growth and success of the followers is a way in which servant leadership can influence them in showing organizational citizenship behavior. It has been said that servant leadership predicts organizational citizenship behavior. Greenleaf, who proposed the theoretical framework of this topic, believed that whoever serves his/her followers will nurture people who serve others. Therefore, a leader is like a model to his/her followers and organizational citizenship behavior is a consequence of this model (Vondey, 2010).

Research has shown that leadership behaviors play an important role in influencing organizational citizenship behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The studies conducted by Dirks and Ferrin indicated that the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior is 0.72 (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). Studies have shown positive correlation between organizational citizenship behavior and satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983) and commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). It has also been shown that both satisfaction and commitment have a positive relationship with servant leadership (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The results of the research carried out by Barbuto and Wheeler indicated that servant leadership is a good predictor for the quality of leader-member interaction, and that servant leadership (like transformational leadership) has a positive relationship with organizational citizenship behavior. Ehrhart also found that there's a positive significant relationship (0.60) between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior at the level of unit (Ehrhart, 2004). According to these views, the individuals who have servant leaders tend to imitate their behavior in interactions which results in a high

level of organizational citizenship behavior. Smith et al. found that supportive leadership is the beginning of a model of social (and not conventional) exchanges, the result of which appears in the positive interaction between leader and follower and among followers (Trivers, 2009).

Research Hypotheses

According to the discussion in the theoretical framework and literature of the study, the following hypotheses were made:

1. There’s a relationship between service and organizational citizenship behavior.
2. There’s a relationship between humility and organizational citizenship behavior.
3. There’s a relationship between trust and organizational citizenship behavior.
4. There’s a relationship between kindness and organizational citizenship behavior.
5. There’s a relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior.

METHODOLOGY

The present research is descriptive-analytical in terms of design and functional in terms of objective. The research population consists of all executive organizations in Guilan province, the total number of which (with the exception of banks, insurance companies, and higher education institutes) is 60 organizations. Out of these, 49 were chosen as the sample. Eight questionnaires were distributed among employees in each organization. The simple random sampling method was used in the study.

Field technique and questionnaire were used for collecting data. The five-point Likert scale design was used as follows:

Table 1.Linguistic qualifiers and numerical values of a Likert item in servant leadership questionnaire.

Overall range	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
Numerical values	5	4	3	2	1

Table 2.Linguistic qualifiers and numerical values of a likert item in organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire

Overall range	very much	much	moderately	a little	very little
Numerical values	5	4	3	2	1

The servant leadership questionnaire is a standard questionnaire which is localized in Iran which after analysis four factors (service, humility, trust, and kindness) were uncovered for servant leadership (Gholipour and Hazrati, 2009, 5). The organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire is also standard and has been used by researchers before. Despite that, in order to make sure, based on expert views, it was checked for content validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was also checked using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The amount of this coefficient for servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior is 0.868 and 0.929 respectively. This is an indication of the questionnaires’ high reliability.

For data analysis descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and variance), inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient, and regression), and SPSS software have been used.

Table 3. Description of the variables

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Service	49	1.17	4.33	2.6803	.62900	.396
Humility	49	1.25	5.00	2.6684	.87595	.767
Trust	49	1.40	4.60	3.0714	.71385	.510
Kindness	49	1.40	5.00	3.0694	.96311	.928
Servant leadership	49	1.55	4.19	2.8724	.64976	.422
Organizational citizenship behavior	49	1.85	4.85	3.3297	.73397	.539
Valid N (listwise)	49					

Table 4. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for normal distribution.

		Organizational citizenship behavior
N		49
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3.3297
	Std. Deviation	.73397
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.105
	Positive	.105
	Negative	-.050
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.732
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.657

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

According to table 4, since the significance level is above 0.05 (sig=0.657) the distribution of data is normal and parametric tests like Pearson correlation coefficient can be used.

Table 5. Testing hypotheses using Pearson correlation coefficient

		Organizational citizenship behavior	service	humility	trust	kindness
Organizational citizenship behavior	Pearson Correlation	1	.725*	.628*	.751*	.693*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	49	49	49	49	49
service	Pearson Correlation	.725*	1	.457*	.533*	.498*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.001	.000	.000
	N	49	49	49	49	49
humility	Pearson Correlation	.628*	.457*	1	.506*	.493*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001		.000	.000
	N	49	49	49	49	49
trust	Pearson Correlation	.751*	.533*	.506*	1	.812*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	49	49	49	49	49
kindness	Pearson Correlation	.693*	.498*	.493*	.812*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	49	49	49	49	49

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

According to table 5, since the significance level is lower than 0.05 and equal 0, there is a significant and direct relationship in all tests. Therefore, there was no evidence of hypotheses being rejected. The correlation coefficient was 0.725 between service and organizational citizenship behavior, 0.628 between humility and organizational citizenship behavior, 0.751 between trust and organizational citizenship behavior, and 0.693 between kindness and organizational citizenship behavior.

