LCU JOURNAL
VOL 1, No 1

LEADSTAR CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Postal Address P.o.box 2033/1250
Addis ababa , Ethiopia
Email:info@leadstarchristianuniversity.com
publications@leadstarchristianuniversity.com
www.leadstarchristianuniversity.com

2024



Principles, Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities of Servant Leadership in the 21st Century

@2024 Leadstar Christian University 2024, Vol 4, No 1

Principles, Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities of Servant Leadership in the 21st Century

Blended Reflection and Critics

Timotewos Tessema Gibicho

timotiwos68@gmail.com

Doctoral Student, Leadstar Christian University

Abstract

The major aim of this work is to explain and describe the blended reflection and critiques of concepts, theories, and ideas on the principles, practices, challenges, and opportunities of servant leadership in the 21st century. Servant leadership is a growing theory that needs to be understood in depth with various secular and religious institution structures and accepted principles and practices to have a high potential impact. The purpose of this work is to magnify the understanding and knowledge of servant leadership through my blended reflection and critique of various arguments that drive us to the practical application of the leadership logical framework. Practical application to servant leadership can be difficult unless one cultivates selflessness-not I, but Christ; not about me, but about the organization; not about my position and power, but about society. We are fortunate with servant leadership that we can easily grow the community in a good psycho-social, socio-economic, political, and physical environment with transparency, accountability, and justice in a world where society serves. I suggest that prioritizing community and values for teams from the inner heart in a well-disciplined approach is non-negotiable. Suffering should be seen as an opportunity to develop servant leadership.

Keywords: *Challenges, Opportunities, Practices, Principles, Servant leadership*

1. Introduction

This work provides us with clear knowledge of servant leadership from recent perspectives on principles, practices, challenges, and opportunities in organized methods. Thus, this work is done because understanding servant leadership will help leaders, communities, and institutions sustain social well-being and institutional profitability.

Servant leadership is a style in which we lead by putting the needs of our team first. Being a servant leader involves actively contributing to the personal development and performance of the team and understanding that when team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they produce higher-quality work more efficiently and productively. If we are interested in pursuing a successful career in leadership, then mastering the skills should be a top priority for us. To be a servant leader is to be dedicated to the growth of others as well as to values-driven institutions that contribute to just, caring, and sustainable societies (Greenleaf, 1970).

The application of principles and practices is important in the face of the challenges to better leadership in an organization or institution, for the benefits of society, businesses, and stakeholders through awakening, engagement, and development. Therefore, the information gathered and the time spent reflecting on the progress and sustainability of the organization keep employees confident in using their knowledge and focused on continuous development and learning.

Servant leadership is a growing theory in the world that some companies apply to get benefits. However, its development and application in various companies may not be easy due to its nature. A mostly adapted leadership system is not easily approachable to servant leadership, and this can be challenging to replace with a servant leadership culture. This work will, therefore, contribute to a common understanding of the servant leadership approach and its principles, practices, challenges, and opportunities in the 21st century. The purpose is to grasp the understanding and knowledge of servant leadership from the writer's experience of blended reflections and critiques of various arguments.

2. The Principles of Servant Leadership in the 21st Century

The writer agrees with the theoretical idea of Robert Green Leaf that the servant leader is a servant first, which starts with a natural desire to serve. Therefore, a responsive choice leads to leadership claims. The concept of servant leadership started with a quiet revolution in the way we think about and practice leadership. Three decades later, the concept of servant leadership is increasingly recognized as the

ideal form of leadership to which several people and organizations aspire.

Today, people are witnessing unprecedented interest and practice in servant leadership. In many corporations and non-profit organizations, we are seeing a rapid shift away from more traditional hierarchical and autocratic leadership models towards servant leadership as a means of relating to others (Green Leaf, 1977–2002). Servant leadership aims to involve others in the decision-making process, which is strongly based on prudent and ethical behavior, and promotes employee development by improving the care and quality of life of the organization.

The words servant and leader are generally considered opposites, despite Robert Greenleaf's deliberate use of these words in a meaningful way, called servant leadership, which really seems like a paradoxical term. Since then (1977–2002), many of today's most creative thinkers have written and spoken about servant leadership as an emerging 21st century leadership paradigm. My understandings and explanations of the principles of servant leadership and how they contribute to meaningful servant leadership practice with attributes and dynamics are then briefly discussed below.

