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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Influence of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction : A Study of Land and Survey Department

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ABSTRACT

Servant leadership has been found to bring positive benefits to an organization and its employees. This study examines the influence of servant leadership on job satisfaction in the Land and Survey Department (LSD). In this study, the structured questionnaire survey was carried out. Eighty two (82) questionnaires collected and were analyzed accordingly to test the various hypotheses. The measurement items were rated with 5-point Likert. Goodness of measures were performed with SPP software and all items measured were found to be reliable and valid. The results indicate that servant leadership is positively correlated with job satisfaction. In addition, all dimensions of service leadership are also significantly correlated with job satisfaction. The study also found no significance difference in job satisfaction based on demographic factors. These results imply that servant leadership in the public sectors is highly correlated with job satisfaction and that demographic factors do not make a difference in the level of job satisfaction in the selected organization. This study provides insights on the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction in the public sector. The findings of this study may help public sector to better understand servant leadership and its effect on job satisfaction.

Keywords: Servant leadership, Job satisfaction, Public sector, Leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's world is more turbulent, chaotic, and challenging than ever before (Kanter, 1995). Organizational changes are becoming a major component of everyday organizational life. The competitive edge of companies no longer relied on its product, but in its people (Ulrich, 2002). People are the lifeblood of organizations, and they represent the most potent and valuable resources of organizations (Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley, 1971). Organizations are faced with new challenges to develop great leaderships which can help these organizations sustain its human resources competitive advantage. The new leadership focused more on service and stewardship rather than remaining a system of controls and procedures. The servant leadership concept is based on the philosophy of "servant leadership," a term coined by Robert K Greenleaf; "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first," Greenleaf wrote. "Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead." *Servant Leadership moves beyond the theoretical and demonstrates how organizations*

achieve and sustain their competitive advantage through service leadership. It argues that leadership is essentially an act of service; that the more responsible the leadership position, the greater the responsibility to serve.

Sauter (1996) defines healthy workplaces as any organization that "maximizes the integration of worker goals for well-being and company objectives for profitability and productivity". The staff of an organization are important to the welfare of the organization. When staff members are not satisfied in their job, their performance, attitudes, staff relations, and commitment to the organization have the potential to suffer. Leadership is an action performed among and with people Barna (1997). When employees are dissatisfied at work, they would be less committed and would become emotionally or mentally withdrawn from the organization (Shirbagi, 2007). The researcher's purpose for this study is to determine if any relationship existed between servant leadership and job satisfaction in the public sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Servant Leadership

Leadership is a skill used to influence followers in an organization to work enthusiastically toward goals specifically identified for the common good (Barrow, 1977). Frick (2004) has mentioned that the term servant leadership was first coined in a 1970 by Robert K. Greenleaf. The theory of servant leader emerged when Greenleaf (1997) defined the role of the leader as servant. The leader is responsible to serve others by being a seeker of the needs, wants and wishes of those to be served before aspiring to lead (Bugenhagen, 2006). Once they know how to support those they serve, the leader's obligation is to lift up those being served and while being served these followers may indicate to meet the needs of others through their own servant leader behavior.

Becoming a servant leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve and focus on the followers, whereby the followers get more attention and concern compared to the organization (Patterson, 2003). The central idea of servant leadership theory is that the servant-leader is first a servant. The servant leader's primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of others, which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership (Russell & Stone, 2002).

Servant Leadership becomes a guiding philosophy in an increasing number of companies such as Toro Company, Synovus Financial Corporation, ServiceMaster Company, the Men's Wearhouse, Southwest Airlines, and TDIndustries (Spears, 2004). According to Spears (2010), since the time Robert Greenleaf birthed the paradoxical servant leadership term, many thinkers are writing and speaking about servant leadership. Servant leadership can be viewed as an emerging leadership paradigm for the 21st century (Spears, 2010).

Liden, Wayne, Zhao and Handeson (2008) develop a servant leadership instrument which consisted of 7 dimension such as: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skill, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically. The servant leadership is comprised of seven components or dimensions:

- Emotional healing, which involves the degree to which the leader cares about followers' personal problems and well-being. It includes recognizing others' problems and being willing to take the time to address them. Servant leaders who exhibit emotional healing make themselves available to others, stand by them and provide

them with support. Studies suggest that negative feelings have adverse effects on job performance and satisfaction (McConville & Cooper, 2003).

