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## INFLUENCE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Public service delivery has over the decades faced challenges. Globally, the public has increased demand for transparency and greater accountability for resources spent and better services. Accountability can be enforced by removing bureaucracies, rigidity and red tapes in the public sector thereby encouraging effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery leading to satisfied citizens. The general objective of the study was to establish the influence of servant leadership on public service delivery

**Methodology:** The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

**Findings:** The study found out that servant leaders significantly influence service delivery and that the leaders in chosen should be in the front line championing better service delivery to the public

**Recommendations:** The challenges facing the public sector in many developing countries suggest a need to transcend traditional rationality and move towards recognizing the pivotal role leadership plays, particularly leadership based on moral values in fostering organizational performance and commitment. The study also recommends for the reduction of corruption in the extent to which abuse and misuse of public resources for private gain have been controlled and minimized. The advocating of equity which has to do with the geographical and demographic targeting of services especially to the neediest groups in the society. This includes targeting the poor and marginalized who have previously been ignored

**Keywords:** *Influence, servant leadership, public service delivery*

## INTRODUCTION 1.1 Background of the Study

A great deal of time and effort has been devoted to the study of leaders and their leadership styles because leadership plays a critical role in a global environment (Johnson, 2008). Ensuring the wellbeing of employees so that they can remain committed to their organizations is also another major challenge facing organizations today. There are very high costs associated with employee turnover and in order to deal with these costs organizations have to strive to create a bond between the employee and the organization (Johnson, 2008). Whichever way leadership and its pattern is defined, one thing that is certain and generally acknowledged among scholars is that from time immemorial, the role of leaders in ensuring excellent organizational performance and workers commitment to work cannot be over emphasized (Akinola & Olumide, 2011). Those organizations that meet the needs of the employees and help them to become the best that they can be are more likely to have employees who are content and motivated and who in turn can be more committed to the organization.

Servant leadership is a subject that has drawn a lot of interest in the leadership literature in the recent years. It is a phrase that was coined by Robert Greenleaf in his essay called, *The Servant as Leader* (Hamilton, 2005). Having read Herman Hesse's short novel entitled, *Journey to the East*, Greenleaf (1970) concluded that a great leader is first experienced by others as a servant to others (Spears, 1996). According to Spears (2004), interest in the philosophy and practice of servant leadership is now at an all-time high. Keith (2009) concurs by stating that servant leadership is becoming a more increasingly popular concept in the repertoire of leadership styles. Numerous academic and popular writers also agree that servant leadership is a valid leadership style for consideration in today's business world (Russell, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002). Popular leadership writers and researchers have stated that servant leadership should be considered by the leaders of today's organization (Covey, 2006; Blanchard, 2002; Northouse, 2004).

Servant leadership has been said to be the key to the better world that people are yearning for that is freer, healthier, more humane and more prosperous. It is a leadership style that is good for the leader as well as the led because it is ethical, practical and a meaningful way to live and be led (Dierendonck, 2010). According to Barbuto and Wheeler (2002, 2006), servant leadership however, is one of the most popularly discussed in the literature but the least critically examined leadership philosophies in most of the public organizations and yet it should be a natural model for these organizations. Levering and Muskowitz (2000) contend that servant leadership has been practiced and advocated in some of the best companies to work for in America on the basis of the Fortune Survey. Three of the five best places in Fortunes January 2000 "Top 100 best Companies to Work for in America" were held the companies that lived by the practices of servant leadership. According to Abraham and Lawrence 2014, In order to adopt into a changing environment, every organization be it public or private must come up with large scale initiatives that are well planned in order to bring transformation on how organizations carry out their operations. Since the crusade to bring change in the running of the public sector in Africa started in the 80s, many African countries borrowed from international financiers and also sort for grants from developed countries in order to start campaigns geared towards the fight against corruption, administration of revenue,

civil service management and the general public finance management not forgetting issues to do with transparency.

In other countries such as India and the Philippines, donors have demanded frameworks of good leadership and public service delivery against benchmarked results which serve as the basis for sustained development investment support (Singh, Pathak, Naz & Belwal, 2010). Sample surveys have been used to assess public satisfaction with service delivery. Some of the dimensions assessed in performance are: time and quality of service, helpfulness of staff and amount of time taken for problems resolution. The reports are intended to put public service organizations in check as far as accountability for better public service delivery is concerned (Wauters, 2011).