2.1. Listening

In applying servant leadership principles, I disagree with the idea that I have traditionally been valued for my communication and decision-making skills. While these are important qualities for a servant leader, we must be strengthened by a deep commitment to carefully listening to others. The servant leader tries to identify the groups openly.

I fully agree with the idea of Herrity (2003) that listening skills are an essential part of good communication. Listening is important because it demonstrates our ability to pay attention to a person's thoughts, behaviors, and feelings, allowing us to influence, serve, motivate, and develop. Listening is essential for many roles, and servant leaders should maintain eye contact with the speaker to avoid distractions and give full attention. Listening skills give us a non-verbal cue to express ourselves, even when the speaker is not looking.

We should visualize what the speaker is saying to help us remember the information and not have to prepare for what we are going to say next. When we lose focus, we need to make sure that we regain it immediately. When listening, we should limit our judgment. I argue with many scholars that we listen uncritically to the speaker in our heads as he speaks. Even if a message makes us excited or anxious, we

should try not to think about negative or judgmental comments, as they impair our ability to listen. We, too, want to listen with an open mind and understand that a person is giving us their point of view.

Do not interrupt while listening. Develop patience and wait for others to finish before responding. The interruption sends the wrong message to the speaker. It could indicate that what we have to say is more important than not caring what they say, or that the conversation is a competition. It is also important not to offer any solutions. Most of the time, people just want us to listen to them. However, if we have a brilliant idea, we might consider asking if we can share our ideas before offering our solution. Asking clarifying questions without interrupting shows listening, paying attention, and willingness.

Provide the speaker with feedback: We should send cues to the speaker, repeat their to-do list, and write what they say. Practice listening: We can practice listening by being aware of our role as recipients of information and improving our communication skills.

2.2. Empathy

The servant leader seeks to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and acknowledged for their unique and one-of-a-kind spirit. As human beings, the good intentions of colleagues and employees are assumed and not rejected, although one may be forced to reject certain behaviors or actions.

The most effective servant leaders are those who have become experienced at listening with empathy. Empathy is an important principle in our personal and professional lives. When we show empathy towards our colleagues and leaders, it can make it easier for us to communicate and solve problems. If we want to improve our relationships and professional reputation, learning empathy is a great way to do so.

Empathy is the ability to consider and understand another person's point of view. Empathy is a learned skill that can be improved through practice and emotional intelligence, as it helps us better understand and respond to others' emotions. I agree with the application of empathy to the workplace’s challenges. A challenge is an obstacle that must be overcome to achieve a goal. It is also a problem that prevents us from being successful at work or in our careers.

Serving as a servant leader can help us better understand and empathize with team members, even if we disagree. Stay positive, admit when needed, and look at the challenge from all angles to choose the best solution. Stay positive, admit when needed, and look at the challenge from all angles. Delegation and setting small goals are important for leadership roles to manage

workloads and stay motivated. Relationship-building skills involve interpersonal and nonverbal communication to build strong and successful relationships at work.

2.3. Healing

Healing is a driving force for transformation and integration. One of the greatest benefits of servant leadership is the ability to heal ourselves and our relationships with others. Many people are heartbroken and suffer from various emotional wounds. Servant leaders recognize that they can heal those with whom they come into contact.

The servant as leader, Greenleaf (1977/2002) There is something subtle about being served and led when it is agreed in the contract between the servant leader and the led that the search for the whole is something that binds them. Healing is one of the tools for conflict resolution. Sometimes conflicts in the workplace can arise when two or more parties have different goals, opinions, or styles.

Conflict resolution is the art of managing differences and finding common ground to heal groups or individuals. Avoidance is a common strategy for resolving conflict in the workplace, but it can require more effort and create tension between the conflicting parties. Opposition is an uncooperative and domineering strategy that does not allow shared problem-solving, known as leveling.

Collaboration: Conflict resolution is beneficial for building strong relationships, reducing dissatisfaction, and facilitating collaboration. Conflict can also prevent tensions between dissenting employees from spreading to other employees who were not involved in the original conflict. A quick and amicable resolution can help maintain peace and morale in the workplace and avoid disruptions to productivity. This will help us achieve our goals.

