

Impact of Servant Leadership on Turnover Intentions in Banking Sector of Karachi

Jennifer Nerrissa Prakasch*, Muhammad Muzammil Ghayas

Iqra University, Karachi, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This research aims to study the impact of Servant Leadership (SL) and its dimensions, namely Organizational Stewardship (OS), Persuasive Mapping (PM), Emotional Healing (EH), Altruistic Calling (AC) and Wisdom (WIS) on Turnover Intention (TI). For completion of the research, the data were extracted from 201 employees of the banking sector. Multiple Regression Analysis was used as the statistical technique. The study suggests the presence of a significant relationship between servant leadership dimensions and turnover intention. Hence, it is concluded that servant leadership plays significant role in determining the turnover intentions.

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*Address of Correspondence:
jennifer.prakasch@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of leadership has always been considered as an authoritarian concept as the first thing that comes under one's mind while thinking about the word leader is the authority. It is because of this reason that leaders are always thought to be all powerful and being the center of the power. Transactional leadership seems to be a perfect match with this age old concept of leadership. Yet twenty first century has brought so many changes to it that clearly defined the concepts of transformational leadership. Even the liaise for leadership is understandable as being careless is not a big deal at all. However, the term servant leadership is something that could not have been thought. It has been unimaginable to even to imagine about the term servant leadership just 30 years back.

A servant leadership concept developed by Robert Greenleaf in thought-provoking essay in year 1977. Scholars have adapted the concept of Servant Leadership in their research for analysis by taking Greenleaf's (1977) ideas for modifying analysis. Though this idea is mysterious, there seems a sensible credibleness that has reproduced augmented attention to this concept. The word "Servant" and "Leader" are generally used and taken as opposites, but Greenleaf (1977) gave these words' meaning together in a noteworthy way.

Term 'turnover' implies that employees' are permanently leaving to satisfy their will or terminating an employee - relationship with the organization. Researchers suitably characterized this term and used it for exchange of employees among the market; between the organizations, employments, and professions; amongst the circumstances of business jobs as well as joblessness (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). Turnover intention among employees signifies a disastrous situation for any business organization. It is because of the fact that on one hand, the turnover intentions among the employees makes it difficult for the business organizations to carry

forward its day to day operations and on the other hand it increases the recruitment and training costs. Hence the turnover intentions among the employees are a serious threat to the business organizations. Therefore, the businesses are in constant search to find out the ways through which the turnover intentions among their employees can be reduced.

Service leadership influences employees who meet their basic needs and treat their followers in a reasonable way (Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008). Subsequently, from end to end the process of social exchange explains that the follower of the servant leaders do not intentionally leave their organization.

As per the social exchange theory, followers can see the leader's responsibility for their needs and prosperity as a corresponding reaction one deserves (Blau, 1964). The commitment of the followers and the promise to remain as an individual of the leader's team instead of quitting can reflect the "give-back" for a social exchange, i.e. positive in outcomes (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010a; Liden, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2004). Hence, the research paper pursues to explain and clarify the association link among the two variables in the sector i.e., of banking in Karachi.

1.1. Problem Statement

Since turnover intentions are considered as a vital source of stress for the business organizations, therefore many researches have been conducted on the topic of turnover intention that consist of both circumstances of intentionally or unintentionally quitting (Cummann *et al.*, 1979, Cotton *et al.*, 1984, Porter *et al.*, 1973). Some have found supervision in being a predictor of turnover intentions by concluding it well through their study (Zahra, Iran, Mir, & Chishti, 2013). Moreover, various researches have been conducted on leadership (Cheng *et al.*, 2004; Silin, 1976; Westwood, 1997) as well. A few researchers (Dirk, 2011; Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004) and professional scholars have studied the concept of servant leadership in their research, the majority of them have followed the intriguing concepts of Greenleaf (1977), on the grounds that this was the first study that developed the term "Servant Leadership". Some researchers (Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009) have earlier studied both servant leadership and turnover intention together. However, no such research has been found in this predefined sector, i.e., banking sector of Karachi, therefore the study's aim is to explain the association between the two variables.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Background

As stated in social exchange theory, workforces tend to establish relationships in the workplace. The theory suggests, social exchange relationships focus on the obligations, connections and identification of workers with their leaders, previous research proposed using the organization's commitment to functionalize the social exchange relationship of employees with their employer (Bishop & Scott, 2000).

Employees who supposed their leaders as exhibiting qualities of a servant leader were more cooperative towards helping employees with tasks and interpersonal relationship building difficulties. Secondly, servant leaders can reduce the withdrawal of employees from the organization by implementing a positive social exchange that encourages employees to remain in the workplace (Liden *et al.*, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010).