In South Africa, the government summed up particular phases that can be adopted in order to improve provision of service in the public sector by those in management positions such as executives as well as overseers. The ability of the Nigerian public service to effectively and efficiently manage public affairs and ensure prompt and quality service delivery had always been called into questioning over the years. Consequently, a number of far-reaching reforms on its structure and personnel management aimed at improving its performance have been put in place by the Nigerian government since its inception but currently, the service delivery in Nigerian public sector is still below the public expectations (Oyedele, 2014).

There have been notable adjustments in the Tanzania public sector for the last twenty years whose rationalization has been founded on the need to adopt to sensitivity to the requirements of the natives through augmentation of openness, enhancing greater efficiency as well as efficacy in service provision, presenting inclusive leadership as well as applying citizen specific practices in ministries, Local Authorities as well as Government departments. The outcomes that were projected are however not satisfying especially after a lot of efforts have been focused on all-encompassing modifications on the public sector for better-quality provision during the last twenty years (Lufunyo, 2013).

In Kenya, after the completion of ERSWE process in 2009, the vision 2030 with main agenda of elevating Kenya to a more competitively gritty economy internationally as well as prosperous through improved standards of living by the year 2030 was presented by the Government. The only way that this development agenda can be realized is through a ruthlessly effective public service delivery platform (Wahida, 2016). The very nature of the public sector service delivery in any country determines whether there is success or otherwise when it comes to provision of public services (Forrer et al, 2010)

Accountability can be enforced by removing bureaucracies, rigidity and red tapes in the public sector thereby encouraging effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery leading to satisfied citizens (Waring, Currie, & Bishop, 2013). Frequent public outcry because of the limitedness of the access to government services was felt in the 1980s (Ndubai, 2016). The inadequate service delivery was caused by some notable reasons like unreasonable delays in getting desired services, corruption practices by civil servants, deteriorating nature of keeping as well as obtaining records when required, chronic absenteeism as well as undesirable practices of handling customers.

The desire to improve public service delivery originated from the ERS (2003-2007). This strategy was adopted by then new Government of Kenya which assumed power on the platform of change as a result of persistent economic performance decline, quality of life and public service delivery before 2003. The RBM mechanism was put in place by the government back in the year 2004 with a redeployment towards improvement on conveyance of progress outcomes to residents (Government of Kenya, 2003).

Service is quite an essential characteristic of servant leadership and has been said to be the hallmark of servant leaders (Russell & Stone, 2002; Covey, 2002; Wis, 2002). Servant leadership begins when a leader assumes the position of servant when interacting with the followers and it is this virtue of service that is at the core of the servant leadership model (Patterson, 2003). Servant leaders are first and foremost servants at heart and are called to a life of service. Servant leaders choose to lead based on the interest of others, as opposed to self-interest (Russell & Stone, 2001; Patterson, 2003). Amy (2012), states that Greenleaf gave significant weight to the idea that true leadership carries a responsibility to think first about being of service to others. According to Patterson (2003), servant leaders model service through their own behaviour thus cultivating an organizational culture of service that inspires and motivates followers.

Winston (2003) proposed that the leader's service to the follower results in the follower's reciprocal service to the leader. Stone et al (2004) argued that the motive of the servant leader's influence is not to direct others but rather to motivate and facilitate service and stewardship by the followers themselves. Servant leadership is therefore different from other leadership styles since its main focus is on the service of people rather than control or self-interest and as such it can contribute significantly to employee organizational commitment. Empirical studies have supported this servant leadership variable (Hale & Fields, 2007; Patterson, 2002; Russell & Stone, 2002; Mazareiet al, 2013).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Public sector reforms have become a common phenomenon around the globe, especially in developing countries. These have become the way of responding to the needs of the taxpayers. The primary development goal for any country is to achieve broad-based, sustainable improvement in the standards of the quality of life for its citizens. The Public service and in particular the civil service plays an indispensable role in the delivery of public services that are key to the functioning of a state economy. When the delivery of services is constrained or becomes ineffective, it affects the quality of life of the people and nation's development process.

