Impact of Servant Leadership on the Employee’s Attitude and Behaviors

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Abstract. Servant leadership perception in China Mainland has extensive and profound practical foundation. The paper carries out the empirical research of relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, workplace deviance based on 315 questionnaires data with SPSS17.0 and LISREL8.70. The results show that servant leadership is significant positive influence on employee's job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors and negative impact on workplace deviance. So, servant leadership behavior can directly improve employees' job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior (positive behavior) and reduce its workplace deviance behavior (negative behavior). The results indicate that servant leadership seems to be a effective leadership style in the enterprises in Mainland China.

Introduction

Due to the economic boom of Chinese society, many researchers have focus on its successful reason such as cultural factors and leadership factors in Chinese organization. Whether the servant leadership style plays an important role? Because the public sector of the economy as the main body of the Mainland China's economy, state-owned and state holding enterprises still dominate the Mainland China's economy, Politically, leaders and cadres should "serving the people wholeheartedly", strictly follow "the power used for the people, the sentiment for the people, the benefits for the people". The masses and enterprise staffs are also used to regard leaders and cadres as a equal servant of the public, may be more likely to accept the servant leadership style and the servant leadership is likely to produce better.

The Impact of Servant Leadership on Employee’s Work Attitude and Behavior

The Basic Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is advocated by Chinese and foreign management practices. Its definition was initially proposed by the former management research director of AT&T Greenleaf. Greenleaf said that the servant-leader is one who is servant first. Sendjaya point out that the core characteristics of servant leadership include voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence (Sendjaya, 2002). Laub (2004) point out that servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of
leadership and the sharing of power and status. Liden (2008) point out that servant leadership characterized by emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically.

Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction

In generally, people-oriented rather than work-oriented leadership style can enhance work satisfaction of employees effectively. The reason is that employees feel that they are important, enthusiastic and the true numbers of organization. Some scholars think that the biggest difference between servant leadership and other leadership is that servant leadership is people-oriented leadership style (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The servant leadership is a humane leadership style. The servant leadership is good at listening and communication to achieve organizational goals. Drury(2004), Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) point out that servant leadership is positively corrected to job satisfaction. Based on the above literature analysis, the author propose the hypothesis 1 (H1): servant leadership is significant positive influence on employee's job satisfaction.

Servant Leadership and OCB

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(Organ, 1988). Ehrhart (2004) points out that servant leadership is positively corrected to OCB. The results show servant leadership is positively corrected to extra effort of employees (Barbuto & Wheeler2006). Ebener & Connell (2010) point out that some behaviors such as appreciates, service and empowerment of servant leadership are positively corrected to OCB, for instance assistance, initiative, participation and promotion. Based on above literature analysis, the author propose the hypothesis 2(H2): servant leadership is significant positive influence on employee's organizational citizenship behaviors.

Servant Leadership and Deviant Behavior

Robinson and Bennett (1995) define deviant behavior as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and thus is perceived as threatening the well-being of the organization or its members”. Empirical research of deviant behavior is rare. Leader is regarded as an agent of the organization. Under servant leadership, the staff is even more easy to comply with organizational norms, and not prone to deviate from the behavior (Hepworth etc, 2004). The study from Sun Jianming and Wang Biying (2010) shows that servant leadership is negative corrected to abnormal behavior in workplace. Based on above literature analysis, the author propose the hypothesis 3(H3): servant leadership is significant negative impact on workplace deviance. Based on above analysis and hypothesis, this study propose the theoretical model (showed in Fig. 1)
Research Method

Scale Selection

Our questionnaires consist of four scales and personal information. Servant leadership is assessed by a 15-item measure developed by Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) and revised by Chinese scholars Sun Jian Ming & Wang BiYing (2010). Job satisfaction is assessed by 20-item measure of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Weiss etc (1967). OCB is assessed a 13-item measure developed by Farh (1997). Deviant behavior is assessed a 15-item measure developed by ZhangYan (2010). Questionnaire is used Likert 6 to avoid the doctrine of the mean thought of Chinese (1=strongly disagree and 6=strongly agree).

