

## **Discovering Servant Leadership Attributes for Conflict Management at Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) Seberang Jaya Pulau Pinang**

**Hasriyah binti Mohd Narudin and Nor Amyza Binti Hamzah**

Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi  
MARA (UiTM) Merbok, Kedah

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study proposes to identify the relationship between attributes of servant leadership towards conflict solving in Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (KWSP) Seberang Jaya Pulau Pinang. This research will use three attributes of servant leadership which are vision, trust and empowerment. The sample size for this research is 108 employees at KWSP. The independent variables analyzed were vision, trust and empowerment while the dependent variable was conflict management. The data was gathered by distributed questionnaire and analyzed by using correlation coefficient analysis of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Management, Empowerment, Leadership, Servant Leadership, Trust, Vision

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is important to any social organization such as company whether public or private sector. It has gained importance in every walk of life from politics to business, from education to social organizations

(Masood, Dani, Burns and Backhouse, 2006). This mean leadership becomes a big deal and concern among various sectors like, businesses, education, political and social organizations. According to Krisnan (2003) leadership can be defined as relationships that encourage followers to pursue joint purposes that represent the motivation of both leaders and followers. Similarly, leadership is ability to influence a group to the achievement of goals (Appelbaum, Bartolomucci and Beaumier, 2004). In short leader is interpreted as someone who sets direction that can influences people to follow that direction. Thus, the employees can enhance their skill and knowledge in order to achieve organization objectives.

According to Rognes and Schei (2008), handling conflicts constructively is one of the greatest challenges in the modern world. Many companies were facing difficulties in solving conflict in their organization. According to Filson (2006) conflict also occurs because of lack of leadership and motivation among the employees. Conflict and leadership go hand-in-hand because leaders have to face problematic employees. In this study, the researchers intend to study whether company have practice servant leadership and further to test whether the company utilizing servant leadership to manage conflict effectively. This research will highlight on the three attributes of servant leadership which are vision, trust and also empowerment.

Conflict exists wherever and whenever there is an incompatibility of opinions, principles or emotions within individuals or between individuals (Corvette, 2007, p. 34). It arises in personal relationships, in business and professional relationships, in organization and between nations. According to Rahim (1989) and Bisno (1988), if the conflict that is not identified understood and managed effectively it can lead to inefficient use of organizational resources, stress and injury on the conflicting parties, rupturing of relationship within the organization and misdirection of the energies of those affected by the conflict situation

The phrase “Servant Leadership” was invented by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1977. According to Greenleaf (1977) servant-leaders are driven to serve first, rather than to lead first, always striving to meet the highest priority needs of

others. It means there are have a close relationship between the leader and employees. Servant Leadership was focused more on the people who are their followers (Stone, Russel and Patterson, 2003). This show that the Servant Leader cares about their followers and the Servant Leadership has a big responsibility towards their followers. Furthermore, it shows in the Servant Leadership style the followers are the highest priority to the Servant Leader. Servant leader constructs are virtues, which are defined as the good moral quality in a person, or the general quality of goodness, or moral excellence. In simple word, the servant leader has a quality or merits towards their attitudes to lead their subordinates (Patterson, 2003).

Vision is the main attribute for the Servant Leader. With the vision the Servant Leader will influences their subordinates. In this research it focuses on the leaders visions. First of all, vision is a statement that what the company or organization want to get in the future. In simple word vision is something that we want to achieve in the certain period. According to Blanchard and Hodges (2003), servant leadership begins with a clear and compelling vision of the future that exits passion in the leader and commitment in those who follow. It means with the vision the followers and the leaders itself will become excited to do the task to make sure they will get what they want. In simple word, the vision of leader is more influencing to the employees rather than organizational vision. Thus, the leaders have to make sure that his vision is clear and accepted by all employees in order to become more successful.

According Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) trust is the level of confidence that one individual has in another's competence and his or her willingness to act in a fair, ethical, and predictable manner. Fairholm (1998, p.4) stated that trust leadership is a logical outgrowth of values based leadership. Trust is both of personal and a group of people cultural that share values among their members. When trust exists in an organization or in a relationship, almost everything else is easier and more comfortable to achieve because there is nothing to hide among the team members, leaders, employee and colleague. Trust is something that special because it is a key element in the relationship between leaders and led that must be present for leadership to take place. Leaders can build trust from their employees through delegating power, providing clear vision and have a good behavior and in the organization.

When the vision is clearly communicated, the leader can gain trust from employees because trust is continuing from leader vision statement.

