Influence Of Servant Leadership Style Of The Department Heads On The Psychological Capital Of The Faculty At University Level

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Abstract

Leadership is an absolute necessity for the university. Leadership is needed to promote the effectiveness of the Higher Education Institution (HEI). One of the leadership approaches in this regard is Servant leadership which has a huge relevance in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). To find out the truth regarding the claim, this study was conducted at Higher Education Institute to examine the influence of the Servant Leadership of the department heads on the Psychological Capital of the facultymembers as perceived by the faculty-members. The pragmatist paradigm with mixedmethod and convergent parallel design was used to achieve the intended objective. The quantitative part of the study was census study with 305 faculty-members as a sample from a public sector University while the qualitative part of the study was subjected to saturation strategy. The results from regression analysis in quantitative part revealed that Servant Leadership of the department heads has a high influence on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-members (β =.876, p <0.001) with congruent qualitative narrations revealed from faculty-members interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis. The recommendations were made accordingly along with agenda for further research in this area.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Psychological Capital, Higher Education, D.I. Khan (DIK), Pakistan

Introduction

Leaders in present time are performing in the digital-era and in a time of ferocious competition and struggles. Hence the leaders and their subordinates feel the necessity for purposes, meanings and connections (Barroca et al., 2017). Such an exposure to severe competition, pressurized situations and a rivalry of highest level, the leaders often struggle to pinpoint the best practices to deal with their followers in a best way in order to make them successful in their professional and personal life with higher level

of satisfaction. The technological advancement and astonishing way of communicating made the workers well-aware of their duties as well as their legal rights and thus have increased expectation from the leaders and the organizations. Keeping in view the complexities of the present time, the theorists demanded for the leadership approach which encompasses ethics and values needed for the workers betterment (Hoch et al., 2018, Dede & Ayrancı, 2014, Baykal & Zehir, 2019). A leadership which is based on human caring and human supporting principal is required to meet the educational challenges that prevails within the premises of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The faculty-members who are facing a serious competition, greater workloads with increased working hours and the psychological-pressure would flourish and remain properly working with leadership which is friendly and decent to them.

Servant leadership approach is one of those approaches which encompasses the traits of being decent, moral and humanistic. Such leaders consider followers importance and give them priority at workplace. Such leaders have their focused on the followers based on their internal-motivation to serve others. They want to make followers independent, empowered and developed. They express no hesitation in demonstrating humbleness, genuineness, care and encouragement to provide service (Van Dierendonck, 2011). The Servant Leadership is unique due to its nature of giving the primary and greater importance to followers (Hoch et al., 2018). It is the emerging leadership style as it maintains the integrity of the organizational premises by developing the workers/followers and make their best possible version for the sake of organizational benefits (Liden et al., 2016). Such leaders fight with the undesirable behavior in the organization and promote the altruistic and brotherhood among the workers. The present study holds the claim that when faculty-members get treated ethically, developed, empowered, emotional healed and supported by the Heads of the department then their Psychological Capital would be increased and made them a highly productive being. According to Brohi et al., (2021) Servant leaders can influence the Psychological Capital.

Rationale of the study

Powerful political, social and economic shifts in the environment in which universities are located, demands that university leaders need to be well developed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century (Coleman & Earley, 2005; Northouse, 2010; Amin, 2012). Leadership is an absolute necessity for the university. Leadership is needed to promote the effectiveness of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) (Al-Ali et al., 2017). According to Latif et al. (2021) Servant leadership has huge relevance in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Spears (1998) argued that servant leadership can be a more suitable, efficient and effective leadership style in higher education as compared to transformational leadership. The reason of implementing servant leadership in HEIs' is that HEIs' are there to provide services to people and servant leadership is all about serving and serving. Servant leadership is the best approach for the HE sectors as it enables transformation from within (Ricky, 2017). Servant

leadership is a holistic leadership approach focusing on follower development in ethical, rational, emotional, relational, and spiritual dimensions (Eva et al. 2019; Sendjaya 2015).

