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Servant Leadership and Career Development: Supporting Employee Growth

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Abstract

In this article, the authors present a literature review encompassing an analysis of Career Development and Servant Leadership in the context of human resource management and organizational growth. The research unveils how leaders who implement servant leadership principles can positively impact the career growth and development of their employees. Applying a Literature Review method, the authors analyzed other articles with similar topics. The research suggests that these characteristics can create an environment in which employees feel valued and supported, thus advancing their career development. The study finds that when leaders exhibit servant leadership characteristics, employees are more likely to experience increased job satisfaction and engagement. This positive experience, in turn, contributes to higher levels of commitment to their organizations. Servant leadership fosters open communication, trust, and a strong sense of community in the workplace, all of which support career development. Furthermore, the research highlights how servant leaders often strive harder to provide growth opportunities to employees. This may include mentorship, training, and guidance in setting and achieving career goals. Employees under servant leadership are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to take control of their career paths. In conclusion, this article emphasizes the strong impact of servant leadership on employee career development. It highlights that leaders prioritizing the well-being and growth of their employees can create a work environment that fosters career advancement, enhances job satisfaction, and strengthens organizational commitment. The research underscores the importance of developing servant leadership within organizations to support employee development and overall success.

Keywords: *Career Development; Employee Service; Human Resource Management; Organizational Growth*

Introduction

Servant leadership is gaining increasing attention in the management and leadership literature. Its core idea emphasizes a leader's role in serving and supporting team members or their organization, rather than merely acting as an authoritative figure. In the complex and ever-evolving organizational landscape, many leaders and researchers seek to understand how the servant leadership model can impact employee engagement and overall organizational performance. Career development, within the context of organizational management, plays a crucial role in guiding, motivating, and directing employees toward

achieving company objectives. One increasingly recognized leadership approach is the concept of "Servant Leadership," introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970. This concept underscores leaders who serve, are oriented towards serving their subordinates, and focus on their growth and development. Servant Leadership aims to create a work environment that supports employee development and enables them to reach their full potential. Career development and servant leadership are two interrelated key elements in human resource management in the ever-evolving business world. Career development encompasses various activities designed to enhance employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies, while servant leadership emphasizes the importance of a leader's service and attention to employees' needs and development. The combination of career development and servant leadership can create a work environment that supports employee growth, enhances productivity, and improves organizational quality.

Career development has become a primary concern in human resource management due to the dynamics of the global labor market. In an era where employees increasingly value personal and professional growth opportunities (Kowske et al., 2010), organizations need to implement effective career development strategies to retain and attract top talent (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). On the other hand, servant leadership, introduced by Greenleaf in the early 1970s, is proposed as a leadership concept that prioritizes service and attention to the interests of employees as a means to achieve better organizational outcomes (Greenleaf, 1970). In the ever-changing and competitive business world, employee career development has become a highly significant aspect. Employees who feel supported in their career development tend to be more dedicated, productive, and positively contribute to the organization's success. Therefore, a leader's role in facilitating employee growth and career development has become increasingly crucial. However, there are issues that require further investigation, such as the extent to which servant leadership impacts employee career development in the context of modern organizations. Fundamental questions arise, such as whether leaders adopting this approach can effectively motivate, support, and facilitate employee career development, and how the impact of servant leadership on employee growth and development can be measured and assessed (Putranto & Unggul, 2023).

This research is important because it encompasses two key aspects in the organizational context: servant leadership and career development, and how they interrelate to support employee growth. In a dynamic and competitive era, organizations need to understand how to effectively implement servant leadership to assist employees in realizing their full potential through robust career development. This study provides an in-depth perspective on how authentic leadership practices can have a positive impact on individual growth within the organizational context. As a result, this study will investigate the relationship between servant leadership and employee career development within the organizational context. With a better understanding of the impact of servant leadership on employee growth, organizations can develop more effective leadership strategies to support their human resource development and achieve better performance. Although career development and servant leadership are recognized in management literature, empirical research linking the two is still limited. Some studies have revealed potential benefits of combining them, including increased job satisfaction, motivation, and employee commitment (Sendjaya et al., 2008). However, further research is needed to comprehend the dynamics of the interaction between career development and servant leadership and their impact on employee growth and overall organizational success. Therefore, this article aims to explore and analyze the close relationship between career development and servant leadership in supporting employee growth and will investigate existing empirical evidence to support this argument.