Conflict resolution can help opposing parties reach their goals. Once resolved, they can work together more effectively and better by focusing on goals rather than conflicts. Conflict resolution can reduce the stress level of the conflicting parties, including the employee's immediate supervisor, co-workers, and clients with whom they come into contact.

2.4. Awareness

In servant leadership, awareness involves understanding how our personality traits, habits, and abilities affect our interactions with those around us, especially in the workplace. Aware leaders actively examine how others perceive their words and actions and work to change their approach so they can lead their peers more effectively.

Awareness leads to personal control and development, which help us as leaders use our strengths to lead teams to the best possible outcomes. General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant leader. Awareness helps in understanding issues of ethics, power, and values. Self-awareness allows us to look at most situations from a more integrated and holistic perspective. According to Greenleaf (1977/2002), awareness is not calming; quite the contrary. Competent leaders tend to be very observant and a little apprehensive. We do not seek consolation; we have our inner peace.

Awareness is essential for servant leadership, as it helps leaders make better decisions and improve corporate finances. It also helps leaders understand their strengths and be realistic about their expectations. Servant leaders have self-awareness, thoughtfulness, observation, and realistic expectations. Servant leadership is characterized by empathy, insight, responsiveness, and control.

We are challenging: Self-awareness is essential for servant leaders to make wise decisions and be flexible, and it can be improved through self-reflection and emotional intelligence. Pay attention to emotional needs, body language, and circumstances to make confident decisions and use strengths to achieve positive results. We need to be self-aware, recognize our strengths, and practice self-evaluation to evaluate how we influence others.

2.5. Persuasion

Another principle of a servant leader is the use of persuasion, rather than authority, to make organizational decisions. The servant leader tries to persuade others not to force obedience. This particular element offers one of the sharpest distinctions between the traditional model of authoritarianism and slavish leadership. The servant leader is effective in building consensus within groups. Persuasion is the process of persuading someone to do something or accept an idea. In the workplace, persuasion is used to sell products, recruit team members, and increase productivity. An employee with strong persuasiveness can influence others to perform well and be successful.

Good communication skills are essential for effective persuasion, which involves speaking and non-verbal signs. Emotional intelligence is an important persuasion skill that helps us tailor our methods to a particular situation or person. Active listening: good things require attention and respect when speaking to others. Before we can convince someone, we often need to know and understand their concerns or arguments.

Giving the other person time to talk and share their thoughts can help build trust

and understand their motivations, making persuasive arguments more effective. Interpersonal skills are essential for persuasion, as they help us interact positively and maintain meaningful relationships. People are more likely to agree with someone they like, so improving our interpersonal relationships is one of the best ways to become more persuasive.

Negotiation is often a key element of effective persuasion. In many cases, the person we persuade will not cooperate unless they feel they will benefit from the arrangement. We may need to be able to compromise to get them to participate. Negotiation skills are essential for persuading stubborn colleagues or clients.

2.6. Conceptualization

Servant leaders strive to develop their ability to dream big. To look at a problem or an organization from a conceptual perspective, we have to think outside of everyday reality. For many leaders, this is a trait that takes discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. A leader who aspires to be a servant leader must also broaden their thinking to include broader conceptual thinking. In organizations, conceptualization is inherently a key role for boards of directors.

Servant leaders should be primarily conceptual; employees should act from their perspective; and the most effective leaders are likely to develop both perspectives. Servant leaders are challenged to strike a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach. The servant leader must have conceptual skills to design and understand complex situations and visualize abstract concepts. Rather than dealing with day-to-day operations, conceptual skills help leaders look at their organization's overall goals and plan ways to achieve them.

The skills help everyone understand the impact of their efforts on the company's vision. Analytical skills: the ability to analyze whether a company's business plan is helping employees achieve company goals can help managers create measures of success and gather data that will determine how the company may operate in the future.

Communication skills: Effective communication is essential for creating business goals and plans, and creativity can help us understand abstract concepts and come up with unusual solutions. Critical thinking and leadership are essential for making good decisions and motivating employees to create their own goals that align with company goals. Organization skill: We must stay organized and focused on the task at hand, track success rates, and plan effectively to achieve major business

goals. Problem-solving skill: Problem-solving should help us find solutions that align with our goals.