For middle-level employees, the feeling of being linked to the organization (that is, their commitment) depresses their interests when looking for another job. While we tend to consider the pressure on those in leadership roles, this finding seems to go hand in hand with the theory of social exchange. For example, in comparison with people who have an economic-based relation (for example, workers), people who have social exchange relationships are more satisfied with the sacrifices made for the benefit of the co-worker. Therefore, to the extent that the social exchanges between the middle managers and the organization have been reciprocal,

we tend to think that middle managers decide to "give back" by gradually becoming involved in the organization and as a result of this commitment, intentions to quit the organization have decreased (Mowday *et al.*, 1982).

2.2. Servant Leadership

The leadership concept had always been considered as an authoritarian concept as the first thing that comes under one's mind while thinking about the word leader is the authority. It is because of this reason that leaders are always thought to be all powerful and being the center of the power. Transactional leadership seems to be a perfect match with this age old concept of leadership. Yet twenty first century has brought so many changes to it that we are able to understand the concepts of transformational leadership as well. Even the liaison for leadership is understandable as being careless is not a big deal at all. However, the term servant leadership is something that could not have been thought. It has been unimaginable to even to imagine about the term servant leadership just 30 years back. The servant leadership concept was a thought-provoking impression developed by Greenleaf (1977) in an essay. Many scholars have adapted the concept of Servant Leadership in their research for analysis by taking Greenleaf's ideas for modifying analysis. Though this idea is mysterious, there seems a sensible credibility that has reproduced augmented attention to this concept. The words "Servant" and a "Leader" both are generally used and thought of as being contradictory in nature, but Greenleaf gave these words' meaning together in a noteworthy way. Robert Greenleaf consciously created these words in a very expressive manner and created the term paradoxical leadership of the servant. Robert Greenleaf stated, "The servant focuses on others rather than on themselves".

Another definition, describes servant leadership as "moving away from the use of power and position to serve others, the influence of being in a position where it can be used for change, modify and inspire those who are within someone's group of influence" (Nwogu, 2004; Rude, 2003).

Greenleaf (1977) devised the concept of "Servant leadership" and started a peaceful revolution of leadership that is progressively seen as a perfect form of this and there is an unprecedented eruption of interest within the exercise of service leadership. We tend to experience a hasty change in many organizations.

Servant leadership, the leader has to play the role of a servant first and then becomes the leader. It starts with the feeling of serving others. So the choice brings someone who aspires to lead. The best proof is: people are raised as individuals: when they are served, they become wiser and more willing to become a servant (Greenleaf, 1977).

The theory for Servant leader emphasizes on serving others and seeks to involve others in advanced cognitive process, generally based on moral, ethical, honest and understanding behavior towards others, and improves the development of workers while improving the organization's environment.

The Servant leader undertakes the role of servant to meet the need of others (Russell and Stone, 2002). This term is also defined as a service provider for individuals, moving towards their progress and prosperity to achieve goals for the betterment (Page and Wong, 2000).

An important aspect of the servant who distinguishes it from other forms of leadership is to show morals of equality, sincerity and integrity (Russell, 2001). As Ehrhart (2004) notes, leader's ethical conduct is an essential aspect of the employees. Servant are leaders, said to be as meeting high ethical standards, they must facilitate the company's path towards higher ethical standards. As employees claim that they meet high ethical standards, they must facilitate the company's path towards higher ethical standards. The moral level is a successive chain of command that reveals the progressive application and obliged towards ethics (Grisaffe and Jaramillo, 2007).

One main attribute that a servant leaders exhibit is: Humility - servants' leader concern for followers who are recognized for successes rather the leader who receives awards for his own success. A servant leader tries to

build an atmosphere in which followers have the right to say. In certain situation, a servant leader can create individual sacrifices to ensure the participation, prosperity and achievements of their followers. On the basis of certain cultures, followers tend to see leaders almost like themselves, however, taking on a diversified role in the work environment. However, in these cultures, the leader exhibits behavior and managerial processes that emphasize an appreciation. Another attribute of servant leader is his/her Vision - to have the vision together by means of ability to communicate the vision, influencing the followers, developing a mutual vision for the organization and the team. This dimension includes wisdom and persuasive mapping that focuses on transformative influencing, trustworthiness and the creation of value for the society. The important characteristic of servant leader is Service - this dimension includes growth, organization management, and followers' empowerment, having covenant relationship, morality, serving subordinates and putting them first. Servant leadership is just not defined as passive or invalid. It is characterized as "determinedly organized and liberally shared and never lost personal power" (Molyneaux, 2003). In addition, the servant leader hopes to encourage others to learn and plan future opportunities (Greenleaf, 1977/2002).

