

Servant-Leadership as a Predictor of Teacher's Trust on Headmaster in Betong Division of Sarawak, Malaysia

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Abstract

Headmaster's leadership style is very important in determining the effectiveness of a school. A school's performance is depending on the leadership style adopted. The objective of this article is to examine the impact of servant-leadership practices towards teacher's trust on headmaster. A total of 310 teachers who work in primary schools, Betong Division, Sarawak, Malaysia have participated in this survey. The analysis of correlation and regression tests were conducted and found significant relationships between servant-leadership and teacher's trust on headmaster. Additionally, the servant-leadership also acts as predictor to teachers' trust on headmaster.

Keywords: Servant-leadership, Leadership, trust, Headmaster, Teachers, Primary school

Introduction

Servant leadership was introduced by Greenleaf (2002). According to Stramba (2003) ^[13] servant leadership is an approach that emphasizes workers interests beyond the personal interests of leaders themselves. This approach fosters a culture of collaboration, trust, foresight, willingness to listen and ethical use of power in an organization. Servant leadership promotes the development of human capital, build community, to be honest, open and accountable and approachable as well as provide guidance to leaders, sharing power and positions for the common good, the organization and also the person receiving the service (Laub, 1999) ^[5].

Crippen (2005) has distinguished servant leadership theory to the theory of traditional leadership. Servant leadership emphasizes service to others while traditional leadership theory focuses on the hierarchical system, the use of power and influence. Traditional leadership approaches are found often cause problems in an effort to improve employee's productivity whereas servant leadership that cares about the commitment, empowerment, organizational culture and ethics (Mozhgan *et al.*, 2012) ^[8]. Servant leaders motivate employees to develop employee potential and empower them to do their best. According to Abd Latif Kasim (2004) ^[11] empowerment is autonomy by the administration to subordinates.

Servant leadership is focused on results but more on the service or services to his followers (Stone *et al.* , 2004). It aims to increase the capacity of followers so that they can discharge their duties and responsibilities in a creative way (Stone & Patterson, 2005). Stone *et al.* (2004) ^[12] believes that the goal of the organization will only be successful if capacity, development and advancement of its members can be improved.

Greenleaf (2002) stated a leader who practice servant leadership style will be more trusted by followers. According Banutu-Gomez (2004) ^[2]. A leader who practices servant leadership attitude won the trust of his followers as a leader, who always cares for his people. When a leader surpasses his personal needs and interests then it will increase the confidence of the followers of the leader (Banutu-Gomez, 2004) ^[2]. Trust

in the leader has a positive relationship to behavior, performance and job satisfaction (Jung & Avolio, 2000; Pillai *et al.*, 1996) ^[4]. According to Yu *et al.* (2002) trust can influence the willingness of teachers to make innovations introduced by school administrators.

Recognizing the importance of the elements of this trust, therefore this study is designed to investigate the effect of the practice of servant leadership towards teachers trust on headmaster. The objective of this study is to answer the question of how far the practice of servant leadership can enhance the trust of teachers on headmaster.

Literature Review

Winston *et al.* (2005) ^[15] conducted a study on 69 respondents consisting of students and workers of Christian Bible college high school in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies. The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between servant leadership practices as observed by workers trust on leaders and organizations. The study was conducted by using a filed-based survey to collect data to assess the level of service leadership practices, followers trust on leaders and followers' trust in the organization. Servant Leadership Organizational Assessment Instrument (Laub, 1999) ^[5]. was used to distinguish servant leadership and non- servant leadership. The instrument consists of 33 items to assess the leader, 27 items to assess the organization and 6 items to measure the level of job satisfaction.

To measure trust on the leaders and organizations, Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) (Nyhan and Marlowe, 1997) instrument was used. The instrument consists of 12 items in which the item measuring trust on the supervisor 1-8 and 9-12 items measure trust on the organization as a whole.