The present study attempts to address multiple gaps and in doing so makes important contributions. Firstly, this study addresses the scarcity in the literature regarding the research on Servant Leadership of the department heads on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-member in the context of HEIs as mentioned by Eva et al. (2019) in their systematic review of 20 years only 10 Servant Leadership studies conducted in the context of higher education. Secondly, the research design that was largely utilized for studying servant leadership was Quantitative (n = 156) with very few studied it qualitatively (n=28) with even fewer mixed method designs (n=8). This study addresses this methodological gap by using mixed method design. Thirdly, only quantitative studies (n=5) studies have been found on servant leadership in Pakistan and in 2020 again studies found to be addressing the servant leadership quantitatively (e.g., Haider et al., 2020) which clearly demonstrates the contextual gap. This study is conducted in the contextual of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is one of the provinces of Pakistan. Fourthly, the social exchange theory will serve as the theoretical basis for accomplishment of this study and thus it will verify the theory accordingly. This study will surely an addition to knowledge and filling the important gaps that are vital to be fulfilled as the concept in needed to be implemented for better results in Education.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study was:

 To examine the influence of Servant Leadership behavior/practice of the department Heads on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-members as perceived by the faculty-members.

Research Question

The research question of the study was:

• What is the influence of Servant Leadership behavior/practice of the department Heads on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-member as perceived by the faculty-members?

Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant influence of Servant Leadership behavior/practice of the department Heads on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-member as perceived by the faculty-members.

Literature Review

The improvement of educational systems, enhancement of the research and increased welfare of society is possible only with the quality of teaching and quality of teaching

is dependent on well-being of faculty-members. 21st -century has brought enormous changes and so dealing with faculty-members on the basis of past working-environment and old demographics make it tough for faculty to perform. There is a need of institutional leaders that go side by side with faculty-members and provide greater support (English & Avakian, 2012). And servant leadership is found to be one in the literature that involves best support and care for the followers.

Robert K. Greenleaf was named as being the pioneer for presenting the paradoxical-approach to leadership termed as servant leadership (Northouse, 2010). Greenleaf (1979) postulates the individual working in any organization is considered to be performed two roles. One as being a servant and the other as being a leader. The pioneer maintained that this is quite possible to perform this duality as well as this is vital for leadership effectiveness. This leadership required to provide services to the followers and meeting their needs at first priority (Spears, 1998). This is opposed to authoritative approach to leading where the leaders is leader first whereas servant leadership theory holds that the real leaders have motivation and desire to be a servant first. Greenleaf (1979) defined servant leadership as:

It involves in nature of a leader to first serve and just serve. He/she then consciously decides to be a leader. The difference arises as the service-first leads to caring of others and the needs/requirements of the people are fulfilled by complete service provision. The testing can be done by checking: Do those served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

Servant leadership's most unique and distinguishing critical factor is its focus and emphasis placed upon followers (Liden et al., 2014).

This leadership behavior makes followers realize their strengths and helps to eliminate the weaknesses by helping all the time. This leadership as being providers of service leads to better engagement of the workers at workplace, thus increase competitiveness of the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2010; Liden et al., 2015). Leader behavior that is concerned with follower development contributes to the positive psychological well-being of followers. Servant leadership has been presented as a leadership style characterized by concern with follower development.

Conceptualizing servant leadership in higher Education

Latif et al. (2021) mentioned 7 elements/dimensions of the servant leadership that are linked with Higher-Education system. These dimensions are explained below:

1. Behaving ethically: It is characteristics of dealing with workers/subordinates in fair and honest way (Liden et al., 2008 & Liden et al., 2014).

- **2. Development:** It is feature of putting the workers//subordinates needs and demands first and helping them in their growth and development to highest level for achieving the success (Greenleaf, 1977/2002).
- **3. Emotional healing:** It refers to alleviation of workers'/subordinate's sufferings for nurturing and empowering them for personal and professional growth (Barbuto Jr & Wheeler, 2006).
- **4. Empowerment:** It refers to motivating, enabling and encouraging the workers/subordinate personal development (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).
- **5. Pioneers:** It is a daring quality to make decisions according to the values having no fear of outcomes (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).
- **6. Relationship building:** It is a quality of making strong bond with workers'/subordinates by honest efforts and support (Liden et al., 2008).
- **7. Wisdom:** It is the combination of being aware of surroundings and expectations of possible outcomes (Barbuto Jr and Wheeler 2006).