- Creating value for the community, which captures the leader's involvement in helping the community surrounding the organization as well as encouraging followers to be active in the community. They are involved in local activities and encourage followers to also volunteer in community services. Creating value for the community is one way for leaders to link the purposes and goals of an organization with the broader purposes of the community.

- Conceptual skills, reflecting the leader's competency in solving work problems and understanding the organization's goals. This capacity allows servant leaders to think multifaceted problems, to know if something is going wrong, and to address problems creatively in accordance with the overall goals of the organization.

- Empowering, assessing the degree to which the leader entrusts followers with responsibility, autonomy, and decision-making influence. Empowerment builds followers' confidence in their own capacities to think and act on their own because they are given the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way they feel is best. Breau & Réaume (2014) determined that empowering behaviours are compelling predictors of job satisfaction, Amundsen & Martinsen (2014) described relational-oriented behaviors on empowering and its positive influence on job satisfaction.

- Helping subordinates grow and succeed, capturing the extent to which the leader helps followers reach their full potential and succeed in their careers. Servant leaders make followers' career development a priority, including mentoring followers and providing them with support. At its core, helping followers grow and succeed is about aiding these individuals to become self-actualized, reaching their fullest human potential. Studies have shown that relationship-oriented leadership, particularly the behaviors of sharing, supporting and developing, are associated with job satisfaction (Wong et al., 2013)

- Putting subordinates first, assessing the degree to which the leader prioritizes meeting the needs of followers before tending to his or her own needs. It means using actions and words that clearly demonstrate to followers that their concern is a priority, including placing followers' interests and success ahead of those of the leader. It may mean a leader breaks from his or her own tasks to assist followers with theirs. (Terosky & Reitan (2016).

- Behaving ethically, which includes being honest, trustworthy, and serving as a model of integrity. It is holding to strong ethical standards, including being open, honest, and fair with followers. Servant leaders do not compromise their ethical principles in order to achieve success. Vitell & Davis (1990a) examined empirically the relationship between ethics and job satisfaction for 61 Management Information System (MIS) professionals. Their results indicated that MIS professionals were more satisfied with the various measured dimensions of their job (pay, promotions, co-workers, supervisors, the work itself) when top management stresses ethical behavior.

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a broad concept that affects both the employees' well-being and organizational health. One of the most popular definitions of job satisfaction belongs to Edwin Locke (1976) which says that job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from one's job or job experiences" (Lock, 1976). According to Armstrong (2006) job satisfaction depends on attitude and feelings of an individual toward his work. Vrooms (1964) definition, on the other hand, focuses on the role of the employee in his workplace. According to the definition, job satisfaction describes workers' affective orientation regarding the current job role that he is occupying (Aziri, 2011). Another very popular definition of job satisfaction belongs to Spector (1997) who describes it as the way in which people feel about their job and its diverse facets (Aziri, 2011).

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine if a relationship exists between servant leadership and job satisfaction. These studies show similar findings and most of them are consistent regarding the fact that there is a strong relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. The link between leadership style and job satisfaction has been well-established (Hu et al., 2010). This has been attributed to leaders who have the ability to empower their employees, which in turn leads to higher levels of job satisfaction (Seibert et al., 2011).

These psychologically empowering behaviors are mirrored in the servant leadership literature, showing the positive links between servant leadership behaviors and employee job satisfaction (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). In relation to the servant leadership job satisfaction literature, the link to increasing job satisfaction draws upon the competencies and characteristics shown by the servant leader (e.g. Cerit, 2009; Ding et al., 2012; Mehta & Pillay, 2011). As behaviours shown by servant leaders such as open communication, empowerment and respect for employees have previously been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction (Ma & MacMillian, 1999), the presence of a servant leader in an organisation should in theory increase job satisfaction (Cerit, 2009) These studies have tended to focus on the direct relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction (e.g. Cerit, 2009; Ding et al., 2012; Mehta & Pillay, 2011),

Research among employees of telephone companies showed that servant leadership is positively and significantly linked to employees' satisfaction from the job (Sepahvand, Pirzad, & Rastipour, 2015). Furthermore, a study that explored the relationship between servant leadership and core self-evaluation and job satisfaction, showed that servant leadership predicts both core self-evaluation and job satisfaction and that core self-evaluation also predicts job satisfaction among working adults in white collar jobs in three U.S. companies (Tischler, Giambatista, McKeage, & McCormick, 2016). According to Ding and co-workers servant leadership is linked to employee satisfaction which plays mediating role between servant leadership and employee loyalty (Ding, Lu, Song, & Lu, 2012).).

