

Development of a Servant Leadership Questionnaire

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Abstract

The United States of America is in the midst of a leadership crisis with leaders putting their self-interest above that of their stakeholders. Servant Leadership is a perceived solution, but lacks empirical support. The researchers will develop a multidimensional instrument using Spears' 10 constructs of Servant Leadership and exploratory factorial analysis (EFA). This study may shape the future of leadership training and development and support good decision-making.

Problem

Due to the leadership crisis facing the United States of America, there is a growing interest in leadership values and one's moral compass. Although Servant Leadership is perceived as a possible solution, it lacks empirical support due, in part, to the lack of a measurement strategy.

There is a perceived need for more empirical support for Servant Leadership (Graham, 1991; Laub, 2003; Russell, 2001; Griffin, 2004). Much of the research on servant leadership has been qualitative (Nwogu, 2004). There has only been one other instrument developed using Spear's constructs; however, the scale is not as valid and reliable as other instruments (Ferch, personal communication, April 17, 2013).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop a multi-dimensional, valid, and reliable instrument which will accurately assess the presence of those attributes and behaviors associated with Servant Leaders.

Relevant Literature

In 1970, Greenleaf published a theory of **Servant Leadership**.

The Servant Leader's focus is on meeting the needs of others by developing employees to **bring out their best, coaching others, and encouraging their self-expression** (Greenleaf, 2002). According to Greenleaf (2002), the Servant Leader ensures the needs of followers are always considered first, and then met.

Spears' (1998, 2002) developed 10 constructs of Servant Leadership based on the writings of Greenleaf awareness:

- building a sense of community
- healing
- persuasion
- commitment to the growth of people
- stewardship
- foresight
- conceptualization
- empathy
- Listening
- Awareness

There is a perceived lack of empirical evidence to support the presence of Servant Leadership. (Graham, 1991; Laub, 2003; Russell, 2001; Griffin, 2004)

Research Question

To what extent is it possible to measure the presence of Spears' Servant Leadership constructs through a multidimensional written instrument?

Procedures

The researchers will use email to solicit 15 subject matter experts (SMEs) to participate in an abridged Delphi technique. The SMEs will have a publication record in Servant Leadership. They will aid in establishing the relevance of each survey item in relation to Spear's constructs.

A snowball sampling approach will be utilized to recruit a small sample of subjects ($N = 20$) for the pre-field test.

The StudyResponse Project will be hired to recruit 3 large, stratified, random samples ($N \geq 300$ /each) for the field test and 2 cycles of instrument administration. Respondents will be currently employed adults who report to a supervisor.

Will use study data to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) following the EFA.

Data Analysis

Abridged Delphi technique; pre-field testing; content validity ratios (CVR); and content validity index (CVI) to refine items and establish content validity.

Field test with 2 cycles of instrument administration to large ($N \geq 300$), stratified, random samples.

Bartlett's Test and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures (KMO) will be used to establish sampling adequacy.

Principle component analysis (PCA), Kaiser Rule, and scree plot will be used to extract factors.

Conduct EFA to extract factors and perform factor rotation. Plan to use the same data to conduct a CFA and SEM.

Findings

Not applicable, since the study has yet to be conducted.

Limitations

Some of the subjects participating in the field test and instrument administration cycles may be challenged to distinguish between the six (6) step Likert scale to be utilized in the instrument's design.

There are different definitions of Spears' constructs, and the researchers may not select the most appropriate definition from the literature.

Monetary payments will be provided to subjects. Perhaps a sample completing the instrument for intrinsic reasons other than income may have different results.

Conclusions

Not applicable, since the study has yet to be conducted.

Social Change Implications

When leaders fail to use good judgment in their decision-making it can have an adverse impact on key stakeholders and subsequently society. As Servant Leadership gains empirical support, it will likely shape leadership training and development; placing emphasis on putting the needs of others above one's own self-interest. The focus on values-based leadership is hoped to improve decision-making, which will benefit key stakeholders and society as a whole.

This will be a self-funded study.