Theoretical Review

Servant Leadership

Currently, the concept of leadership has attracted the attention of many researchers due to the increasing number of moral violations and management deviations in the workplace. Servant leadership is a holistic approach that engages employees in various dimensions (e.g., relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual) so that they have the power to grow and develop according to their abilities (Qiu, Dooley, &

Xie, 2020). In its application, the well-being and personal development of individuals within the organization are focused on the honesty of service, ensuring that these individuals can grow and achieve their personal well-being (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014).

Sousa and Dierendonck (2010) define Servant Leadership as a practical altruistic philosophy that supports those who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way to extend service to individuals and institutions. Servant leadership promotes cooperation, trust, insight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment. This means that Servant Leadership, as a practical altruistic philosophy, supports those who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way to extend service to individuals and institutions. Servant Leadership encourages cooperation, trust, insight, listening, and the use of power and empowerment. Servant leadership is also introduced through leadership research. Servant leadership is one of the leadership styles that can motivate employee performance. Servant Leadership is defined as a leadership style that serves its employees. Leaders prioritize the needs of their followers and treat subordinates as colleagues (Sapengga, 2016). According to Sapengga (2016), the concept of servant leadership is the most charismatic leadership concept from a moral perspective. According to Dennis (2004) in Hussain and Ali (2012:363), indicators for measuring Servant Leadership include: compassion, empowerment, vision, humility, and trust.

Servant leadership focuses on a leader who serves the interests of their followers above personal interests (Palomino, et al., 2021). This leadership style can meet the needs of employees by focusing on a comfortable work environment (Eva, et al., 2019), meaning that this type of leadership provides service to its followers with ethical behavior and has a significant impact (Zia, et al., 2021). Furthermore, servant leadership provides full support to employees to continuously enhance their potential (Schopf, et al., 2021), making employees feel nurtured by their leaders. Therefore, it can be concluded that servant leadership is a type of leadership that offers the best service in the form of attention and empathy to its followers, in this case, employees, so that employees genuinely feel cared for by a leader.

Career Development

According to Humaira et al. (2020), career development refers to a series of positions or roles held by an individual throughout their working life through education and training within an organization. Career development also serves as a human resource management activity whose primary goal is to enhance and improve the effectiveness of employees in performing their jobs, enabling them to contribute as much as possible to the achievement of organizational goals.

The Concept and Components of Career Development

Career development plays a crucial role in human resource management, aiming to promote individual growth within the workplace. It involves actions from both organizations and individuals to help achieve set career goals. Beyond merely ascending the organizational hierarchy, career development also encompasses skill development, knowledge mastery, and the accumulation of relevant experience in alignment with an individual's career direction

Components of Career Development

According to Super, D. E., & Knasel, E. G. in 1981, career development comprises several key components. One of them is the development of skills and knowledge relevant to an individual's career goals. This process may involve various activities such as training, courses, or work experiences related to their field or profession.

Additionally, effective career development begins with careful planning. This involves setting short-term and long-term goals, along with concrete steps to achieve them. Planning serves as a guide for individuals in pursuing their desired career achievements. Career development often involves support from a mentor or guide with more experience. Mentors provide valuable guidance, advice, and insights in an individual's career development.

Furthermore, recognition of individual achievements and contributions plays a vital role in career development. This can take the form of promotions, salary increases, or other awards that motivate individuals to continue growing. Regular performance evaluations help individuals identify strengths and areas for development in their work. This information serves as a basis for better career development planning. Accumulating diverse, relevant work experiences is also a crucial component of career development. These experiences help individuals broaden their understanding and skills.