The core of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power Page and Czuba (1999). Power is related to ability to make other to do what the leader wants. Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly and Konopaske (2006, p. 500) define empowerment as granting individuals the permission to utilize their talents, skills and resources, and experience to make decisions to complete their workloads in a timely manner. Empowerment is about delegating power and consent for the employees to perform their task in their own way. The employees have the right to do the task based on their understanding in ethical manner. There are many managers struggling with the processes of empowerment and delegation (Argyris, 1998; Sanders, 1994), but these are essential behaviors of the servant leader. Clearly, empowerment is neither quick nor easy, except in the case of a newly formed organization where the leaders understand it and have committed themselves and the organization to it. This is necessary to demonstrate the benefits and provide an implementation strategy which can give a clear understanding of that entire employee about empowerment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The sample size for this research is 108. The respondent that is select only from the staff at KWSP, Seberang Jaya, Pulau Pinang. Based to Uma Sekaran (2006), the population 150 the sample size is 108. KWSP has four departments, which are Khidmat Pelanggan, Penguatkuasaan, Sokongan Operasi dan Bayaran Caruman, and also Bahagian Pentadbiran.

The objectives of this study is to identify whether KWSP have practice servant leadership in their company and also to identify the relationship between attributes of servant leadership towards conflict solving in KWSP.

## **Data collection**

The data will be collected by distribute questionnaire. In this questionnaire there are three sections which are section A for demographic, section B independent variables for and section C for dependent variable. In section A, the question will ask about the basic question such as gender, level of education, age, and department. Section B, the question is about conflict management in KWSP While in section C will ask about servant leadership and its attributes to determine whether the company have practice servant leadership.

## **Data Analysis**

The data will be analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences or SPSS® Version 16.0 for Windows. To identify the relationship between attributes of servant leadership towards conflict solving in KWSP, the correlation coefficient will be used. The correlation relation has two types which is Pearson's and Spearman's correlation. If the data was normal the Pearson's correlation will use but, if the data not normal the Spearman's correlation will be used.

## **RESULT**

The significant of this study can be clarified into two which are organization and university. Firstly is to organization by making aware whether the KWSP is practicing servant leadership or not. Besides that, whether these companies can practice servant leadership and using servant leadership to solve the conflict. Next, is to ensure that servant leadership style can be effective in manage the conflict.

Second significant of this research is adding some knowledge corpus in Leadership Subject and become reference in the future academic writing. This research also can add some literature review into leadership writing especially in servant leadership.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion this research will give benefits to this organization and become useful to KWSP and other company in the future.

## REFERENCES

- Appelbaum, S. Bartolomucci, N. Beaumier, E. (2004). Organizational citizenship behavior: A case study of culture, leadership and trust. *Management Decision* pp.13-40.
- Argyris, C. (1998). Empowerment: The emperor's new clothes. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(3), 98-105.
- Bisno, H. (1988). *Managing Conflict*. Berly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Blanchard, K., & Hodges, P. (2003). *The Servant Leader*. Nashville, TN: J. Countryman.
- Corvette. (2007). *Conflict Management: A practical guide to developing negotiation strategies*. United States of America.
- Fairholm. (1998). Leadership as an exercise in virtual reality. *The Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 187-193.
- Filson, B. (2006). *Conflict, Leadership And The Leadership Talk*. Retrieved February 19, 2010, from <http://ezinearticles.com/?Conflict,-Leadership-And-The-Leadership--Talk&id=156329>
- Greenleaf, R.K. (1997). *Servant Leadership: A journey into Nature of legitimate power and greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Gibson, J.L, Ivancevich, J.M., Donnelly, J.H., & Konopaske, R. (2006). *Organizations: Behavior, Structure and Processes*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Krishnan, V.R. (2003). Impact of transformational leadership on followers' influence strategies. *The Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25 (1), 58-72.
- Masood, Dani, Burns & Backhouse. (2006). Transformational leadership and Organizational culture: *the situational strength perspective*. 220.
- Patterson, K. (2003). "Servant Leadership: a theoretical model", unpublished properties of the organizational trust inventory". *Evaluation Review*, 21(5), 614-635.
- Rahim, M.A. (1989). *Managing Conflict: And interdisciplinary approach*.

- New York: P Praeger.
- Sanders, J.O. (1994). *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.
- Stone, Russell & Patterson. (2004). Transformational versus servant leadership: a difference in leader focus. *The Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25 (4), 349-361.
- V. Schei, J. K. Rognes (2010). Understanding the integrative approach to conflict management. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 25 (1), 82-97.