Laub (1999) indicated the more an employee perceived servant leadership characteristics were being implemented by the leader in the workplace, the greater the degree of individual job satisfaction. Research is limited in determining a correlation between servant leadership and the level of job satisfaction. The research studies which have been performed have supported a correlation between servant leadership and the level of job satisfaction (Anderson, 2005; Drury, 2004; Washington, 2007). Research found that servant leadership behaviors have positive relationship with job satisfaction (Caffey, 2012; Amadeo, 2008). Similarly, Miears(2004) investigated that servant leadership style is one of the main leadership styles

which has considerable influence upon teachers' job satisfaction. Various researchers (like Girard, 2000; Laub 1999; Thompson, 2003; Hebert, 2003, Miears, 2004; Irving, 2005) had investigated the relationship between servant leadership behavior and job satisfaction. Lashbrook (1997) stated that leadership style plays a vital role in influencing employees' job satisfaction.

3. Methodology

This study aims to explore the relationship between service leadership and job satisfaction. A survey design was used to reach the research objectives. The specific design was the cross sectional design, where a sample is drawn from a population at a particular point in time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). About 82 employees returned back the questionnaire giving a response rate of 82 %. Servant leadership was measured using a scale developed by Liden .et.al (2008). Job satisfaction was measured using an instrument called Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Weiss et.al (1967)). Results of the instrument's Cronbach Alpha measurement show that the score of reliability is above .80 which indicates an acceptable level. This is summarized in Table 1 below.

3.1 Research Framework

This study defined service leadership as independent variables and defined job satisfaction as a dependent variable to explore the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. The research framework is as shown in Figure 1.This study proposed the following hypotheses with regard to servant leadership, demographic variables and job satisfaction based on the research purpose and framework

H1:   There is a significant relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction

H2   There is a significant relationship between servant leadership dimensions (emotional healing, creating value for community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates, putting subordinates first and behaving ethically) and job satisfaction

H3:   There exists a significant difference in job satisfaction across the various demographic variables (gender, marital status, job category, educational level, length of service, and age)

Independent Variable

Service Leadership

- **Emotional healing**
- **Creating Value for the community**
- **Conceptual Skills**
- **Empowering**
- **Helping subordinates grow and succeed**
- **Putting subordinates first**
- **Behaving Ethically**

