Practicing Servant Leadership in Improving Team Effectiveness: Critical Success Factors and Impact on Organizational Performance

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The application of servant leadership in organizations has been shown to have a significant impact on improving team effectiveness. Servant leadership focuses on empowering, serving and developing team members with the aim of creating a more collaborative and supportive work atmosphere. This research examines various factors that determine the success of servant leadership implementation, including leader readiness and commitment, a supportive organizational culture, team member engagement, and effective communication. These factors interrelate to create an optimal work environment for improved team performance. The application of servant leadership can reduce tension, increase mutual trust, and encourage team members to collaborate better to achieve common goals. However, the challenges faced are mainly related to differences in existing organizational cultures, where more hierarchical or authoritarian organizations may have difficulty adopting this leadership style. It is important for organizations to build a culture that supports individual empowerment and openness in communication. Leaders need to set a consistent example of being concerned for the well-being of team members, as well as developing good interpersonal skills. Effective implementation of servant leadership will contribute to improved team performance and long-term success of the organization.

INTRODUCTION

Today, most organizations show a shift from traditional authoritarian leadership styles to more inclusive and servant approaches, one of which is servant leadership. Servant leadership emphasizes leaders who focus on serving the needs of their team members, guiding them to grow, and paying attention to employee well-being and satisfaction. Leaders with this style strive to create a safe, open and collaborative environment, where every member feels valued and listened. This concept is increasingly being applied in various organizational sectors as it is proven to increase motivation, job satisfaction, and overall team performance. A focus on individual empowerment and attention to employee well-being helps create a more positive and productive work environment. Leaders who prioritize empathy, listening, and empowerment of team members are considered more effective for building better relationships and creating a positive work environment (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014). Servant leadership is increasingly considered an effective model in the modern world of work.

What happens in the application of servant leadership in organizations shows promising results for improving teamwork and performance. This leadership style emphasizes the importance of serving team members through an empathetic and caring approach. Servant leaders act as active listeners who truly understand the needs and aspirations of their team members. Several studies show that by adopting servant leadership principles, such as listening, personal development, and paying attention to team needs, organizations are able to build a collaborative work culture. Servant leaders who focus on empowering individuals within the team can improve communication, increase employee engagement, and strengthen bonds between team members (Gašková, 2020). As a result, teams that feel valued and supported tend to perform better, work more efficiently, and are more committed to organizational goals. The strengthened bonds between team members and increased sense of engagement prove that servant leadership is an effective model for creating a healthy work environment.

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While servant leadership has great potential to improve team performance, its implementation in organizations does not always go smoothly. One of the main issues is resistance to change, especially in organizations that are used to a more authoritarian or hierarchical traditional leadership style. This transition is not just a matter of changing how to lead, but also involves changing the values and norms that have been deeply rooted in the organizational structure. Leaders who are used to a more controlling approach and unilateral decisions may find it difficult to adapt to a more supportive and servant role. The servant role in the context of leadership is sometimes perceived as a form of weakness or loss of authority (Ferch, 2011). This can lead to a misunderstanding or disagreement with the basic principles of servant leadership, which ultimately hinders the effective implementation of this leadership style (Greenleaf, 2002).

There are challenges in terms of training and developing leaders who adopt servant leadership. Not all leaders have the skills or desire to focus on the needs and development of others. Servant leadership requires leaders to have emotional skills and the ability to listen, empathize, and guide their teams (Harwiki, 2013). Servant leadership requires leaders to be facilitators who are able to understand and support the growth of individuals in their team. However, some leaders may lack in these aspects and focus more on achieving short-term goals rather than attending to the long-term needs of the team. An excessive focus on short-term results can lead leaders to neglect aspects of personal development and team member well-being, which are actually the foundation of the servant leadership approach. Deficiencies in these skills can hinder the effectiveness of servant leadership, reducing the positive impact that the approach can have (Liden et al., 2008).