Public service delivery has over the decades faced challenges (Ndubai, 2016). The introduction of various policies for instance performance contracting as well as measurement and evaluation has not yielded expected results (Kamara, 2016). The quality assessment and service delivery improvement strategy report by the Kenya School of Government (2015) revealed low employee performance and productivity which had led to decline in the customer satisfaction level in the Kenyan Public Sector from 73% in the year 2012/2013 to 65% in the year 2014/2015. There is hence a need to focus approach on other strategies to improve service delivery in the public sector for instance the adoption of servant leadership.

There have been a lot of inefficiencies in service delivery by governments to the public (Obegi 2014). It is a well-known fact that service delivery by governments is beset with a lot of challenges ranging from corruption, political interference, poor working condition, outdated and outmoded systems, tribalism, nepotism, procedures and practices among others, conspire to impact adversely on service delivery, (United Nations, 2015). According to (Mohammed Nor et al., 2010), public sector organizations agree that customer service delivery is one of the most important vital factors that contribute to the establishment of reputation and credibility among the public. They argue that the public complaint of long queues, poor service delivery and insufficient physical facilities, wrangles amongst the leadership. This paper sought to establish influence of servant leadership on public service delivery

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to establish influence of servant leadership on public service delivery.

### 1.4 Justification and Significance of the Study

The study will be beneficial to leaders since it provide valuable information on the awareness and effects of servant leadership on public service. The policy makers and regulators such as law bodies will have an opportunity to understand the prevailing situation in their countries regarding public service delivery. This will influence policy makers in formulating informed policies regarding improvement of public service delivery with a focus on leadership styles used. The study will be important to the policy makers who formulate strategies and the whole organization since they implement the strategies. The study will be of important to future researchers and scholars since it would be a source of material for their research and will also help them in identifying the research gaps they need to fill. This will help deepen the empirical research in servant leadership and service delivery.

Moreover it would provide knowledge to the scholars since it provides important literature in development and discovery of new ideas, concept and theorems. It would assist other scholar in doing research in this area of studies. While recommendations will give information on further areas of research. The study is accessible to public which would be used by anybody in undertaking research, training, education, policy making and other tasks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW 2.1 Theoretical review

Two theories were found to be relevant in establishing establish influence of servant leadership on public service delivery. The theories that were found to best inform the research constructs are the Servant leadership, Greenleaf (1970) and control theory (Ouchi, 1979).

### 2.2.1 Servant Leadership Theory

Servant leadership, first proposed by Greenleaf (1970) is a theoretical framework that advocates that a leader's primary motivation and role is service to others. Greenleaf first coined this modern term servant-leadership in 1970 in the essay entitled, The Servant as Leader (Spears, 1996).

Servant leadership is a type of leadership which comes under the democratic style. This theory advocates that a leader's primary motivation and role is to serve and meet the needs of others, which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership. Servant leaders develop people, helping them to strive and flourish (Russell & Stone, 2002; McMinn, 2001). Servant leadership is a belief that organizational goals will be achieved on a long term basis only by first facilitating the growth, development and general wellbeing of the individuals who comprise the organization (Stone et al, 2003). It is therefore a leadership style that emphasizes that leaders should be attentive to the concerns of their followers and empathize with them and at the same time they should take care of them and nurture them (Northouse, 2007). The best test of the leader is whether those served grow as persons and whether while being served they become healthier, wiser and more able themselves to become servant leaders (Wheeler, 2011). This theory was applied in the study as a board with diversity is expected to perform its functions better and hence lead to improvement of financial performance and vice versa. The theory posits that a board with many independent members would be in a better position to have objective oversight. It was hence expected that organization with a high proportion of independent members in their boards would perform better. Based on this understanding, the study used servant leadership theory to show that serving optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership this will enhance service delivery in the public sector

### **2.2.2 Control Theory**

Control theory, invented by Ouchi (1979) and Eisenhardt (1985) uses the notion of modes of control to describe all attempts to ensure that individuals in organizations act in a way that is consistent with organizational goals and objectives (Kirsch, 1997). The concept of control is based on the premise that the controller and the contolee have different interests. These different interests will be overcome by the controller's modes of control (Tiwana, 2009). Modes of control may distinguish between formal and informal mechanisms. Formal modes of control are defined as Behavior control and Outcome control. Behavior control consists of articulated roles and procedures and rewards based upon those rules. Outcome control is mechanisms for assigning rewards based on articulated goals and outcomes. The informal modes of control are carried out by the control modes labeled as clan and self. Clan are the mechanisms of a group sharing common values, beliefs, problems, and these mechanisms work through activities as hiring & training of staff, socialization etc. The control mode of the self is about individually defined goals and can be carried through the mechanisms of individual empowerment, self-management, self-set goals, etc. (Kirsch, 1997). This theory proposes a framework for control approach to strategy formulation which integrates a number of key control mechanisms arising from strategic plan implementation. The control mechanisms and rules must also be aligned with the overall organization goals through effective monitoring and evaluation as well as the goals of individual teams. Based on this understanding, the study used control theory to focus on modes of monitoring and evaluation on in successful strategic plan implementation to enhance service delivery in the public sector