Job Satisfaction

Dependent Variable

Demographic Variables

- **Gender**
- **Marital Status**
- **Job Category**
- **Education Level**
- **Length of Service**
- **Age**
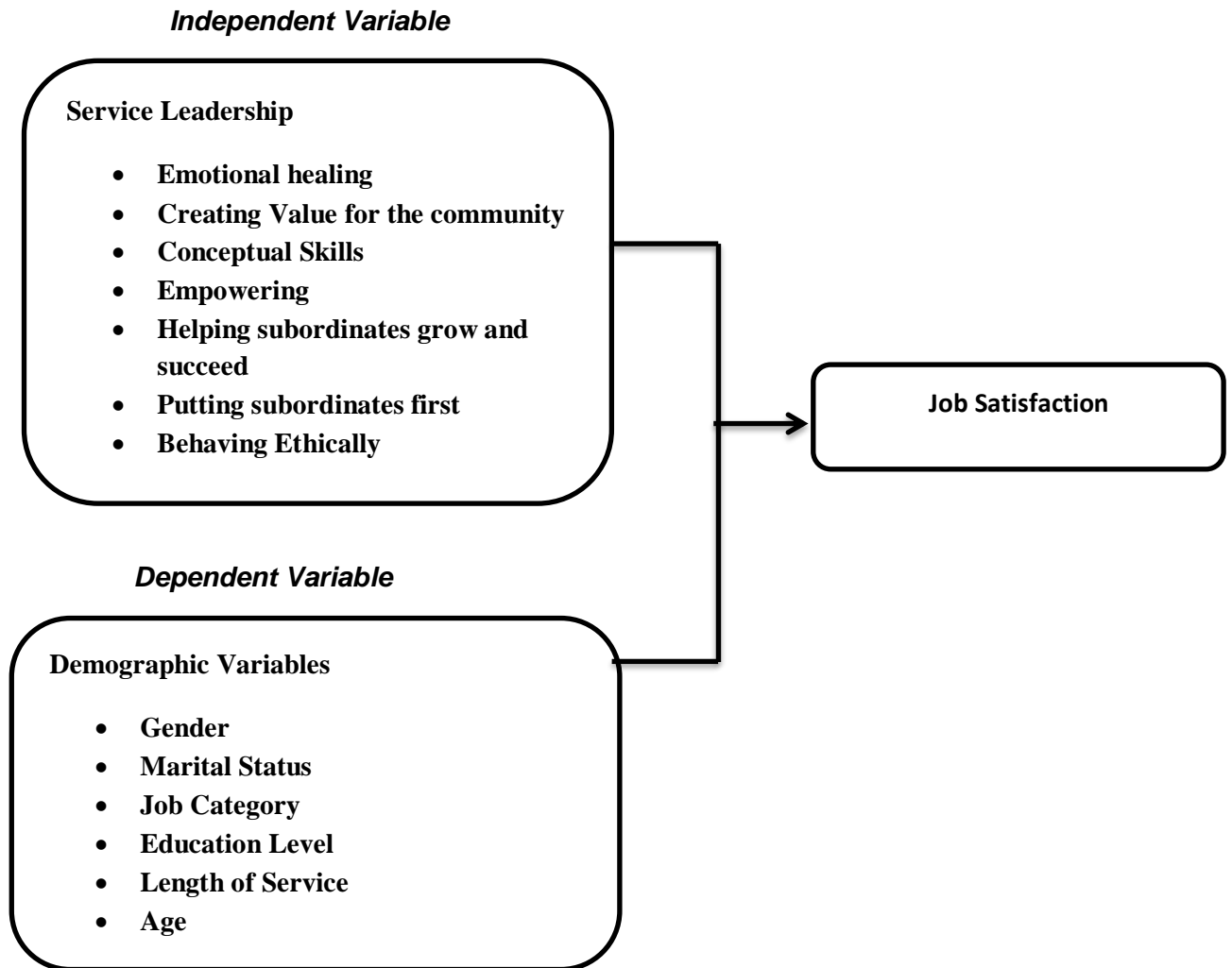
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The majority of the respondents were female (68.3 percent) and aged between 31 to 50 years old (65.8 percent) and mostly were married (65.4 percent). The majority of the respondents were Malay (32.1 percent) followed by Bidayuh (25.9 percent). About 55.24 percent of the sample had either Diploma or SPM qualification. As for the length of service 52.6 percent had served for 7 to 15 years. About 68.4 percent of the respondents were from the Support Group 1. This is summarized in Table 2.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation Scores (N=82)

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	S. D.
Servant Leadership	28	.939	3.70	.568
Job Satisfaction	20	.883	3.84	.439

Table 2: Respondent's Profile (N=82)

Profile	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Gender		
Male	26	31.7
Female	56	68.3
Age		
Below 30 years old	21	25.6
31- 40 years old	32	39.0
41-50 years old	22	26.8
51-60 years old	8	9.7
Race		
Malay	26	32.1
Iban	21	16.0
Bidayuh	16	25.9
Chinese	13	19.8
Others	5	6.2
Marital status		
Single	28	34.6
Married	55	65.4
Education's level		24.4
SPM	20	12.8
STPM	10	30.8
Diploma	25	18.3
Degree	15	8.5
Others	7	
Length of services		
1- 6 years		23.1
6 -10 years	19	20.7
10- 5 years	17	30.4
More than 15 years	25	23.1
	19	
Job Category		12.7
Management &	10	68.4
Professional Group	54	19.0
Support Group 1	15	
Support Group 2		

4. The Results

Based on Table 1, the mean score for both service leadership (mean 3.70) and job satisfaction (mean 3, 84) is high (Best & Kahn, 2003). In addition, the study found a strong positive relationship between service leadership and job satisfaction (r = 0.613; p< 0.01). This indicates that service leadership is associated with higher job satisfaction. H1 is accepted. In addition, all dimensions of servant leadership had positive relationships with job satisfaction: Emotionally healing (r = .473, p<0.01), creating value for community (r=.606, p< 0.01), conceptual skills (r=.571, p<.0.01), empowering (r=.454, p<.0.01), helping subordinates (r=.4535 p<.0.01), putting subordinates first (r= .451, p< 0.01) and behaving ethically (r= .550, p<.0.01). Thus H2 is accepted. This is shown in Table 3.