Another issue that can arise is the different perceptions of the leader's role in the team. The implementation of servant leadership can be confusing for team members who are used to more assertive leadership and clear direction. Some team members may see this approach as a lack of strong leadership, or even feel underappreciated because the leader does not directly give clear instructions or decisions (de Waal & Sivro, 2012). Being unclear about the boundaries between serving and leading can lead to confusion in terms of who should make the final decision or be responsible for the final outcome. They may feel that they are not getting clear enough direction, which can reduce their sense of security and certainty at work. This can lead to internal conflict or confusion about carrying out assigned tasks (Stone et al., 2004).

The application of servant leadership in organizations needs to be observed because this approach offers the potential to improve team dynamics and increase performance significantly (Pawar et al., 2020). In an increasingly complex and competitive business world, leadership quality is key to achieving organizational goals (McCann et al., 2014). Servant leadership that prioritizes the well-being and development of individuals in the team has the potential to create a more collaborative work environment, increase motivation, and strengthen employee loyalty. This approach encourages leaders to not only focus on achieving organizational goals, but also on how to support their members to develop professionally and personally. Leaders who focus on serving the needs of the team can improve relationships between members and encourage them to work more efficiently and deliver better results. Observing how the application of servant leadership affects team performance can provide important insights into the effectiveness of this approach in the modern workplace. Understanding how servant leadership is applied and affects team performance can help organizations to assess the potential and challenges of implementing this approach in the future.

The urgency to examine the application of servant leadership also arises from the organizational challenge of creating a productive and sustainable culture. In many organizations, there is still a tendency to adopt a more authoritarian leadership style, which is not always in line with the evolving needs of more complex teams. Given the positive impact that servant leadership can have on building healthier relationships between team members, as well as improving long-term performance, it is important to understand more about how this leadership style is implemented and what the obstacles are. Through observation, organizations can gain a clearer picture of the potential of implementing servant leadership to improve team performance and support the achievement of organizational goals more effectively.

The purpose of this research is to analyze how the application of servant leadership can affect the dynamics of teamwork in organizations. This research also aims to explore the extent to which servant leadership can improve team performance, both in the short and long-term. This research focuses on identifying the factors that determine the successful implementation of servant leadership to improve team effectiveness, hoping to provide useful insights for organizations to adopt this leadership style more effectively.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a literature study approach that aims to review and analyze various relevant literature regarding the application of servant leadership to improve team performance. This approach allows researchers to gather extensive information from various sources, including scientific articles, books, research reports, and journals related to the topic. The literature study allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of the concept of servant leadership, as well as analyze how the concept is applied in various organizations to influence team dynamics and overall performance. This approach provides a strong foundation for further research and provides a more comprehensive theoretical insight into the topic under research (Northouse, 2018).

In this research, the researcher will focus on analyzing the literature that discusses the impact of servant leadership on team effectiveness in various organizational sectors. The sources used will include leadership theories, as well as existing empirical research on the application of servant leadership style. One of the main sources that will be analyzed is the research by Laub (1999), who developed a servant leadership model that can be used to assess its impact on organizations. Related literature will also include studies that address how servant leadership affects job satisfaction, commitment, and performance of team members in different types of organizations, both public and private sectors (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

This literature review approach will also include a discussion of the factors that influence the successful implementation of servant leadership in organizations. The researcher will identify various factors to consider, such as the culture of the organization, the leader's level of readiness to adopt this leadership style, and team members' acceptance of the change in leadership style. References used will include previous studies that explore how these factors play a role in influencing the effectiveness of servant leadership to improve team performance (Spears, 2010). By analyzing these various sources, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how servant leadership can be effectively implemented in organizations and its impact on team performance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The Effect of Servant Leadership Implementation on Teamwork Dynamics

The application of servant leadership can significantly affect the dynamics of teamwork in organizations. The concept of servant leadership emphasizes that leaders should act as servants to their team members, with the primary goal of supporting and empowering them to develop professionally and personally. This approach encourages leaders to listen, direct, and attend to the needs of individuals within the team, leading to improved relationships between team members. With empowerment-focused leaders, communication between team members becomes more open, creating stronger bonds and high mutual trust, which is important for building effective teamwork (Greenleaf, 2002).