2.7. Foresight

Foresight is a quality that enables a servant leader to understand the lessons of the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of future decisions. It is also deeply rooted in the intuitive mind. Perspective remains a largely unexplored area in leadership research, but it deserves the most attention. Critical thinking and knowing how to apply it allow us to delve deeply into any question or topic we come across and make good decisions. Observation, communication, experience, and reasoning allow us to analyze and evaluate a situation and use this information to guide our actions.

Critical thinking enables us to gather and carefully evaluate information, solve complex problems, recognize mistakes, understand the connections between ideas, eliminate bias from our decisions, ask clear and pertinent questions, support our decisions and arguments with facts and evidence, determine whether the information is correct and important, communicate clearly and effectively, resolve conflicts quickly, and be aware of things we may not understand.

We can think critically to approach any problem or task consistently and systematically. We can also use it to build stronger relationships with colleagues and solve problems quickly and efficiently as a team. A servant leader can enhance critical thinking by asking questions such as, ‘What do I already know?’ ‘How should I know?’ ‘What am I trying to establish or prove?’ and ‘What am I missing? ‘

Active listening is another way for a servant leader to develop critical thinking. Think critically and listen to people's ideas and arguments without judgment so that we can process the information they give us. Focus on what people are saying; do not just listen to what they are saying. When deciding or solving a problem, let us ask ourselves what we want to achieve. Servant leaders must analyze existing information to ensure it is accurate and relevant.

The servant leader must develop forethought. It is the ability to anticipate the impact of a decision or action. With every decision, we determine how it might affect our colleagues, other projects, company profits, or work processes. When we think we've learned a lesson or found a solution to a problem, stop and think about the implications for others. As servant leaders, we must change our thinking. Rethinking is an activity that can help us solve difficult problems or see situations from a new perspective.

2.8. Stewardship

I disagree with the idea that Peter (1993), the author of Stewardship and authorized manager, defined stewardship as "giving someone something." Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was that CEOs, employees, and directors played an important role in holding their institutions in trust for the good of society. Servant leadership, like administration, involves, first and foremost, a commitment to meeting the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion rather than control. Stewardship for servant leaders involves responsibility and accountability, especially where they serve or in the workplace.

Accountability is one of the required qualities for servant leaders in the workplace and is essential to being an effective and influential leader in the workplace. The servant leader(s) must take responsibility for the actions of their team members and ensure that they complete all tasks as planned. Before taking on a leadership role, we must carefully understand the skills and resources our team members may need to get the job done. Accountability can also help servant leaders build trust at work and increase team accountability.

When leaders are accountable for their actions and deliver expected results, organizations can benefit from higher turnover rates, lower expenses, more productive employees, better customer service, greater employee engagement, teams, less oversight, an open culture, and strong leadership.

Responsible team members can accept the consequences of their actions and the reward for outstanding performance. Accountability and responsibility go hand in hand for servant leaders. The main way to understand the difference between responsibility and accountability at work is that responsibility means the person is part of the cause of a problem or outcome, while accountability means accepting the consequences of that stock.

2.9. Commitment to the Growth of People

As a servant leader, I believe that people have intrinsic value beyond their specific contributions as employees. The servant leader is responsible for supporting the personal and professional growth of associates by providing funds, taking an interest in ideas, and actively supporting employees.

There are attributes of servant leaders. One is being committed to the people's growth. Accountability: taking ownership of responsibility and positive and negative outcomes is key to effective leadership. Servant leaders must be able to take responsibility for their team's work as well as for themselves. This can include apologizing for mistakes and developing

new systems and processes to avoid future mistakes.

Active listening: Servant leaders must be able to give but also receive and listen to feedback from team members. Active listening allows the leader to not only hear the words being spoken but also to understand their meaning. We can practice active listening by minimizing distractions during conversations, showing interest through nonverbal cues, and summarizing the speaker's words to show that we understand them.

Collaboration: Staff often need to work internally across departments and externally with suppliers, outside contractors, and contractors. We need to know how to find common goals and form partnerships to achieve the most successful and mutually beneficial outcomes. Good collaboration often requires prioritizing communication between parties to ensure our goals are aligned and everyone involved understands our expectations.

Courage: Leaders need courage to make decisions with confidence and take on more responsibility. Communication: Strong leaders show empathy by acknowledging and welcoming the feelings of their employees to build stronger working relationships. Flexibility: Leaders with a growth mindset are able to adapt and overcome challenges to reach their goals while also being eager to learn.