The results have shown a significant relationship between servant leadership and trust towards leaders. In addition, there is a strong relationship between servant leadership and confidence in the organization. However, there is no difference between servant leadership whether to trust or confidence in the organization's leaders by demographic factors except age.

Meanwhile, there were significant differences in the level of trust between the organization leaders and organizations led by servant leadership to the organization led by a leader who is not a servant leader. This shows the servant leadership was able to increase the level of trust on the leaders and organizations.

Sendjaya et al. (2010) also conducted a survey on 555 employees at two educational institutions in Indonesia. The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between servant leadership behaviors and trust. Survey method using questionnaire was conducted and distributed to faculty members and education administrative staff. Servant Leadership Behavior Scale (LBS) instrument consists of 35 items that measure six dimensions of behavior (voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, spirituality and Transforming Transcendental influence). Whilst instruments for measuring trust (Trust / loyalty) towards the leader, developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990) was used. The instrument contains six items that give a special focus on trust between followers and leaders. The results prove all six dimensions of servant leadership have positive and moderate relationship on trust. Dimensions such as transforming influence showed the highest correlation with the confidence of (0.50) while the authentic self-dimension has the lowest correlation with the confidence of (0.24). Regression test was conducted to determine the effect of the trust on servant leadership behaviors. The test revealed servant leadership is a predictor of the trust. Out of the six dimensions, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, and transforming influence (largest) are significantly contributed trust on leader.

In order to determine whether the level of servant leadership style has an impact on the level of trust subordinated to the leader a three-level test Servant Leadership has been established. The level is divided into low, medium and high. The results showed that the different levels of servant leadership shown by a leader affect the level of trust of subordinates to the leader. This means servant leadership can enhance the confidence of subordinates to leaders. Subordinates who find that their leaders practice servant leadership style will have a high level of confidence on their leaders; compared subordinates found their leaders practice servant leadership level is low. In addition, Marieta, Zani and Petrus (2015) conducted a study on the relationship of servant leadership and emotional fitness and trust of workers towards the private sector manager in Africa and found the servant leadership also has a significant relationship with trust. These findings imply that servant leadership style of the headmaster or leaders will invoke or express trust of teachers or subordinates. Therefore, organizations or schools should encourage leaders or headmasters to practice servant leadership style to create trust on headmasters through the dissemination and sharing of vision, to be a role model, showing concern and respect for the teacher and have integrity.

Methodology

The study was involving 310 primary school teachers from Betong, Sarawak, Malaysia. Data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of instruments such as Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) built by Laub (1999) [5], to measure the servant leadership while OLA contains 59 items

and Faculty Trust Survey by Tschannen-Moran (2003) [14] contains 13 item.

Both these instruments are translated using back translation method by a specialist of subject matter. Data was collected and processed using SPSS version 21.

A pilot study was conducted to test the suitability of the instrument to carry out the study. A total of 30 teachers were selected to participate in this study. Results showed that both instruments have high Cronbach alpha values, namely .98 and .96 for the OLA trust Faculty Survey.

Results

A total of 310 teachers who work in primary schools of Betong Division, Sarawak were selected as respondents in this study. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents based on gender. There are 165 respondents (53.2%) are male teacher and 145 respondents (46.8%) are female teacher. In comparison the male teachers involved more than female teachers in this study.

Table 1: Respondents based on gender

Gender	Respondents	%
Male	165	53.2
Female	145	46.8
Total	310	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents based on the level of education. A total of 205 respondents (66.1%) are the graduate teachers and the remaining 105 respondents (33.9%) are non-graduate teachers. This shows the number of graduate teachers who participated in this study exceeded the number of non-graduate teachers

Table 2: Respondents based on education level

Category	Respondents	%
Graduates	205	66.1
Non-Graduates	105	33.9
Total	310	100

Table 3 below shows the distribution of respondents based on their age category. A total of 81 respondents (26.1%) aged under 30 years, 107 respondents (34.5%) aged 31 to 40 years old, 86 respondents (27.7%) aged between 41 to 50 years and a total of 36 respondents (11.6%) aged 51 years and above. The group aged 31 to 40 years is the largest age group involved in this study.