Servant leadership can change the pattern of interaction within a team by emphasizing the importance of collaboration and togetherness. Servant leaders act more as facilitators who encourage active participation and contributions from all team members, which reduces reliance on unilateral decisions from the leader. This approach creates space for every team member to participate in the decision-making process, which in turn increases ownership of the team's work and encourages more effective collaboration. This allows team members to feel more valued and motivated to work together towards a common goal. Servant leadership can reduce feelings of injustice within the team, as leaders tend to be fair to distribute opportunities and give equal attention to each member, which further enhances teamwork (Liden et al., 2008).

The application of servant leadership also encourages leaders to make room for team members' self-development, which increases their sense of responsibility for the team's work. Servant leaders are more supportive of their members' career development needs and provide opportunities for them to develop to their full potential. This creates a more inclusive and positive work environment, which is critical to improving the dynamics of collaboration. Team members feel that they are given opportunities to develop so they tend to be more engaged in team work and more committed to working together to achieve organizational goals (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

The application of servant leadership has a lot of potential to create a more positive work dynamic, but on the other hand, it also presents its own challenges in building and maintaining effective cooperation in the team. Not all team members may be used to more "gentle" leadership approach or giving more room for their autonomy. Some individuals may feel that they lack clear direction or feel that their leaders give them too much space and therefore lack assertiveness in making decisions. This may cause discomfort or uncertainty in performing their works. Implementing servant leadership requires a careful balance between giving team members freedom and maintaining clear direction to achieve common goals (Stone et al., 2004).

The application of servant leadership can also increase team members' engagement in decision-making. Servant leaders, who focus more on serving and supporting team members, provide space for each individual to speak up, share ideas, and contribute to the decision process. When leaders encourage open dialog and listen to input from all team members, team members feel more valued and participate more in the decision process (Putra & Mardikaningsih, 2022). These shared decisions tend to be better accepted by the whole team, as they feel part of the process (McCann et al., 2014). This contributes to better cooperation as each team member has a sense of responsibility for the decisions taken, which further strengthens the team's attachment to the organizational goals (Van Dierendonck, 2011). A work environment with active collaboration increases trust between team members and leaders (Putra et al., 2020; Hariani & Irfan, 2022).

The application of servant leadership also affects how teams handle conflict. In teams led by a servant leader, conflicts can be resolved more constructively as the leader focuses more on listening to all parties and finding solutions that meet the needs of all team members (de Waal & Sivro, 2012). Servant leaders tend to deal with conflict with a calm and empathetic approach, preferring to first listen to various points of view before making a decision. With a more empathic approach, servant leaders help create a culture that is more open and accepting of differences, which allows teams to manage conflict more effectively. Servant leaders see conflict as a problem, but as an opportunity to improve relationships and increase understanding between team members (Hunter, 2004).

Overall, the application of servant leadership has a significant positive impact on the dynamics of teamwork. By emphasizing the empowerment of team members, servant leadership encourages individuals to take initiative and actively contribute to the decision-making process. This approach increases the sense of individual responsibility, and creates mutual trust among team members. When leaders focus on developing each member's potential, they create an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to give their best (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014). The increased open communication that characterizes servant leadership allows team members to share ideas, feedback, and concerns without fear of judgment. This creates a more inclusive and collaborative work atmosphere, where every voice is heard and valued. As such, teams can work more efficiently and harmoniously, and are more committed to achieving common goals, ultimately improving overall team performance (Harwiki, 2013).

Organizations that adopt servant leadership principles will benefit in the long-term, both in terms of improving team performance and building a healthier organizational culture. Research shows that organizations that implement servant leadership tend to have higher employee retention rates, as team members feel more satisfied and engaged in their work. A healthy organizational culture resulting from servant leadership can reduce stress levels and conflict in the workplace, creating a more positive and productive environment. Spears (2010) emphasizes that servant leadership focuses on short-term results, and on developing strong and sustainable relationships within the team. By building a solid foundation through trust and collaboration, organizations can better face emerging challenges and adapt to rapid changes in the business environment. The implementation of servant leadership is not just a managerial strategy, and is an investment in the sustainable development of human resources and organizational culture.