Optimism: Senior leaders value team members' contributions and maintain a positive attitude to help them cope with challenging situations. Passion: Servant leaders should be passionate about workplace goals and build unity to motivate and inspire team members. Patience: Servant leaders should be patient when helping employees learn new roles and responsibilities, as it may take time for managers to learn new skills. Problem-Solving: Servant leaders develop problem-solving skills and prioritize training to empower teams to overcome challenges while also being resilient by focusing on results and leading by example.

Respect: A servant leader demonstrates respect by allowing employees to make decisions and use their knowledge, strengthening their sense of worth and commitment to the organization. Transparency: Servant leaders should consider the consequences of their decisions and actions, ask for help, give honest feedback, and trust their team to improve morale and motivation, which helps grow them.

2.10. Building Community

I agree that the servant leader has been lost in recent human history in the transition from local communities to large institutions as an important factor in shaping people's lives. This awareness prompts the

servant leader to seek ways to build community among the people working in a particular institution. Servant leadership suggests that a real community can be created between people working in corporations and other institutions.

According to Greenleaf (1977/2002), all it takes to rebuild a community into a viable way of life for large numbers of people is for servant leaders to show the way, not through mass movements but through any servant leader who is unrestrainedly responsible for a particular society. Maintaining accepted values, customs, and culture to resist technological influence are qualities required of servant leaders to build a strong and dynamic community.

The servant leader of an organization or company is willing to do the same work as their group members and encourages collaboration through regular group meetings to improve the organization's experience for the targeted society. To do this, the first step is to lead by example; this is the best quality I agree with and share with many scholars in the 21st century.

3. The Practice of Servant Leadership in the 21st Century

Servant leadership provides a structured environment for implementing servant leadership principles in everyday life, allowing for personal growth, community growth, and valued service rather than an ego struggle for power and status. Leadership practices in organizations or institutions are essential for developing mature and engaged leaders, but not enforcers.

When servant leadership becomes a goal or part of an organization's vision, those who take on the task become mentors to one another. Students are trained as mentors but also with each other. Servant leaders learn in the community, thereby strengthening their community and their ability to form partnerships with one another. Groups become teams, and organizations become precise tools at the service of many stakeholders.

In the practice of servant guidance, people face their weaknesses, egos, and limitations and are empowered to face them. They begin to see the missed opportunities to serve and be served and to understand how difficult it is to agree to serve others. Collaboration practice begins with a servant, not because it is more important than leading.

Servant leadership best practices are deceptively simple, yet they are perhaps the most profound and challenging type of leadership. The main reason for the difficulty is that it is not based on a set of skills but requires a fundamental change of attitude and inner transformation. Not all team-building exercises will make us team

people if we're selfish at heart. The ego has a hard life, and pride does not easily let go of its captives, which is why there are so few servant leaders. Servant leadership training tests our basic attitudes and motivations and requires a new focus on yourself and other people.

3.1. Compendium of Best Practices in Servant Leadership

As theory develops, servant leadership should be applied in an ongoing practical approach to grounding. It largely synthesizes what others have suggested (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). The important thing emphasized here is that these best practices need to be connected to reap the full benefits of servant leadership identity.

Practicing servant-leadership cultivate humility, selflessness, stewardship, and a sense of vocation to be servant leaders who are called to lead in certain areas. This perspective is necessary for effective leadership. One of the components that must be effective is the right motivation. Serving God by serving others is the practice of reaching out. Our usual attitude is not what I can get from you, but how I can help you. The practice of sacrificing self-interest for the sake of others.

There is always a willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the common good. We need to know the needs and strengths of others to bring out the best in them. The practice of empowering others for their development ("If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people." (Chinese Proverb).

Applying the right method is essential for positive relationships, and most leaders listen to others with openness and empathy. Learning to listen is the most important skill for servant leaders in developing understanding and sensitivity. Leaders need to consult carefully, consider people's input when making important decisions, and express trust and appreciation for others.

Encourage others to strive for excellence by teaching them the need for continuous self-development. Showing the right character from the inside is required for maintaining integrity and authenticity. Follow your voice at all costs. Courage to stand up for what you believe in. Courage to face grim reality by engaging in an honest review and evaluation of one's progress in life. It requires bringing these rare but honest people into your life to tell the truth and find solutions to your weaknesses. Servant leadership helps develop leadership qualities. Servanthood by itself does not make a person a leader, and we must combine the heart of a servant with leadership qualities.