Table 4 on the other hand, shows no significance difference in job satisfaction and selected demographic variables such as gender, marital status, job category, educational level, and age (p<0.05) except for length of service. Thus H3 is rejected. However, there is significant difference in job satisfaction and length of service (p <0.05) in which 1 to 6 years and over 15 years length of service have significantly different mean job satisfaction levels.

Table 3: Correlation between Service Leadership Dimensions and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Job Satisfaction (r value)
Servant Leadership	.613**
• Emotionally healing	.473**
• Creating value for community	.606**
• Conceptual skills	.571**
• Empowering	.454**
• Helping subordinates	.435**
• Putting subordinates first	.451**
• Behaving ethically	.550*
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level	

Table 4: T-test: Job Satisfaction: Gender and Marital status

Variable	Characteristics	mean	T -value	Df	Sig.
Gender	Male Female	3.78 3.86	.825	80	.412
Marital Status	Single Married	3.91 3.79	1.163	80	.248

Table 5: One Way Anova: Job category, Educational level, Length of Service, Age and Job Satisfaction

Variable	Characteristics	Mean	F-value	Df	Sig.
Job Category	Professional & Management Group Support Group 1 Support Group 2	3.90 3.84 3.76	.258	79	.855
Educational level	SPM SPTM Diploma Degree Others	3.71 4.01 3.91 3.76 3,86	1.142	76	.343
Length of service	1-6 years 6-10 years 10-15 years Over 15 years	4.07 3,92 3.75 3.64	3.999	78	0.011`
Age	Below 30 years old 31-40 years old 41-50 years old 51-60 years old	4.01 3.86 3.71 3.67	2.197	78	.095

5. Discussion

Our findings provide support that positive relationships exists between dimensions of servant leadership and job satisfaction in Land Survey Department (LSD). The majority of the staff perceive that the level of servant leadership is quite high and job satisfaction as high. In terms of correlation, high level of servant leadership is related to higher levels of job satisfaction amongst the staff. This study supports previous findings by Laub, (1999); Miears, (2004) and Thompson, (2002) who reported a positive relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. It is evident that servant leadership who put employees first and empower them can have a positive impact on their job satisfaction which will further motivate them to improve their work performance and hence contribute to the achievement of organizational goals.

The practice of Servant leadership which emphasize empowering employees and ethical behavior in the public sector will boost the public service delivery since employees are the drivers of excellent service in an organization Another interesting finding is that the study found no significant differences in job satisfaction across the demographic variables except length of service .This is not consistent with other studies that found significant differences in job satisfaction based on demographic variables (Tabatabaei, Ghaneh & Shokri, 2011) and Bukers (2010). But was consistent with findings by Shafie Abadi & Khalajasadi (2010) which indicated that there was not any relationship between job satisfaction of workers in respect of sex, educational level, age and marital status. As for length of service, it is was consistent with the findings by Long (2007) who reported that job satisfaction was higher in workers with 1-5 years of work experience in comparison with who had more than 20 years.

The study presents two major implications: theoretical contribution and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the results of this study confirm that servant leadership and job satisfaction are highly correlated and hence contribute to research on servant

leadership and job satisfaction in the public sector. In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used as a guideline by public agencies to promote servant leadership in their workplace and use it to increase its staff's level of job satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

This study confirmed that servant leadership influences job satisfaction. The correlation test revealed a positive relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the study also found all dimensions of servant leadership as having a positive relationship with job satisfaction. This study further suggests that servant leadership will strongly enhance and promote higher levels of job satisfaction amongst public sector employees. In addition, only one demographic variable namely length of service significantly influences job satisfaction in the selected public agency.

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, a cross-sectional research design was used to gather data at one point within the period of study. This may not capture the developmental issues and/or causal connections between variables of interest. Second, the survey questionnaires relied heavily on the respondents' self-responses that were selected based on random sampling technique. Finally, the samples were taken from one public agency namely land and survey department in Kuching via survey questionnaires. These limitations may decrease the ability of generalizing the results to other public agencies in Malaysia. It is suggested that future research look at other variables such as employee loyalty, employee motivation and organizational commitment that may moderate or mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

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