Lastly, building a professional network and maintaining good relationships with individuals in the same industry or field holds significant value in career development. These relationships can open new opportunities and support an individual's career growth. All these components play a vital role in shaping effective career development. Overall, career development is not solely the responsibility of the individual but is also a concern for companies striving to ensure the growth and productivity of their employees.

Employee Development

Discussing employee growth inevitably leads us to the concept of mindset. The mindset theory, originating from educational psychology as elucidated by Dweck (2006), posits that individual mindsets can be categorized into two types: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. Individuals with a growth mindset believe that attributes such as intelligence can develop, while those with a fixed mindset perceive these attributes as static. Research indicates that individuals with a growth mindset are more inclined to learn from their mistakes and achieve higher levels of task performance and learning accomplishments compared to individuals with a fixed mindset (e.g., Asbury et al., 2016; Bostwick and Becker-Blease, 2018; Yeager and Dweck, 2020). Moreover, prior research has found that employees with a growth mindset contribute to increased employee engagement, task performance, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior (Han and Stieha, 2020).

Career development has become a primary focus of human resource management (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). This is crucial as it reflects an organization's efforts to assist employees in achieving their career goals. Research by Demir (2015) emphasizes that career development is the key to enhancing employee satisfaction and commitment. Furthermore, servant leadership has emerged as a leadership model prioritizing service to employees (Greenleaf, 1970). According to a study by Wong and Davey (2019), servant leadership can create an organizational climate that supports employee growth and development. However, the spotlight is on how the integration of career development and servant leadership can benefit organizations. Greenan, Goussé, and Ughetto (2020) emphasize that combining these concepts can help organizations achieve better performance. This not only affects organizational performance but also employee engagement, a key factor in corporate success (Suryandari, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the integration of these concepts can also have a positive impact on employee productivity. Studies by Dinh et al. (2016) suggest that leaders who apply the servant leadership model are more likely to motivate employees to reach their full potential. However, there are challenges in implementing this concept. Although highly promising, implementing servant leadership-based career development is not an easy task, and training leaders to develop the necessary service skills is a necessity (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2018). Regarding measurement and evaluation, it is crucial to have appropriate metrics to assess the quality of career development in the context of servant leadership. This has been developed by Bregenzler et al. (2019), creating a useful measurement tool to evaluate the impact of integrating these concepts. Lastly, the integration of career development and servant leadership can provide a competitive advantage for organizations. Research by Sendjaya et al. (2016) states that this can help organizations win employee loyalty and support long-term growth. Therefore, understanding and implementing career development principles based on servant leadership is a strategic and relevant step for organizations aiming for long-term success.

In an increasingly complex and ever-changing organizational landscape, integrated career development with servant leadership has become a relevant and crucial topic. This concept offers significant potential to enhance organizational performance, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. However, the challenges in its implementation require special attention and effort through leader training and careful evaluation. By understanding and applying career development principles based on servant leadership, organizations can achieve sustainable growth and long-term success. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to understand the underlying mechanisms of the relationship between servant leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of how servant leadership can have a positive impact on organizations through employee engagement, as well as the factors that moderate this relationship. Thus, this research aims to build upon existing knowledge and provide clearer insights into the impact of servant leadership in various organizational contexts.

Methodology

In this research, a literature review approach was employed. The literature review process involved gathering references from several previous studies, which were then compiled to draw conclusions. This compilation was used to evaluate two main aspects: the relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee Development, and Employee Career Development following the influence of Servant Leadership (Mardalis, 1999). In the literature review approach, the main steps involving the process of identifying literature sources began with the collection of various types of literature sources relevant to the research topic, including scholarly journals, books, articles, and related publications. After gathering these literature sources, the next step was selection, where the researchers chose literature sources with high relevance and quality. The focus of this selection was on the concepts of servant leadership, career development, and their impact on employee growth.