Psychological Capital (Psy Cap)

Psychological capital is an umbrella expression having positive intramural traits of individual that boost up the performance (Gohel, 2012). Psychological-capital is an essential psychosomatic element which met criteria to be included in positive-organizational behavior (POB) and has unaccountable practical benefits. PsyCap possess capacities of a person having quality of development and management after a worth noting investment for the performance enhancement in a workplace and stand tall in 21st century competition (Luthans et al., 2005; Luthans et al., 2007). PsyCap can be conceptualized as an individual's positive state of development that are considered high-order components with high converging and discriminating validity (Avey et al., 2009) that is the HERO:

- Hope: Hope is derived from Rick Snyder's (1995) hope theory. Hope is a state of productive motivation putting up hurdles in the act of goal realization (Snyder et al., Snyder, Rand & Sigmon, 2002). Hope is the sense of determination of worthy goal "agency" as well as goal attainment plan "pathways" (Synder, 1996; Basim & Cetin, 2011).
- Self-efficacy: Albert Bandura's (1997) work on social cognitive theory highlighted the term efficacy or self-efficacy. It is the mobilization and operationalization of the motivation, cognition, resources and plans of activities to successfully attain the goal (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Embracing challenges, complex tackling procedures to cope the hurdles, tenacious for success despite of hurdles (Shahnawaz & Jafri, 2009) are characters of self-efficacy.
- Resiliency: Resilience is associated with Ann Martin (2002) work. Resilience is the capacity of settlement and dealing with undesirable situations. The state of being steadfast to face the situation, bolstered with stalwart faith in life and eldritch sense of improvisation and adaptation to changing time (Coutu, 2002; Meng et al., 2011).

• Optimism: Seligman's (1998) define optimism by means of attribution theory by considering permanence and pervasiveness. Persistence in thoughts and expectations for the best to happen (Synder et al., 1991; Peterson et al., 2011). Objectivity in assessing (Luthans et al., 2008), availing the hard chances and quality of being longsuffering (Wrosch & Scheier, 2003) to achieve the goal is optimism.

Psychological capital got an independent recognition among the several "Capitals-assets" as it focused on "who you are" to "who you can be" instead of "what you have" (Economic capital), "what you know" (Human capital) and lastly "who you know" (Social capital) (Luthans et al., 2004). The much focus on part of psychological capital is kept on persons' future rather than looking at the present (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans et al., 2007).

Servant Leadership and Psychological Capital

There is a link between Servant Leadership and Psychological Capital. Liden et al. (2015) wrote that followers of servant leaders experience an increase in self-efficacy because servant leaders provide support and encouragement to employees (Self-efficacy). Servant leaders engage with followers, they create opportunities for followers to receive training, grow and develop (Liden et al., 2014) this creates opportunities for followers (Optimism). Servant leader's desire to assist and support followers to reach their potential, agency, pathways, and goals as components of hope are well-positioned to create a positive relationship with servant leadership (Davis, 2018) (Hope). Servant leaders support followers in developing and growing, they are more likely to bounce back from adverse experiences (Resilience).

Research Methodology

The context and Respondents

The context of the study was a public sector University, KP, D. I. Khan-Pakistan. The target population was the faculty-members i.e., Lectures, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors with teaching experience of at least one year in the said University. The performance of the teachers is a major concern in higher Education which can be influence by their inner motivation and psychological capacities which are affected by the type of Leadership. Thus, the target population was selected keeping in view the role of teachers in higher education institutes. To achieve the intended objective, pragmatist-mixed-method paradigm with convergent parallel design was used as qualitative or mixed-methods are deemed useful to study the phenomenon of leadership. The quantitative design was descriptive with survey strategy while qualitative part was case study. In convergent parallel design, the research collects both data types concurrently, analyzed them separately and merge them at the time of integration/interpretation. The population of the study was N=305 (University-Admin, 2022). For the quantitative part, the sampling is not required as it was census part of the study while for qualitative part of the purposive sampling was used and faculty-