Impact of Servant Leadership to improve Team Performance

Servant leadership is known for its approach that focuses on the empowerment and well-being of team members, with the ultimate goal of improving overall team performance. Across different types of organizations, this approach can improve team performance by creating a more collaborative and supportive work environment (Coetzer et al., 2017). Servant leaders lead by giving direction, and listening, facilitating growth, and prioritizing the needs of team members. This leads to increased motivation and commitment of team members, which can further improve productivity and organizational performance (Greenleaf, 2002). In various studies, it has been proven that a service-oriented leadership style can increase the sense of individual responsibility, which is a key factor for improving team performance.

In the business sector, servant leadership can foster improved team performance by reducing tension and improving communication among team members. Servant leaders focus on listening and providing the support needed by team members, which creates mutual trust and openness. With better communication channels in place, problems can be resolved faster and more efficiently, leading to improved performance. Several studies have shown that teams led by a servant leader perform better because team members feel more valued and empowered to make maximum contributions to organizational goals (Liden et al., 2008).

In non-profit or public service organizations, servant leadership can also have a positive impact on team performance. These organizations often face challenges in terms of limited human resources and budget. However, with servant leadership, team members are encouraged to work more efficiently and with high morale, despite limited resources. Servant leaders in this sector can improve team morale by paying more attention to individual development and the social goals of the organization, which strengthens the team's commitment to work better to achieve greater goals. Servant leaders do not just lead by instruction, but by example and genuine concern for the well-being and growth of their members. This leads to more maximum performance improvement to achieve more altruistic organizational goals (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

On a broader level, the application of servant leadership in organizations can be instrumental to building a more inclusive and participatory organizational culture. In organizations that have a collaborative culture, team members feel more supported and valued, which increases cooperation and interaction between individuals (McCann et al., 2014). This leadership style emphasizes values such as empathy, listening, and empowerment, which are highly relevant in creating an open and collaborative work environment. With mutual trust, team members will be more likely to collaborate, share ideas, and work together to achieve organizational goals. Research conducted by Spears (2010) shows that servant leaders can create a culture that supports diversity and collaboration, which further contributes to better team performance. A culture of mutual respect and support can reduce harmful conflicts and increase innovation through a more open exchange of ideas (Hariani, 2021).

However, it is important to note that the success of servant leadership to improve team performance depends on the leader's approach, and on the readiness of the organizational culture to accept such leadership style. In organizations that are already accustomed to a more authoritarian or hierarchical leadership approach, the shift towards servant leadership may require greater time and effort to be accepted (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014). This change is not just about changing the leader's communication style, but also involves transforming the overall culture of the organization. Some research suggests that in some organizations, the implementation of servant leadership requires significant cultural change, which can face barriers such as resistance to change or uncertainty in terms of leader and follower roles (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Organizations that have been more open to leadership styles based on empowerment and collaboration tend to see faster results to improve team performance. Servant leaders, with a focus on the development of team members, serve as guides and mentors who facilitate the achievement of the maximum potential of individuals in the team. Leaders who encourage continuous learning and development will create teams that are more competent and more committed to achieving organizational goals (Stone et al., 2004). The application of servant leadership can accelerate the improvement of team performance if applied within an organizational culture that supports individual empowerment.

Overall, the application of servant leadership can have a significant positive impact on team performance in various types of organizations, whether in the business, non-profit, or public sectors. This leadership style emphasizes the importance of listening to and understanding the needs of team members, as well as providing genuine concern for their well-being. With this approach, servant leaders create a collaborative and supportive work environment, where each individual feels valued and motivated to contribute to their full potential (Gašková, 2020). Research shows that when team members feel heard and cared for, they tend to show higher levels of engagement, leading to increased productivity and overall team performance. Servant leadership also encourages individual empowerment, where leaders give team members the opportunity to take initiative and take responsibility for their tasks (de Waal & Sivro, 2012). This increases the sense of belonging, and develops team members' skills and confidence, which are critical to achieving organizational goals (Harwiki, 2013).