The subsequent process involved the analysis and synthesis of literature, where the content of the selected literature sources was analyzed to identify key findings, key concepts, and arguments supporting the research topic. Furthermore, literature synthesis was conducted to organize this information into a coherent framework.

Subsequently, the findings from the literature review were systematically and structurally presented in the academic article. The information was organized based on subtopics and research objectives. The final step was critical analysis, where the researcher critically analyzed the literature. They identified gaps in existing research and sought implications of these findings for the context of servant leadership and career development. Thus, these steps formed the basis for conducting a systematic and structured literature review. Additionally, cross-referencing and guidance comments were also utilized in this research. The goal was to maintain the integrity of the evaluation process and avoid potential information errors due to a lack of clarification in the literature (Sutanto, 2005).

This research was conducted for several crucial reasons. Firstly, servant leadership is one of the leadership concepts gaining increasing attention in management and organizational literature. However, a deeper understanding of how servant leadership can support employee growth and career development is still required.

Secondly, employee career development is a critical aspect of human resource management in various organizations. By understanding the role of servant leadership in this process, organizations can enhance employee performance, retention, and job satisfaction. Thirdly, understanding the concepts of servant leadership and employee career development can provide valuable insights for leaders and practitioners in developing effective and sustainable leadership strategies. Therefore, this research is highly significant in addressing existing knowledge gaps and providing a more comprehensive insight into how servant leadership can contribute to supporting employee growth and career development in an organizational context. For data analysis, the content analysis method was utilized in accordance with

Krippendorff (1993). In this analysis process, data were selected, compared, merged, and categorized to identify relevant information (Sabarguna, 2005).

Result and Discussions

Servant Leadership is a leadership approach that places service to subordinates at the core of leadership functions. In the context of employee career development, this concept holds significant implications. This theory suggests that effective servant leadership can help create an environment where employees feel supported, valued, and motivated to grow and develop professionally. Servant leadership theory emphasizes several key factors. One of them is the leader's involvement and support for employee career development. In this context, leaders who actively apply servant leadership are engaged in assisting the career development of their employees. They provide the necessary support, training, and guidance to facilitate employee career growth.

Additionally, the theory also underscores the importance of providing opportunities to employees. In servant leadership, leaders offer opportunities for employees to develop their skills and knowledge. This can take the form of special projects, additional training, or promotions based on employee performance. Furthermore, this theory highlights a relational approach to leader-subordinate relationships. In servant leadership, these relationships are relational and empathetic. Leaders do not merely view subordinates as sources of productivity but also understand individual career aspirations and goals. They endeavor to support employee career development by empathetically understanding and responding to individual needs and goals. The diagram below represents the model depicting the relationship between key elements in the exploration of servant leadership theory and employee career development:

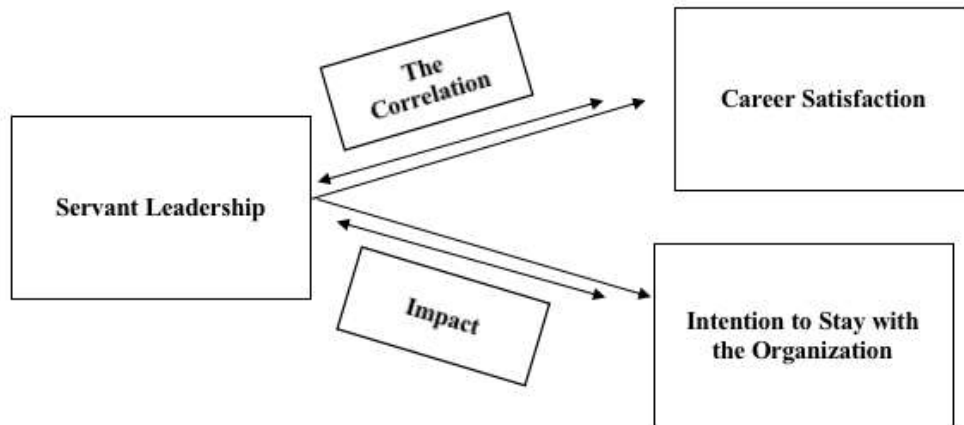


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Faeq, Dalia Khalid., et al. 2021). Role of Servant Leadership in Achieving and Developing Employee’s Career Satisfaction and Intention to Remain with the Organization. Ecoforum. Vol. 10 Issue 1(24).