Study Objective

Convenient sampling method has been adapted to survey manager and employees from MBA trainee and corporate training member. Altogether 337 questionnaires have been distributed and 10 invalid questionnaires excluded. Finally, 315 valid questionnaires have been collected. The rate of valid questionnaires collected is 99.3%. Demographic profile of effective samples is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable name (gender, Work experience, job position)</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>variable name (Age, Education)</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>Under 25 year</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25-35 year</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>36-45 year</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Above 45 year</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Under college</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 year</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>college</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 year</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 5 year</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>enterprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job position</td>
<td></td>
<td>nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General staff</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>state-owned</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary professional or</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reliability Analysis

The author adopt Cronbach $\alpha$ coefficient to test internal consistency reliability of questionnaires through SPSS 17.0. The range of Cronbach $\alpha$ coefficients of subscales is from 0.723 to 0.930, which are higher than habitual 0.70 standards, indicating good reliability of scales (see table 3).

Data Analysis and Study Result

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The author adopt confirmatory factor analysis to test construct validity of five scales through LISREL8.70. The author use the following goodness of fit indices: (1) $\chi^2$/df: $\chi^2$/df <3, indicating the model fit very well, 3<$\chi^2$/df <5, indicating the model can be accepted, $\chi^2$/df>5, indicating the model fit is poor. (2) RMSEA: RMSEA $\leq$0.1 indicating the model can be accepted, RMSEA>0.1 indicating the model fit is poor. (3) NNFI and CFI: the closer values of NNFI and CFI are to 1, the better model fit. (4) SRMR, the smaller the value of SRMR, the better model fit. SRMR $\leq$0.05, indicating the model fit very well, SRMR>0.05, indicating the model fit is poor. (See Table 2).

Table 2. The Result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NNFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>servant leadership</td>
<td>163.25</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job satisfaction</td>
<td>712.35</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>280.74</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deviant behavior</td>
<td>300.96</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of confirmatory factor analysis show scales the author adopted have good construct validity.

Correlation Analysis

The author adopt Pearson correction analysis to calculate the correlation coefficient of variables (see Table 3).

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation and Correction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Servant leadership</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table 3 shows that servant leadership is positively correlated to employees’ work satisfaction and OCB, meanwhile is negatively correlated to their deviant behavior at workplace.

In addition, the scale of the Cronbach a is between 0.723 ~ 0.930, which is higher than the commonly used 0.7 standard, shows that the questionnaire has good reliability.

The Impact of Servant Leadership on Work Attitude and Behavior of Employees

The author construct a structural equation, in which servant leadership is the independent variable; job satisfaction, OCB and deviant behavior are the dependent variables (showed in Fig. 2). Servant leadership has a significantly positive impact on work satisfaction(\(\beta=0.71, P<0.001\)), also has a significantly positive impact on OCB(\(\beta=0.64, P<0.001\)), meanwhile has a significantly negative impact on deviant behavior(\(\beta=-0.34, P<0.001\)). The model fit values respectively are \(\chi^2/df = 2.64\), RMSEA = 0.075, NNFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.064, indicating model fit is good.

Figure 2. The Impact of Servant Leadership on Work Attitude and Behavior.

Conclusion and Advice

This study has found out that servant leadership is positively correlated with employees’ work satisfaction and OCB, meanwhile is negatively correlated to their deviant behavior at workplace. The findings of this study are different from the suggestions of some scholars. In fact, servant leadership may be a better alternative. So manager should adopt altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, wisdom, and organizational stewardship.
Limitations and Prospect

One of study limitations is this study only comparatively analyzes the impact of servant leadership on employees’ working attitude and behavior in Chinese firms, does not study their effects on organizational performance. The reason is our questionnaires include too many items. If the author added a new variable, it would increase the burden on the respondents and affect the quality of investigation. Therefore, the conclusions don’t infer to organizational performance. Future research will integrated analyze the impact of servant leadership on individuals, groups and organizations.

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