We have a great ability to be productive, a great vision of the right direction, high intelligence and knowledge, interpersonal skills, team builders, motivators, a big heart, good listeners, optimists, courage, self-confidence, character, honesty, integrity, principled leadership, transparency, accountability, and reputational capital. Servant leadership best practices can help develop key leadership qualities, including humility and passionate commitment, suitable for all leadership styles.

4. Challenges of Servant Leadership in the 21st Century

When seeing the servant as a leader, Greenleaf (1979) suggested that the same quality of a person that cannot be removed is the quality of a servant. Being a servant leader is more difficult than following the simple definition of empowering and serving the people you lead. Servant leadership is a type of project management or team leadership that focuses on the development and well-being of the community.

Focusing on individuals improves team and organizational development and well-being, allowing them to become wiser and better equipped. Servant leadership is about empowering people to grow and meeting the goals and needs of the organization while sharing power rather than accumulating power for themselves.

Servant leadership is harder than other forms of leadership, but most managers fall somewhere on a continuum between pure servant leadership and megalomaniac micromanagers. Servant leaders, whether doctors, teachers, nurses, police officers, or sports coaches, are required to perform several roles within their professions. Several past researchers attempted to explore the specific roles of servant leaders.

I disagree that in servant leadership, even in the book by Green Leafe called 'A Servant as a Leader (1970), the theory does not clearly define the role of morality. Servant leaders may not possess an adequate understanding of service and the business as a whole. My justification is that, as servant leaders, we may lack the motivation to serve, rendering the theory impractical when relying on the moral framework of our team. The servant leadership concept can be time-consuming for leaders, requiring extra effort, which is hard work. Authenticity is daunting and difficult to achieve. There is a perception risk that servant leaders may be perceived as weak, leading to diminishing formal authority.

There is a lack of confidence that employees are expected to make decisions and own them, a scenario that can happen when an employee finds it difficult to see the bigger picture and lacks the confidence to make decisions that drive the given

responsibility forward. Within this, consultative decision-making can lead to slower decision-making. There are major challenges to servant leadership in the 21st century, as explained in my recent work for different companies and organizations.

4.1. Excessive Criticism

Appraisals and constructive feedback can be useful, but excessive criticism can lead to insecurity and reduced productivity. Leaders must analyze criticism before passing it on and determine if it is helpful.

4.2. Doing Everything Alone

As servant leaders, we must learn to delegate tasks to avoid workload burnout and exercise confidence in our employees' skills and abilities. We must trust them, provide clear direction, allow questions, and oversee the implementation of the plan.

4.3. Sitting Offside

Servant leaders must know when to step in and when to step back, but if they stay away, they lose team loyalty and respect. This shows that they only care about their projects and interests, leading to employees feeling underappreciated and unappreciated.

4.4. Demanding from Employees

The discerning leader will demand more of their subordinates, but they may not tolerate all requests and try to move elsewhere.

4.5. Fatigue of Undermining Authority

Servant leaders use empathy to the extreme. As servant leaders, we put the needs of our followers ahead of our own. If this is inconsistent, it will lead to fatigue. Leader's authority is undermined if they empathize with followers.

4.6. Decreased Motivation

In addition to undermining authority, servant leadership can impair motivation. When leadership helps, employees are tempted to step down from their current level. If the leader has to carry some of the burdens, the followers do not have to carry as much. Eventually, a pattern of reduced motivation will emerge.

4.7. The Organization Is Given A Lower Priority

The servant leader's attention to the needs of the members of the organization can reduce the needs of the organization itself. Yes, leaders must consider the needs of their followers. However, this should never overshadow the organization's mission. Focusing on the relational aspect of an organization can distract somewhat from the functional aspects of the organization.

4.8. Lack of Efficiency in All Situations

Organizations require a fluid leadership style that considers the challenges and shortcomings of servant leadership as well as its future implications.

4.9. It Can Take Some Time

Siekert (2019) moved into the role of supervisor for the first time. Siekert believed that in a few weeks, he would be able to convince people to follow in his footsteps. When I have engaged in any leadership style, especially servant leadership, it all takes time. According to Siekert, we have to observe our people, interact with them, and try to understand them.