### **2.2 Empirical Review**

Solomon (2011) did a study to find out the effects of Rapid Results Initiatives (RRI) on service delivery in the civil service of the republic of Kenya. The study employed descriptive research

design where a sample size of 94 respondents was involved in the gathering of data. The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling from a target population of 940 respondents. The data was sourced through questionnaires. Collected data was sorted, cleaned, coded and analyzed by the aid of statistical package of social scientist programme (SPSS). The data was tabulated, analyzed and presented in form of tables, pie charts, and figures. The study found out RRI had positive effects on service delivery. Most respondents (43.5%) agreed that establishment of anticorruption plans and boxes improved service delivery and reduced corruption cases. The study recommends that more sensitization forums should be held on service charters. It also recommends that targets set should not be so many and that more training should be conducted focusing on all employees. Also recommended is facilitation in terms of transport, conducive working environment, tools and equipment.

Robert (2011) did a study on the effects of customer orientation and servant leadership on frontline employees' burnout and, subsequently, on their turnover intentions. Also investigated in the study was the intervening role of person-job fit in the process. Data collected from 530 frontline bank employees in New Zealand served as the study setting. Results showed that both customer orientation and servant leadership significantly reduce burnout and ultimately turnover intentions. Results also show that person-job fit mediates the influences of customer orientation and servant leadership on burnout and turnover intentions.

Mark (2019) examined students' perceptions of interprofessional practice within a framework of servant leadership principles, applied in the care of rural older adults utilizing a service learning model. Mobile wellness services were provided through the Idaho State University Senior Health Mobile project in a collaborative team approach in the community-based setting. Students from varied health professional programs were placed in teams for the provision of wellness care, with communication among team members facilitated by a health professions faculty member serving as field coordinator. The interdisciplinary education perception scale (IEPS) was used to measure students' perceptions of interprofessional practice using a pretest post-test research design. Multivariate analysis was performed revealing a significant pretest to post-test effect on students' perceptions as measured by factors inherent in the IEPS and deemed essential to effective interprofessional practice. Univariate analysis revealed a significant change in students' perception of professional competence and autonomy, actual cooperation and resource sharing within and across professions, and an understanding of the value and contributions of other professionals from pretest to post-test.

Ongachi (2012) did a study to investigate how the strategic plan, performance contracting, the customer service charter and results based management approach influence service delivery in the department. Service delivery is a great concern to the government of Kenya and more so to the end users hence, part of the requirement for wider economic recovery strategy (ERS) in the public sector reform programme (PSRP). This research study will be of importance to the government of Kenya, probation department, stakeholders in the correctional services within the community, and to scholars and researchers who may need such data for empirical review in further studies. The scope of the study was confined to the Upper region of Eastern province with a target population of 40 probation officers and 10 beneficiaries of the department's services, categorized as the control

group (Offenders, relatives to offenders, victims and community members). Data was obtained through the use of questionnaires which were self-administered to the probation officers while interviews were conducted to gather information from the beneficiaries because a majority of the department's beneficiaries are either semi literate or illiterate. Owing to the small sample size of the target population, no sampling technique was used. The data collected was analyzed using frequency distribution tables and percentages from which conclusions about the key variables were drawn. Descriptive analysis was used to expound on the data collected. The research established that there is a positive relationship between public sector reforms and service delivery. As the findings indicated that, as a result of the introduction of PSRs by the government, service delivery is more customer centered and results oriented. Consequently, we have prompt service delivery and reduced customer complaints translating to efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. In spite of the significant impact that PSRs have had on service delivery in the department, the findings revealed that there is need for the department to boost the human resource capacity through regular trainings and provide adequate resources for the successful implementation of the PSRs.