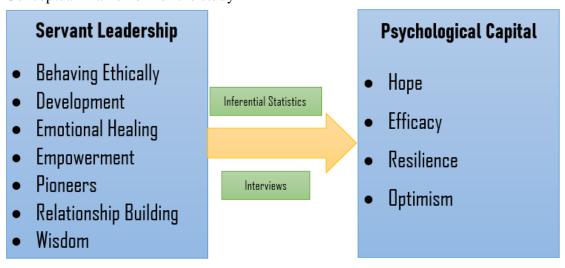
members were selected with minimum 1 years of experience in the given context as the inclusion criteria. The sample size was subjected to saturation for qualitative part of the study. The saturation was achieved at 30 respondents. The ethical consideration in terms of informed consents, confidentiality, anonymity and respondents' convenience was maintained. For qualitative part of the study the respondents were given pseudonyms for the purpose of secrecy.

Research Instrument, Data collection and Data analysis

For the quantitative part two questionnaires were adopted which are Servant leadership in Higher Education by Latif and Marimon (2019) and Psychological Capital by Avey et al. (2007). For the qualitative part of the study, interview protocol was developed using the adopted questionnaires to reveal the depth. In order to collect both data at the same time, the researcher added two members. one member was M.Phil. Management while the other one was PhD Management. The process of data collection was divided between 3 members after a thorough meeting between them. The researcher didn't face much difficulty in guiding the other two members because they are highly qualified and well-aware of the research process and complexities. The questionnaires were distributed and time was taken on the same day for the interviews as well after the approval of competent authority. The decision regarding day and time were subjected to convenience of the faculty-members. Total questionnaires collected back were 260/305. The regression analysis was applied to quantitative part of the study while thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used for the qualitative part of the study. The interviews of some respondents were recorded while some have given written responses due to busy schedule while for some respondents, researcher and his team made memos during interview sessions. The respondents who demanded the interview transcripts afterwards were given to them so to check nothing is manipulated.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the study



Result Of Regression Analysis

(Servant Leadership and Psychological Capital: SL → PsyCap)

Simple Linear Regression was applied to test the generated hypothesis by using SPSS. The table below provided further details related to decision regarding existence of correlation with its' strength and acceptance or rejection of research hypothesis (\mathbf{H}_1).

H₁: There is a significant influence of Servant Leadership of the department heads on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-members as perceived by the faculty-members.

Table 1 Influence of Servant Leadership on Psychological Capital

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Variable	В	Beta Coefficient (β)	SE
Constant	.966		.091
Servant Leadership	.797	.876	.027
\mathbb{R}^2	.768		

Note. N=260.

The table 4.10 presented the summary of the hypothesis testing. The hypothesis tests if Servant Leadership carries any significant influence on Psychological Capital. The dependent variable Psychological Capital was regressed on predicting variable Servant Leadership to test hypothesis \mathbf{H}_1 . The R^2 of .768 depicted that the model explains 76.8% of variance in the Psychological Capital with F (1, 258) = 853.42, p <0.001). This indicated that Servant Leadership plays a significant role in shaping Psychological Capital (β =.876, p <0.001). These results clearly direct the positive influence of Servant Leadership. Therefore, the hypothesis (\mathbf{H}_1) claiming a significant influence of Servant Leadership on Psychological Capital is accepted.

Results of Qualitative Findings

In response to the question "Which element of Psychological Capital might be influenced more by the Servant Leadership behavior of the department heads as perceived by the faculty-members?" the respondents were of the view that Servant Leadership practices influence the Psychological Capital including the hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism (HERO). This question was linked with prevalence of the Servant Leadership practices in the given context and respondents accordingly mentioned that Psychological Capital on the whole get influenced by these practices as mentioned below:

Table 2 Influence of Servant Leadership dimensions on Psychological Capital

Theme: Influence of Servant Leadership dimensions on Psychological Capital				
S. No	Sub-themes	Quantification of t	Quantification of the data	
		Frequency Per	rcentage	

^{***}P<.001.