This model diagram reflects the relationship between concepts in servant leadership theory and employee career development, as outlined in the theoretical literature that serves as the research framework. This model provides a visual perspective on how servant leadership can influence employee career growth and development within the organizational context. In this article, an analysis was conducted through a literature review research method to understand the relationship between three key variables: servant leadership, career development, and employee growth. This study aimed to investigate how servant leadership affects employee career development and, consequently, drive employee growth.

The first literature on servant leadership originated from a journal authored by Faeq et al. (2021). The synthesis discussion in this article primarily focused on how servant leadership influences career satisfaction and employees' intention to stay in the tourism companies in Erbil. The research structure encompassed three main factors: servant leadership, career satisfaction, and employees' intention to stay with the company. The results of the descriptive study indicated a high level of servant leadership in the tourism companies, creating a positive work environment and providing support for career satisfaction. When companies implement servant leadership, employees feel valued and supported, thereby enhancing engagement and the desire to remain with the organization. This research is significant as it offers a fresh scientific insight into the research data in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and provides decision-makers in tourism companies with an understanding of the role of servant leadership in enhancing career satisfaction and employee retention. Overall, the research findings demonstrate that the application of servant leadership can have a positive impact on employee outcomes and contribute to the success and sustainability of tourism companies.

Furthermore, a journal authored by Yulihardi et al. in 2022 discusses the impact of servant leadership, self-confidence, and job satisfaction on the performance of tourism object management groups in the Technical Implementation Unit of Alahan Panjang in Solok Regency. The research found that servant leadership, self-confidence, and job satisfaction had a positive and significant impact on the performance of tourism object managers. This study emphasizes the importance of servant leadership in the tourism sector, as it helps address leadership trust crises and provides a positive example for managers. Moreover, self-confidence plays a crucial role in enhancing performance by instilling managers with the belief that they can successfully complete assigned tasks. Job satisfaction is also identified as a vital factor contributing to the performance of tourism object managers.

The research recommends several policy implications, including the implementation of sincere service-oriented leadership to support tourism object managers. It also suggests enhancing manager self-confidence and improving job satisfaction through rewards and penalties, as well as creating a comfortable work environment. Overall, the findings from this study provide an understanding of the factors influencing the performance of tourism object managers and offer insights to enhance their effectiveness in Solok Regency. The authors also provide recommendations for future research, including exploring Trust in the Coworker (TCW) as a moderating variable and investigating organizational trust and trust in leaders as mediating factors in the relationship between servant leadership and job performance. They also suggest considering other leadership styles and conducting cross-sectoral research with employees from various service industries.

In conclusion, this article highlights the positive impact of servant leadership on job performance and underscores the importance of TCW as a mediating factor. It provides valuable insights for managers and organizations seeking to enhance positive job performance through Servant Leadership practices (Rashid, 2022). From the above articles, the results of the literature research indicate that effective servant leadership practices by organizational leaders can significantly contribute to employee career development. Servant leadership prioritizes serving subordinates, listening to their needs, and providing support for professional growth. Relevant references in the literature suggest that leaders who apply servant leadership principles tend to create a positive work environment that supports positive career development. The Relationship between Career Development and Employee Growth Literature research also indicates that effective career development has a positive impact on employee growth. The career development process, which includes training, skill development, promotions, and increased responsibilities, can boost employees' self-confidence and competence. Relevant references emphasize that employees undergoing effective Career Development tend to achieve greater employee growth, which can provide personal and organizational benefits.