Although challenges in the implementation and acceptance of this leadership style remain, the results that can be achieved in terms of improved performance and team satisfaction make servant leadership an effective option for increasing organizational productivity. Such challenges may include resistance to changes in organizational culture, lack of understanding of servant leadership principles, and difficulty in balancing servant leadership with high demands for results. However, with strong commitment from top management and adequate training for leaders and team members, these challenges can be overcome. Organizations that successfully implement servant leadership often report improvements in job satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, and increased innovation, all of which contribute to long-term success.

Organizations can improve team performance and create a more positive and sustainable work culture by adopting servant leadership principles, which will ultimately support the achievement of their strategic goals.

Factors Determining the Successful Implementation of Servant Leadership in Team Effectiveness

The successful implementation of servant leadership to improve team effectiveness is highly dependent on several interrelated factors, both in terms of individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole. One of the main factors is the readiness and commitment of the leader to adopt this leadership approach. A servant leader must be able to put the interests of team members above their own, listen attentively, and provide ongoing support and coaching. Leaders who are willing to adapt to this leadership style will influence the team dynamics and encourage higher mutual trust and commitment among team members (Greenleaf, 2002).

The second factor that plays an important role is organizational culture. Organizations that have a culture that supports empowerment, collaboration, and openness will be better equipped to accept and implement servant leadership. A culture that prioritizes inclusive values and values individual contributions will allow servant leaders to more effectively engage team members in decision-making and achieving common goals (Harwiki, 2013). Conversely, in organizations that tend to promote rigid hierarchical structures or cultures that are less supportive of diversity, the application of servant leadership can be difficult. A culture that is open to change and innovation strongly supports the implementation of servant leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

The third factor is team member engagement and participation. Servant leadership will be more successful if team members feel empowered and engaged in decision-making. In teams led with this approach, members feel valued and are given opportunities to grow, both professionally and personally. This can increase their sense of responsibility towards achieving the team's goals, as they feel they have more of a role in the success. Linden et al. (2008) explain this active participation allows teams to work more efficiently and more productively, which contributes directly to increased team effectiveness.

The fourth important factor is effective communication between leaders and team members. Servant leaders must be able to establish open and transparent communication channels, where every team member feels comfortable to share ideas, problems, and solutions. Effective communication enhances a shared understanding of the team's goals, challenges, and each member's role in the team. This is critical to creating harmonious cooperation and avoiding unneeded conflict. A good servant leader will ensure that all voices are heard, creating an environment where every team member feels valued and supported (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

The leader competency factor also affects the successful implementation of servant leadership. Servant leadership does not only rely on good intentions or the desire to serve, but also requires concrete abilities, both in technical and emotional aspects. A competent servant leader must have technical skills in the field being managed, and strong interpersonal and emotional skills. The ability to understand the needs and aspirations of team members, as well as provide appropriate coaching, is key to creating a strong relationship between the leader and the team. Leaders who are able to inspire and guide team members to reach their full potential will be able to improve overall team performance and effectiveness (Stone et al., 2004). Servant leaders who have a combination of strong technical and emotional skills will be able to create teams that are more productive, innovative and effective in facing daily work challenges.

External factors such as market demands and industry developments also play a role in the successful implementation of servant leadership. In a fast-changing environment, teams led with a servant leadership style tend to be more flexible and able to adapt rapidly to changes. Today's world of work continues to evolve rapidly, influenced by globalization, technological advances, and changing consumer preferences. Servant leaders who support self-development and continuous learning for team members will ensure that the team remains relevant to industry developments and can innovate to meet new challenges. In this way, servant leadership can help teams remain effective in the face of external uncertainty (Spears, 2010).