Table 6. Multivariate regression test

Method	input variables	model
Stepwise	Trust	1
	service	2
	Humility	3

Table 7. The summary of regression model between the dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.751 ^a	.564	.555	6.36473	
2	.843 ^b	.711	.699	5.23627	
3	.866 ^c	.750	.733	4.93131	2.013

- a. Predictors: (Constant), trust
- b. Predictors: (Constant), trust, service
- c. Predictors: (Constant), trust, service, humility
- d. Dependent Variable: organizational citizenship behavior

Table 8. Linear regression between the dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	12.446	4.056		3.069	.004
	<u>Trust</u>	1.004	.129	.751	7.802	.000
2	(Constant)	3.549	3.809		.932	.356
	<u>Trust</u>	.681	.125	.510	5.445	.000
	<u>service</u>	1.167	.241	.453	4.842	.000
3	(Constant)	2.812	3.599		.781	.439
	<u>Trust</u>	.566	.126	.424	4.503	.000
	<u>Service</u>	1.009	.235	.392	4.296	.000
	<u>Humility</u>	.319	.122	.235	2.620	.012

- a. Dependent Variable: Organizational citizenship behavior

According to the previous tables, since the amount of d (Durbin-Watson Statistic) is 2.013 which is in the range of 1.5 to 2.5, the assumption of no correlation between errors is not rejected and regression can be used.

To test the fifth hypothesis, i.e. determining the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, stepwise regression has been used. As the tables indicate regression analysis has 3 steps, i.e. three variables of trust, service, and humility enter the equation whose correlation (R) in the first step is 0.751. The Coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.564 in this step. In the second step, with the addition of the variable of service, the amounts of R and R^2 change to 0.843 and 0.711 respectively. In the third step, with the addition of humility as the third variable, R and R^2 change to 0.866 and 0.750 respectively. This coefficient of determination signifies that 75 percent of changes in the dependent variable (organizational citizenship behavior) are explained by servant leadership (trust, service, and humility). Moreover, the correlation table shows that the variables of trust and service are significant at the 99% confidence level ($\text{sig}=0.000$), and humility is significant at the 95% confidence level ($\text{sig}=0.012$). This value was more than 0.05 for kindness, which is why it was not included in the regression equation. Based on the value of B in the correlation table, the regression equation can be written as follows:
 $Y=2.812+0.566(\text{trust}) +1.009(\text{service}) +0.319(\text{humility})$

According to the attained β , the standard deviation of the dependent variable (organizational citizenship behavior) changes 0.424 of unit, per unit change in the standard deviation of trust. This amount is 0.392 per unit change in the standard deviation of service, and 0.235 per unit change in the standard deviation of humility.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A study was carried out by Michelle Vondey in 2010 in America under the title of “The Relationships among Servant Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Person-Organization Fit, and Organizational Identification”. The sample size was 140. Statistical analysis was carried out using hierarchical regression. The results showed that servant leadership has a relationship with organizational citizenship behavior, and this relationship is moderated by person-organization fit and organizational identification. The present study is in this respect in line with the aforementioned study.

Another study was conducted by Geoffrey A. Trivers in 2009 at the Ph.D. level in Business Administration with the guidance of Russell W. Wright Ph.D. at Argosy University, under the title of “Servant leadership's effects on trust and organizational citizenship behaviors”. The population consisted of all organizations at the north-west of USA and the sample size was 134. The findings showed strong positive relationship among the research variables. Furthermore, trust was shown to completely mediate the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. The results of this study are similar to the present study regarding the significant relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior.

In a research carried out by Khan and Rashid (2012), the results showed that the relationships among organizational citizenship behavior, leadership style variables, organizational justice, organizational commitment, and organizational culture are significant; and among the variables organizational commitment is the most effective in explaining organizational citizenship behavior. The results of this research are in line with the present study regarding the relationship between leadership style and organizational citizenship behavior.

Applied Suggestions

The suggestions of the study according to the results and the intended objectives are as follows:

According to the mean of questions for each variable and also existence of significant relationships in hypotheses it is suggested that managers be chosen and trained so as to consider serving their employees as their main and important duties, and be good models in terms of serving others, without expecting to be rewarded or appreciated, encouraging others to give good service. The managers should help others even if they are not benefited, and even if they sacrifice their own interests for the sake of others. They should also share their power and authority with others; show no interest in self-applause; practice humility in their behavior; and respect all employees including those who dissent.

Moreover, managers should provide a detailed vision for the organization with the help of their employees, and include the employees' perspective in this vision. Managers should look upon their employees as effective factors in the future of the organization, and by putting trust in them increase their commitment to the organization. They should ask for opinions when needed and allow the workers to make decisions themselves, to improve responsibility among them.

Such managers should show kindness, empathy, and care for employees in their behavior; defend their rights in the organization; and act calmly in disturbance.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Researches

One of the limitations of this study is that the focus is only on executive (governmental) organizations; therefore the results cannot be generalized to other organizations, institutions and companies with different atmosphere, and competitive structures. Moreover, the study was carried out in governmental organizations, and cannot be generalized to organizations of the private sector. The aim of the present study was to determine the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. The results showed that there's a strong direct relationship between these variables. Therefore, it is suggested that the research be conducted in larger populations for confirmation or rejection of the results. Furthermore, the study can be carried out employing demographic variables.

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