		(n)	(%)
1.	Behaving Ethically	30	100
2.	Development	30	100
3.	Emotional healing	30	100
4.	Empowerment	30	100
5.	Pioneering	30	100
6.	Relation building	30	100
7.	Wisdom	30	100

Sample Quotes

Influence of "Behave Ethically" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

This practice of leadership is needed in order to elevate the level of Psychological Capital. The faculty-members can see their positive side by this behavior from Head of the department and institute. Hope, confidence, resilience and optimism get positively influenced by ethical behavior of the heads. (R14)

Influence of "Development" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

There is no doubt in mind of faculty-members [in my opinion] all the elements of Psychological Capital get improved by provision of developmental opportunities from the head of the department. (R20)

Influence of "Emotional healing" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

Obviously, at the times of hardships you want someone in authority to hold you, support you and try to make you stable and help you to return to normal life. Emotional healing from the end of the leader keep faculty motivated and increase level of Psychological Capital. (R12)

Influence of "Empowerment" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

As a faculty-member, I want to be independent and empowered according to my abilities and when anybody [the head] trust me and allow me to do things on my own it will increase my hope for improvement, confidence in abilities, resilience to cross the hurdles and I see myself as optimist. (R11)

Influence of "Pioneers" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

Leaders' initiation of the tasks is motivation for faculty-members and it encourage teachers to accomplish the tasks. The only thing that raises Psychological Capital (R11)

Influence of "Relation Building" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

This practice from the head has a great influence on faculty-members Psychological Capital level. All the elements of Psychological Capital can be enhanced through relation building practices of head of the department. (R10)

Influence of "Wisdom" on Psychological Capital

In this regard One of the participants mentioned that:

Intellectual capacity of the heads makes faculty-members respect him by all means as they get enough knowledge of academic and professional career. The learning process of faculty-members continues because of heads' wisdom. This increases our positive abilities such like HERO within. (R28)

Mixed-Method Interpretation

Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative data

Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Convergence	Decision
n=260	n=30	Divergence	Decision
SL and Psy Cap (β=.876, p <0.001)	Agreement	Convergence	Significant

It is clear from both types of data that Servant Leadership is definitely desirable for the faculty-members at present time of increased competition. The faculty-members via questionnaires and their interviews clearly express their feelings of the need of the leaders who can serve them and understand their situation rather than imposing increased burden.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of Servant Leadership behavior of the department heads on faculty-members as perceived by the faculty members. There found an influence of Servant Leadership of the department Heads on the Psychological Capital of the faculty-members. The results are congruent with Brohi et al. (2021), Safavi and Bouzari (2020), Clarence et al. (2020), Baykal (2020), Davis (2018), Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) and Coggins and Bocarnea (2015) revealed a link between the Servant Leadership and Psychological Capital similar to present study indicating an increase in Psychological Capital of the school teachers (University teachers for this study) with the increase in the Servant Leadership behaviors/practices by heads.

Recommendations

From the findings, it is recommended that Servant Leadership needs to hold position in the educational sectors. The department heads must understand that authoritative leadership is no more desirable in the 21st century. It is recommended that heads of the department must practice Servant Leadership behavior in order boost the performance

of faculty-members and to enhance their internal capacities i.e., the psychological capital which will make them perform even in the hardest of the times and despite of the hurdles. On the other hand, training sessions must be organized in the University so that faculty-members can build up their Psychological Capital. The seminars must also be arranged for the heads so that they can understand the importance of employee friendly leadership and at the same time the importance of the Psychological Capital of the faculty-members for the departmental and organizational success.

Agenda for Future research

The Servant leadership studies needs to be conducted in different cultural context of Higher Education Institutes. this will further expose the necessity and demand for this leadership approach in Education sector. The other dependent variables can be investigated in HEIs. The mediation and moderation analysis could be performed to further strengthen the underlying theories that guide the leadership studies. Comparative analysis can be done in different cultural settings so that real picture in terms of cultural influences on this leadership can be revealed.

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