Finally, the motivation and job satisfaction of team members also affect the success of servant leadership implementation. Servant leadership can increase job satisfaction by creating an environment that values each individual and provides opportunities for self-development (Choudhary et al., 2013). Leaders who show concern for the emotional and professional well-being of team members will create stronger bonds between team members and the organization. A sense of satisfaction and being valued by team members will motivate them to work harder and effectively to achieve team goals can improving the overall performance in the organization (Hunter, 2004).

Overall, the successful implementation of servant leadership to improve team effectiveness depends largely on a combination of interrelated factors. First, the leader's readiness to serve is a fundamental element in servant leadership. Servant leaders focus on achieving organizational goals, and on the development and well-being of team members. This creates an environment where team members feel valued and supported, which in turn increases their motivation and commitment to the task at hand. A supportive organizational culture is important to create an atmosphere conducive to the implementation of servant leadership. A culture that encourages collaboration, mutual respect and openness will facilitate positive interactions between leaders and team members. Open communication is also key to ensuring that all team members feel comfortable to share their ideas, feedback, and concerns. With effective communication, leaders can better understand the needs and expectations of team members so that they can provide appropriate and relevant support (Gašková, 2020).

Leader competence and team member engagement also play an important role in the success of servant leadership. A competent leader has the needed knowledge and skills to lead, and is able to inspire and motivate team members to achieve common goals. Engagement of team members in the decision-making and planning process is also very important, as this provides a sense of ownership and responsibility for the team's work. When team members feel engaged, they tend to be more committed to actively contributing and collaborating with their peers. Organizations that want to implement servant leadership need to pay complete attention to all these factors. By creating a supportive environment, facilitating open communication, and ensuring leaders and team members have needed competencies, organizations can significantly improve team effectiveness. Successful implementation of servant leadership will result in more productive and effective teams, and create a harmonious and supportive working atmosphere, ultimately contributing to the long-term success of the organization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description that has been presented, it can be concluded that the application of servant leadership in organizations has great potential to improve team effectiveness. Servant leadership focuses on empowering, serving, and developing team members, which can create a more collaborative, harmonious, and supportive work atmosphere. Factors such as leader readiness and commitment,

supportive organizational culture, team member engagement, effective communication, as well as leader competence, have been shown to play an important role in determining the success of servant leadership implementation. With greater attention to the well-being and development of team members, servant leaders can reduce tension, increase motivation, and create mutual trust, which directly contributes to improved overall team performance.

However, implementing servant leadership is not always easy and can face several challenges, especially in organizations with a more hierarchical or authoritarian culture. Servant leadership values such as empathy, openness, and participation may be considered weak or inefficient. Leaders who try to implement this style can experience challenges in building trust, especially when team members are used to receiving instructions from superiors in a top-down manner without much room for discussion. This change in leadership style can cause confusion, resistance, or even rejection if it is not accompanied by a thorough adjustment of the organizational culture. The successful implementation of servant leadership relies heavily on the readiness of the organizational culture to adapt to change and support a more inclusive and collaborative leadership style. On the other hand, organizations that already have a culture that is more open and supportive of individual empowerment will more easily benefit from this leadership approach. It is imperative for organizations to actively prepare an environment that supports the success of servant leadership through culture building, training, and effective communication.

The advice that can be given is that it is important for organizations to engage all parties in the culture change process, from top leaders to team members, to support the implementation of servant leadership. Transformation towards a more servant leadership style cannot be effective if it is only carried out by one layer of management. Leaders must set a clear example through consistent actions to pay attention to the needs of the team and build supportive relationships. To ensure success in improving team effectiveness, leaders need to develop good interpersonal and communication skills to better understand and meet the needs of team members. Organizations also need to provide space for team members to actively participate in decision-making and make maximum contributions towards achieving common goals. In the long-term, the successful implementation of servant leadership will contribute to the creation of teams that are more productive, innovative, and able to face the ever-evolving challenges in an increasingly complex world of work.

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