Table 3: Respondents based on age

Age category	Respondents	%
below 30 years	81	26.1
31 to 40 years	107	34.5
41 to 50 years	86	27.7
Above 51 years	36	11.6
Total	310	100

Table 4 below shows the distribution of respondents based on respondents' teaching experience. A total of 135 respondents (43.5%) have experience about 10 years and below, 81 (26.1%) teachers have experience 11 to 20 years, 80 teachers (25.8%) 21 years to 30 years and a total of 14 respondents (4.5%) have experience more than 30 years. This shows the majority of

teachers involved in this study are the young teachers with teaching experience 10 years and below.

Table 4: Respondents based on teaching experience

Experience	Respondents	%
Below 10 years	135	43.5
11 to 20 years	81	26.1
21 to 30 years	80	25.8
Above 30 years	14	4.5
Total	310	100

Research question

What is the servant-leadership practice level adopted by of headmasters of primary school in Betong Division, Sarawak? To determine the level of headmasters’ servant-leadership practices and teacher commitment, following score range in Table 5 used as guide.

Table 5: Range Headmaster servant-leadership and commitment Teachers

Score	level
1.00 – 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Moderate Low
3.01 – 4.00	Moderate High
4.01 – 5.00	High

Source : Nunnally *et al* . (1994)

Table 6 below shows the analysis of the headmaster’s servant leadership practices as observed by teachers based on its dimensions. The results showed that 298 respondents observed their leaders’ servant leadership style is high. The mean score for servant leadership style of the headmaster is 4.37, (SD = .37). While the mean scores for each dimension in comparison, has a builds community dimension recorded the highest mean score 4.44, (SD= .40) and by contrast leadership dimension mean score is lower 3.91, (SD = .35) compared to other dimensions. This shows the headmaster practice servant-leadership style with high emphasizes aspects of community development in the practice of his leadership.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation headmasters’ servant leadership Practice Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	SD
Values people	4.36	.41
Develops people	4.32	.40
Shares leadership	4.37	.46
Provides Leadership	3.91	.35
Displays Authenticity	4.32	.39
Builds Community	4.44	.40

Table 7 shows the level of teachers’ trust towards headmasters according to its’ dimensions. Based on the table the overall mean scores for teachers’ trust is 4.3 (SD = .46). It shows the teachers have great trust on their headmasters. The dimensions of honesty has the highest mean score of 4.38 (SD = .50), and the dimensions of openness and competence both have a mean score of 4.24 (SD = .52) and (SD= .54) were lower than other dimensions. In conclusion, teachers see their headmasters are being very honest, kind, reliable, open and competent. By having such characteristics, the teachers have gained trust and high expectations towards headmasters.

Table 7: Teachers’ trust level according to dimensions

Trust	Mean	Standard Deviation
Benevolence	4.31	.52
Reliability	4.26	.56
Honesty	4.38	.50
Openness	4.24	.52
Competence	4.24	.54

Testing hypotheses

Research question

Is there a significant relationship between headmaster’s servant leadership and teacher’s trust on headmaster?

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between headmaster’s servant leadership and teacher’s trust on headmaster.

Based on the analysis in Table 8 the correlation coefficient, r for servant leadership factor is equal to .76. It shows a strong correlation. As the value of p = .00 is smaller than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a significant relationship between servant leadership style of the headmaster and teachers’ trust towards the headmaster.