4.10. Sometimes It Can be Confusing

Servant leaders use a mix of styles depending on the situation and internal and external factors, leading to confusion for untrained observers.

4.11. It May Reduce the Formal Authority

As we serve others, we strengthen them. We know that we will always support them when we make this decision. Team members no longer need their leader to make decisions.

4.12. Requires A High Level of Authenticity

This is the most difficult challenge of servant leadership. Authentic leaders must remain true to themselves and their values and beliefs. Doing this consistently without losing control of results by servants can overwhelm even the most effective leaders. High-end authenticity requires flexibility and authenticity to achieve servant leadership.

5. Opportunities for Servant Leadership in the 21st Century

Servant leadership provides opportunities where the hallmarks of success are well established to build deeper relationships and trust. It encourages more personal responsibility, innovation, curiosity, and creativity. Servant leadership fosters a people-centric culture and has a significant positive impact on organizational performance. An effective method of ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the company is by serving the company's employees.

A high level of internal staff development, the development of future leaders, and the strengthening of team morale are the opportunities that servant leadership offers. Leaders gain the respect of team members, and employees feel more valued in the workplace, increasing their pride in their work (Gomez, 2022). In the 21st century, servant leadership has created tremendous opportunities for organizations to positively impact implementation, productivity, and employee engagement.

The main ways are discussed in detail in my work below.

5.1. Strength Teams

By serving the team, servant leaders earn the respect of their teammates, which improves collaboration, leads to productive behavior, instills harmony, and builds stronger teams. Strengthen the team for sustainability and quality intervention or service.

5.2. A Favorable Working Environment

Working with a leader in an organization creates a positive work environment where interactions are more constructive and there is less competition to impress the leader with selfish political wrangling. The work area should be comfortable to promote productivity and energy.

5.3. Alignment of Personal and Professional Goals

Supporting and encouraging the personal and professional development of a servant leader enables employees to align their personal and professional goals with those of the organization. Alignment improves employee engagement, commitment, and loyalty to the company, thereby increasing productivity and profits.

5.4. Improving Organizational Efficiency

Teams, supported by their leaders, are more flexible in the face of a changing environment and ensure an agile organization. Executive-supported professional development supports the learning and development process of employees, strengthening strengths and eliminating weaknesses.

5.5. Management Development and Training

Servant leadership helps team members learn responsibility and ownership, improves employee engagement, and reduces staff turnover.

5.6. The Management of The Service Is Flexible

Whether we are charismatic and intuitive leaders or methodical and down-to-earth leaders, we can always benefit from the practice of servant leadership. No leader can be effective in a culturally diverse workplace by employing a single leadership style.

5.7. Reduce the Widespread Evil of Abuse of Power

The superiority of submissive leadership over autocratic leadership is well documented (Russell et al., 2002). The servant leader prevents and reduces all kinds of problems directly related to command and

control leadership. Reengineering, restructuring, downsizing, hostile mergers, and acquisitions scare the hearts of workers whose jobs are directly affected. Servant leadership is beneficial for development, humanitarian intervention, and business.

6. Outcomes and Implications

Servant leadership is positively associated with key outcomes such as employee engagement and role performance and negatively correlated with withdrawal and revenue intentions (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Liden et al., 2008, 2014, & Peterson et al., 2012). This positive influence of servant leaders can be explained by the leaders' emphasis on meeting the needs of their followers.

Employees tend to respond to the leader's concern to meet their own needs through high performance, which contributes to the leader's well-being and goal attainment. In addition, because servant leaders prioritize the development of their people, they enable them to take on new responsibilities and develop new skills, which helps improve performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

Work engagement is a fundamental motivational construct and precedes employees' personal and professional achievements, which are characterized by drive, commitment, and acceptance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Commitment is conceptually associated with leadership because the primary function of leadership is to motivate and empower employees. Servant leadership, in particular, is primarily based on the value of service workers (Greenleaf, 1970).

Employees encourage engagement at work by creating an environment conducive to psychological safety. Employees do not perceive their work situation as a threat, which gives them the strength to do their best at work. Employee appreciation for their contribution to the organization, as well as their tendency to empower employees, also contributes to employee motivation and goal setting (De Clercq et al., 2014). Engagement is further strengthened by meeting members' needs for autonomy, competence, and connectedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The key characteristic of servant leaders is a clear focus on meeting the needs of their subordinates, which should lead them to recognize the needs of employees and contribute to their development through empowerment, employee development opportunities, skills, and goodwill (Liden et al., 2008). A work environment in which employees feel competent, proactive, and connected to others at work encourages self-motivation, free participation in work for their intrinsic satisfaction, or identification with the value or meaning of work.