Though Robert K. Greenleaf developed this term in the 1970s, but it has been not yet studied enough, though still practiced in organizations (Spears, 2005). According to Robert Greenleaf, CEO's and employees played an important role in all institutions by trusting their institutions for the good of society.

2.3. Dimensions of Servant Leadership

Attributes of servant leader are well-defined below:

2.3.1. Altruistic Calling

Altruistic calling described as the fundamental choice of consciousness in serving others (Greenleaf, 1977). Effort of persuading others is positively influenced by the establishment for the implementing ideology of servant leadership in organizations (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Employees serve leaders and sacrifice their personal interests for the development of their team members (Bass, 2000; Graham, 1991).

2.3.2. Persuasive Mapping

Persuasive mapping describes it as to develop intellectual capacity and rational thinking for encouraging being thoughtful for others' (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders are extraordinary in persuasive planning because of it, they are capable enough in articulating issues and intellectualizing potentialities by sharing their views. They have all the mandatory knowledge by which they can help followers efficiently (Liden *et al.*, 2008).

2.3.3. Organizational Stewardship

Organizational Stewardship defines the degree to which leaders make strategies for their organization to have a positive impact on the community and work for the betterment of society (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The servant leaders usually demonstrate the sense of social responsibility towards the organization and its employees. This helps them in gaining cooperation from the employees. Hence, organizational stewardship arguably is the dimension of servant leadership.

2.3.4. Emotional Healing

Emotional healing describes how to enable the healing process and how to identify it. It also includes the capability to foster difficulties and traumatic spiritual recovery (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders are seen extremely emotional and are willing to be sensitive towards others (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Hence, emotional healing arguably is the dimension of servant leadership.

2.3.5. Wisdom

Wisdom describes the ability to obtain clues about the environment and recognition of the possible consequences and implementation of its observations (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders are observers and background in many contexts, which allows leaders to transform their knowledge and transmit it to others (Bierly *et al.*, 2000).

2.4. Turnover Intentions

Term 'turnover' implies that employees' are permanently leaving to satisfy their will or terminating an employee - relationship with the organization. Researchers suitably characterized this term and used it for exchange of employees among the market; between the organizations, employments, and professions; amongst the circumstances of business jobs as well as joblessness (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). Turnover intention among the employees is a disastrous situation for any business organization. It is because of the fact that on one hand, the turnover intentions among the employees makes it difficult for the business organizations to carry forward its day to day operations and on the other hand it increases the recruitment and training costs. Hence the turnover intentions among the employees are a serious threat to the business organizations. Therefore, the businesses are in constant search to find out the ways through which the turnover intentions among their employees can be reduced.

Employee turnover is reflected as a serious problem for many organizations and thus researcher regards this occurrence as a persistent disadvantage in the workplace that does not understand the explanations for which there is turnover (Ahmad & Omar, 2010). Turnover intention is defined as an acutely aware and deliberate choice to leave the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

Mobley's (1977) discussed model of the psychological method of job rotation, dissatisfaction at work leads to the denial of new ideas, since the termination is leading to satisfactory job for an individual. Several studies have determined job satisfaction as a key factor of turnover intentions (Griffeth *et al.*, 2000; Hom *et al.*, 1992).

2.5. Servant Leadership and Turnover Intentions

The servant leader believes that meeting the basic needs of their followers should be the top priority of the leader (Ehrhart 2004, Greenleaf 2002). Servant leader also believes that they are morally obliged to respond to the necessities of their followers and thereby place the betterment of the followers before their own needs and on the interest of workplace (Greenleaf, 1977). The servant leadership theory is based on leader's association contribution to creating a positive work environment in which employees develop a sense of additional attachment and loyalty towards the organization (Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D., 2008). Servant leadership affects the turnover intention through a moderate chain of events that involves the organization's perceived level of ethics, the individual organization fit, and the employee engagement in the organization.

Employees who are supervised and assisted by a servant leader, feels that he can count on his leader as an important resource in the time of stressful conditions (for example, interacting with a dissatisfied client). Being able to rely on this resource should also help employees deal directly with stress and reduce the intention of employee turnover (Babakus, E., Yavas, U., & Ashill, N. J., 2010).

Many researches have been conducted on turnover intentions (Cummann *et al.*, 1979, Cotton *et al.*, 1984, Porter *et al.*, 1973). Some have found supervision to be a predictor of turnover intentions (Zahra *et al.*, 2013). A few researchers (Dirk, 2011; Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004) and professional scholars have studied the concept of servant leadership in their research, the majority of them have followed the intriguing concepts of Greenleaf (1977), on the grounds that this was the first study that developed the term "Servant Leadership." Some researcher (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2009) has studied servant leadership and turnover intention

together. However, no such research has been conducted in the banking sector of Karachi, therefore, the study is to explain the relationship between the servant leadership and the turnover intentions in the banking sector of Karachi.