Table 8: Pearson correlation between servant leadership style and teacher of trust towards the headmaster

Variable	Strength of relationship (r)	Sig
Servant-leadership	.76	.00

Significant at 0.01

Correlation tests were conducted between each dimension of headmasters’ servant leadership comprising dimension of values people, develops people, shares leadership, provides leadership, displays authenticity and builds community with the variables of trust towards the headmaster. The goal of testing is to identify the dimensions that contribute to a positive relationship between the two variables. The test results in Table 9 shows the strength of the relationship between teachers’ trust on headmasters with dimensions of servant leadership are from r = .58 to .76. Dimensions of develops people has the strongest correlation r = .76 and r =.58 (builds community) is the lowest compared to other dimensions with trust towards the headmaster. As a result, develops people dimension is the largest contributor to the relationship between the variables headmasters’ servant leadership and teachers’ trust. The second dimension with values people r = .74, followed by displays authenticity dimension r = .73, provides leadership r = .69, the dimension of shares leadership dimension r = .66 and develops community r = .58.

This means the ‘develops people’ dimension has been able to increase the trust of teachers towards the headmaster. This condition may occur because of the attitude of the headmaster who cares about the needs of teachers, especially from the aspect of increasing the potential of the profession by constantly providing guidance and encouragement to them. This factor has led to teachers see the headmaster as a person who can be trusted, competent and can be depended. Thus they have been entrusted to the headmaster.

Based on this situation, headmasters should focus on develop people dimension in developing their leadership practices to improve the confidence of teachers to headmasters. When teachers earn the trust of teachers and headmasters perform his

duties successfully. Teachers will receive all instructions about the task entrusted with an open heart and this situation will be

able to improve the performance of the school.

Table 9: Pearson correlation Analysis of servant-leadership dimensions

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Trust						
2	Values people	.746**					
3	Develops people	.765**	.816**				
4	Shares leadership	.660**	.713**	.768**			
5	Provides leadership	.695**	.821**	.842**	.739**		
6	Displays authenticity	.736**	.871**	.867**	.766**	.877**	
7	Builds community	.586**	.839**	.760**	.690**	.796**	.837**

* $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$

Ho2: Headmaster's servant-leadership is not a predictor of teachers' trust toward the headmasters

SPSS data analysis results in Figure 10 below shows that predictor variable i.e. headmasters servant-leadership ($R = .767$, $t = .685$, $p < 0.5$) significant factor towards teachers trust in schools. Therefore, null hypothesis was rejected and reported

that the predictor variable accounted for 58 percent ($r = .7621$) change of variance in the level of teachers' trust toward the headmasters [$F(1, 296) = 421.84$, $p < .05$]. Based on the findings researchers conclude that headmaster's servant-leadership effects the teachers' trust towards the headmasters.

Table 10: Regression analysis servant-leadership as predictor towards teachers trust

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE	R ² change	F	P
1	.767 ^a	.588	.586	.30112	.588	421.84	.00

* $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$

Discussion

According to this study, there are some new findings that have been produced. First, the study found that the level of primary school headmasters Betong, Sarawak servant leadership practice is high. This suggests that headmasters in Betong has done paradigm shift in their leadership style compared usual conventional patterned working procedures.

Second, this study also showed that teachers who worked in primary schools Betong, Sarawak have trust in their great teacher. This is a healthy sign where headmasters have received high trust from the teachers. High trust will facilitate cooperation between the two sides. Close cooperation will increase the effectiveness of schools.

Third, the results showed that servant leadership has a strong relationship with teachers' trust on headmasters. In addition, servant leadership was also found to be predictive factor of teachers trust on headmasters. This means that the practice of servant leadership is able to increase the trust of teachers towards headmasters.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate the servant leadership practices of headmasters able to improve teachers' TRUST towards the headmaster. From these six dimensions, develops people has the strongest relationship with teacher trust towards the headmaster. Therefore, the headmasters are recommended to practice servant leadership to increase the confidence of teachers towards headmasters. The element of trust is very important in an organization because without these elements the organization's goals cannot be realized. Trust impact the teachers' commitment to the school (Lokman Mohd Tahir, *et al* 2008)

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