An article written by Arqawi et al. and published in PJAEE in 2021 discusses the relationship between career development and employee loyalty in the context of King Abdulaziz University. The authors highlight the importance of career planning in assisting employees in advancing their careers.

They emphasize that career planning involves aligning organizational opportunities with individual career aspirations. This research found that the level of career path planning at this university is moderate, focusing on career path clarity, path content, initiation in path development, support from top management, and the role of human resource management. The authors also note that the development of career path components has a strong positive relationship with organizational commitment and loyalty. Overall, this article underscores the importance of career development in promoting employee loyalty and organizational success.

The Implications of Servant Leadership on Employees' Growth

The implications of implementing servant leadership for employee growth are highly significant. In this leadership model, leaders focus on serving and developing their employees, leading to several positive implications. First, leaders who apply servant leadership are actively involved in helping employees develop their skills and knowledge. They provide the necessary support, training, and guidance to facilitate employee growth. Therefore, employees have access to resources that support their development. Second, servant leadership also involves providing opportunities for employees to develop their skills and knowledge. Leaders offer opportunities for special projects, additional training, or promotions based on employee performance. This encourages employees to continue learning and enhance their competence. Third, the relationship between leaders and subordinates in servant leadership is relational and empathetic. Leaders don't view subordinates solely as sources of productivity but also understand individual career aspirations. They strive to support employees' career development by understanding and responding to individual needs and goals. This creates an environment in which employees feel valued and heard, which, in turn, can enhance employee motivation and engagement in career development.

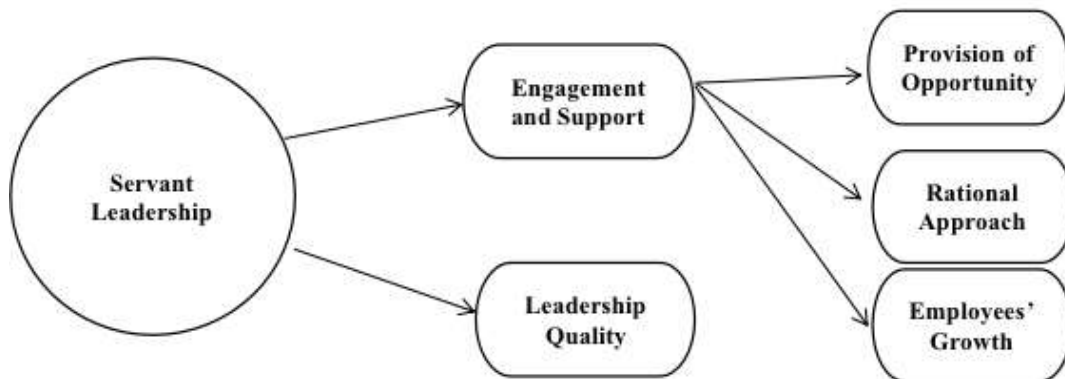


Figure 2: The Implication of Servant Leadership

Source: Spears, L. C. 1996. Reflections on Robert K. Greenleaf and servant-leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 17 (7), 33-35.)

Theoretical Implication

The theoretical implications of this article significantly address the essential role of servant leadership and career development in employee growth. This article strengthens the theoretical foundation of leadership, provides a deeper understanding of the factors influencing career development, and integrates the concept of servant leadership into the existing career growth theory framework. Therefore, this research makes a vital contribution to enriching our knowledge about how leadership and career development play a role in understanding individual growth within an organizational context. This study integrates the concept of servant leadership into the existing career growth theory framework, creating a robust theoretical foundation. It enriches the human resource management literature by expanding the

understanding of how a service-focused leadership approach can impact individual growth. Furthermore, the article identifies the key role of career development as a mediator between servant leadership and employee growth. These theoretical implications provide a deeper insight into how career development efforts can enhance the positive influence of servant leadership on employee growth. Thus, the article not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of the factors influencing career growth but also promotes the development of a more holistic and comprehensive leadership theory. As a result, this article has significant implications for the advancement of management science, human resources, and overall organizational management.