3. METHODOLOGY

An instrument was designed for measuring the variables used in the study. Twenty three items were adapted from Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) to measure the dimensions of the servant leadership and three items were adapted from Cumman *et al.*, (1979) to measure the turnover intentions. Hence, there were twenty six items in all related to the variables studied. Data were collected from 201 respondents of the banking sector. In this regard, purposive sampling technique is used and the data were collected only from those employees of the banking sector who have been working for the same bank and with the same supervisor for at-least 6 months. This is done because it takes time for the employees to understand the supervisor and decides whether he or she wants to quit or continue. Multiple Regression Analysis was used as the statistical technique and the following regression model has been developed for testing the hypothesis:

$$TI = \alpha + \beta_1 AC + \beta_2 PM + \beta_3 OS + \beta_4 EH + \beta_5 WIS + \varepsilon$$

4. RESULTS

4.1. Reliability

The Cronbach Alpha allows us to measure the internal reliability and consistency of the model on the basis of the variables that are used in the research questionnaire for gathering data. The result shows that are variables tested are based on the reliable results. Since a Cronbach Alpha of 70% and greater i.e. > .70 is considered acceptable. From Table 1, it is visible that all the variables have Cronbach alpha value of 0.7 or greater therefore, these variables are reliable.

Table 1. Variables and their Cronbach Alpha Values.

| Variable | No. of Items | Cronbach Alpha |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Emotional healing | 4 | .819 |
| Altruism Calling | 4 | .706 |
| Wisdom | 5 | .843 |
| Persuasive Mapping | 5 | .866 |
| Organizational Stewardship | 6 | .853 |
| Turnover Intentions | 3 | .701 |

4.2. Regression

For this study, we have used multiple regression for analysis that examines the impact of 5 independent variables (Altruism Calling, Persuasive Mapping, Organizational Stewardship, Emotional Healing and Wisdom) on a single dependent variable Turnover Intention. The adjusted R square for the study is 0.102 which indicates it is 10.2% and it is evident that the above model has least impact on turnover intentions. The Even though the variables that are being discussed here account for a total of 10.2% out of 100%, we can say that there are other factors apart from Servant Leadership factors that influences the level of intention to quit

of an individual employee. The F value of the ANOVA table was 5.556 with a significant value of 0.000 indicating that the model is solid enough in supporting the results obtained that we desired for our model to be as a model fit.

Table 2. Coefficients^a.

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.056 | .411 | | 7.437 | .000 |
| | EH | -.179 | .078 | -.172 | -2.306 | .022 |
| | AC | -.497 | .113 | .363 | -4.409 | .000 |
| | WIS | -.070 | .107 | -.053 | -.655 | .513 |
| | PM | .037 | .087 | .034 | .427 | .670 |
| | OS | -.202 | .082 | -.185 | -2.472 | .014 |

^a Dependent Variable: TI

Table 2 shows the coefficient values and the significance values. The results suggest that three among the five dimensions of servant leadership have a significant impact on turnover intentions. The coefficient value for Emotional Healing (EH) was -0.179 with a significant value of 0.022, the coefficient value of Altruistic Calling (AC) was -0.497 with a significant value of 0.000, whereas, the coefficient value for Organizational stewardship (OS) was -0.202 with a significant value of 0.014. Hence, these three variables have a significant negative relationship with the turnover intentions.

5. DISCUSSION

The prior researches also show significant result same as our model, there is an impact of servant leadership on turnover intentions. However, at the same time, servant leadership has a direct impact on quitting decision. These findings are supported by the previous researches (Jaramillo *et al.* 2009b; Hunter *et al.* 2013). Therefore, it can be concluded that servant leadership plays a significant role in turnover intentions. Hence, managers in the should focus on servant leadership dimensions especially on the emotional healing, altruistic calling and organizational stewardship dimensions to reduce the turnover intentions among the employees of the banking sector. This will provide the leaders in the banking sector with the opportunity to reduce the turnover intentions among the employees and will thereby helpful in retaining the employees. This certainly reinforces the observation that people don't leave jobs instead they leave managers; hence, by adopting the servant leadership style, turnover intentions can be reduced. These conclusions are in alignment with the suggestions of Ghayas and Siddiqui (2012) that supervisor's support is important in reducing the turnover intentions. Furthermore, researchers (Ghayas, 2015) have also suggested that supervisor's support is not only related to the turnover intentions but with other variables such as organizational commitment.

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