Salome (2013) did a study to establish the relationship between drivers of strategy implementation on service delivery in Siaya County Government, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to examine how servant leadership, stakeholder involvement, financial capacity and monitoring and evaluation affect service delivery of county government of Siaya, Kenya. The study was built on the Resource Based View Theory, Stakeholder Theory and Control Theory. This study was conducted at the Siaya County government head office. Data was collected from the 70 employees to be drawn from Human resource & Administration, Finance & control, Legal and Audit divisions involved in strategic planning and implementation. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A census was used to collect the intended information from the targeted respondents. The primary data was collected through the use of questionnaires. The secondary data was obtained from published documents such as journals, periodicals, magazines and reports to supplement the primary data. A pilot study was conducted for the data collection instrument. The data was analyzed with help of SPSS. The study adopted regression analysis at 5% level of significance to determine strength and direction of the relationship of the variables. The study concluded that servant leadership, communication; coordination and technical expertise significantly influence service delivery in the County Government of Siaya. The study concluded that servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on service delivery.,

### **Research gaps**

Methodological gap is the gap that is presented as a result in limitations in the methods and techniques used in the research (explains the situation as it is, avoids bias, positivism, etc.) Salome (2013) did a study to establish the relationship between drivers of strategy implementation on service delivery in Siaya County Government, Kenya. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A census was used to collect the intended information from the targeted respondents. The primary data was collected through the use of questionnaires. The secondary data was obtained from published documents such as journals, periodicals, magazines and reports to supplement the primary data while Mark (2019) examined students' perceptions of interprofessional practice

within a framework of servant leadership principles, applied in the care of rural older adults utilizing a service learning model. Mobile wellness services were provided through the Idaho State University Senior Health Mobile project in a collaborative team approach in the community-based setting. The interdisciplinary education perception scale (IEPS) was used to measure students' perceptions of interprofessional practice using a pretest post-test research design. Both studies presented a methodological gap since study will adopt a desktop literature review method (desk study). Which involves an in-depth review of studies related to the study was to establish influence of servant leadership on public service delivery.

Geographical gap is a knowledge gap that considers, the untapped potential or missing/limited research literature, in the geographical area that has not yet been explored or is under-explored. For instance Robert (2011) did a study on the effects of customer orientation and servant leadership on frontline employees' burnout and, subsequently, on their turnover intentions. Also investigated in the study was the intervening role of person-job fit in the process. Data collected from 530 frontline bank employees in New Zealand served as the study setting. The study presented a geographical gap as it was done in New Zealand while our current study will focus on establishing influence of servant leadership on public service delivery.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to influence of servant leadership on public service delivery. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on influence of servant leadership on public service delivery from various data bases. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject of influence of servant leadership on public service delivery. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to influence of servant leadership on public service delivery which was split into top key words. After an in-depth search into the top key words influence, servant leadership, public service delivery, the researcher arrived at 5 articles that were suitable for analysis. The drawing and interpretation of research findings and sense which is not a quantitative impact evaluation, was important in this context, which implies that qualitative and thematic analysis was most suitable in this study.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER STUDY**

### **4.1 Summary**

Service delivery has become a parameter of defining the level of satisfaction amongst clients in most organizations, contributing on development and restructuring of most organization and reshaping its destiny politically, economically, socially, ecologically and environmentally. The study found out that servant leadership styles has a positive impact on public service delivery. Every government is mandated to ensure that quality services are made available to the public.

Public services are faced with challenges in human resource capacity especially in attracting and retaining competent personnel and providing affordable, acceptable and accessible services. Most public services offer inferior conditions of services relative to the private sector. As a result staff is lost to the private sector

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

Based on the critical review. The study concluded that servant leaders significantly influence service delivery. It was further concluded that the leaders in chosen should be in the front line championing better service delivery to the public. Moreover servant leaders should provide service training to help subordinates to have positive attitude and to deliver timely and accurate services.

#### **4.2 Recommendations**

The challenges facing the public sector in many developing countries suggest a need to transcend traditional rationality and move towards recognizing the pivotal role leadership plays, particularly leadership based on moral values in fostering organizational performance and commitment. The study also recommends for the reduction of corruption in the extent to which abuse and misuse of public resources for private gain have been controlled and minimized. The advocating of equity which has to do with the geographical and demographic targeting of services especially to the neediest groups in the society. This includes targeting the poor and marginalized who have previously been ignored

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