Practical Implication

The practical implications of this article are highly relevant in the context of human resource management and organizational leadership. Within organizations, implementing the principles of servant leadership is key to creating a work environment that supports employee growth. Therefore, leaders need to receive training and development that focuses on the aspects of servant leadership. These training programs can help leaders understand the importance of listening, supporting, and understanding the needs of their employees. Over time, this will influence the organizational culture and create more positive relationships between leaders and their subordinates. Additionally, organizations need to design more focused career development programs that align with individual needs. In practice, this could involve more personalized career planning, with a focus on both short-term and long-term employee goals. In this regard, career development becomes a tool for achieving individual growth. Organizations can provide guidance and support to help employees plan their careers in line with the company's vision and goals. Lastly, employees also need to be actively engaged in the development of their personal career plans. This involves identifying desired career goals and planning concrete steps to achieve them. In this case, career growth theory literature, as discussed in the article, can be used as a guide. Implementing the principles of servant leadership and effective career development programs will create a safer, more inclusive, and growth-supportive environment for all employees. This will positively impact employee satisfaction and engagement, which, in turn, will strengthen the overall performance of the organization

Conclusion and Recommendation

The main purpose of this article was to explore how servant leadership affects employee career development and subsequently fosters employee growth. Initial studies in the literature review investigated the impact of servant leadership on career satisfaction and employee retention in the tourism industry. The results indicated that strong servant leadership contributes to a positive work environment, enhancing career satisfaction. The implementation of servant leadership principles results in employees feeling valued and supported, thereby increasing their engagement and commitment to the organization. Other research articles emphasized the importance of servant leadership, self-confidence, and job satisfaction in improving the performance of tourism management teams. Their findings showed a significant and positive influence of servant leadership, self-confidence, and job satisfaction on the performance of tourism management. This research highlights the crucial role of servant leadership in the tourism sector and underscores the importance of self-confidence in enhancing performance.

The last article explored the correlation between career development and employee loyalty in the context of King Abdulaziz University. The study emphasized the central role of career planning in facilitating employee career advancement. The research found that the level of career path planning at the university was moderate, which positively related to organizational commitment and employee loyalty. In conclusion, this article provides an in-depth discussion of the crucial role of Servant Leadership and Career Development in the context of employee growth. The research findings underscore the relationship between Servant Leadership and employee growth, demonstrating that this leadership approach has a significant impact on creating an organizational environment that supports individual growth. Furthermore, this research identifies career development as a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and employee growth, offering a deeper understanding of how career development efforts can

facilitate the positive impact of Servant Leadership on employee growth. The theoretical implications of this article make a valuable contribution to the management and human resource literature, enriching our understanding of the factors influencing career growth and promoting the development of a more comprehensive leadership theory.

It is essential for organizations to consider leadership training and development focused on servant leadership principles. This way, leaders can internalize these concepts and apply them in their daily practices, creating an environment that supports employee growth. Additionally, more targeted career development programs that align with individual goals need to be designed. Integrating career development as an integral part of employee development strategies will help individuals achieve their desired career growth. Finally, it is crucial for employees to actively engage in their personal career planning, and organizations can provide more detailed guidance to assist them in planning their careers. By adopting a servant leadership approach and implementing appropriate career development programs, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction and engagement, create an environment that supports individual growth, and promote sustainable organizational development.

The article acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, it relies solely on literature research without primary data collection, making its findings dependent on the quality and relevance of existing research. Secondly, this research encompasses various contexts and sectors, making it challenging to generalize the findings to different industries or organizational settings due to contextual factors. Thirdly, the article focuses on specific relationships, overlooking other factors that may influence employee outcomes, potentially leaving unexplained variation. Fourthly, diverse methodologies and measurement instruments affect the validity and reliability of the findings, particularly when self-report data are involved. However, despite these limitations, the article provides valuable insights into the relationship between servant leadership, career development, and employee growth. Future researchers should consider these limitations when conducting further research in this field.

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