7. Conclusion

Findings from various sources on this work suggest that the principles for servant leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, they do serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its practices, challenges, and opportunities. Interest in the practice of servant leadership continues to grow for a better opportunity.

Many books, articles, and papers on the subject have now been published, and more and more organizations and people have sought to put servant leadership into practice. Servant leaders, who distinguish themselves from other leaders by putting employee needs and well-being ahead of personal and organizational considerations, are particularly helpful when employees are ineffective and under-engaged.

Servant leadership principles are often natural to many individuals, and, like many natural tendencies, they can be enhanced through learning and practice. Servant leadership offers great hope for the future by creating better, more caring institutions. This, in turn, indicates that, paradoxically, outcomes can be better when the leader accepts and supports employees regardless of their contribution.

In addition to core principles and practices to increase employee engagement, organizational results, and service quality, opportunities should be considered to encourage the engagement of low-performing employees. Placing these employees under the supervision of servant leaders and training leaders to develop servant leadership skills can result in increased job engagement and improved organizational performance.

As servant leadership is a highly growing and dynamic theory, it is essential to practice it starting with the individual, where we are performing from the lowest position or level while serving the community. We need to read and do research on more issues where the application of servant leadership is required and helps to solve recently emerging philosophical and technological approaches to go with the improvement scenarios for the needs of organizations, communities, the technological revolution, and the employment system.

Acknowledgment

To begin with, I would like to thank almighty God for all the great deeds he did for me. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Zerai Hagos (instructor and program coordinator at Leadstar Christian University) and Dr. Hayal Dres (instructor and English language department head at Dilla University) for their technical and professional comments on the overall contents and language flow of the paper. Also, I thank Dr. Zerihun Gebre (President of Leadstar Christian University), Pastor Yezihalem Tilahun (international student's coordination at LCU), and Mr. Abdisa Michael (IT Officer at LCU) for proofreading the contents and facilitating the paper work and publication.

I, moreover, have unlimited thanks and big respect for Leadstar Christian University for paving the way with an inalienable opportunity for this doctorate program and servant leadership course inclusion in the curriculum design. I am indebted to my wife, Melke Markos, who gave me her precious time to support my work. Friends and families who have been supportive during this work will also share my heartfelt gratitude.

References

Blanchard, K., & Hodges, P. (2003). The Servant Leader: Transforming your heart, head, hands and habits. Nashville, Tennessee: J Countryman, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Chiniara, M., & Bentein, K. (2016). Linking servant leadership to individual performance: Differentiating the mediating role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness need satisfaction. The Leadership Quarterly. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.08.004

De Clercq, D. et al. (2014). Servant leadership and work engagement: The contingency effects of leader-follower social capital. Human Resource Development Quarterly. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21185

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977/2002). S*ervant-leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). The servant as leader. The Greenleaf Center.

Greenleaf, R K. (1977/2007) A servant as a leader: Servant leadership Development theory.

GOMEZ, A. L. (2022). What is servant leadership and how can it empower your team? https://www.betterup.com/blog/author/a%C3%ADda-lopez-gomez-read

Herrity, J (2023). Ten ways to improve your listening skills. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/author/jennifer-herrity.

Liden, R. C. et al. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. The Leadership Quarterly. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.006

Liden, R. C. et al. (2014). Servant leadership and servant culture: Influence on individual and unit performance. Academy of Management Journal. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.0034

Peterson, S. J. et al. (2012). CEO servant leadership: Exploring executive characteristics and firm performance. Personnel Psychology. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2012.01253.x

Peter, B. (1993). Stewardship. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Russell, D. W. (2002). In Search of Underlying Dimensions: The Use (and Abuse) of Factor Analysis in Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. Personality and Social Psychology. https://doi.org/10.1177/014616702237645

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. Journal of Organizational Behavior. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.248

Schaufeli, W. B. et al. (2006). Measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. Educational and Psychological Measurement. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164405282471

Siekert, R. (2019). Top five servant leadership challenges. https://robertsiekert.com/top-5-servant-leadership-challenges/