The relationship between servant leadership style and work engagement with managers’ efficiency in Zahedan medical sciences University hospitals

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Abstract

Field and objective: one of the most fundamental factors in creating motivation in the individuals and enhancing their efficiency is to increase their work engagement. Since the work engagement and efficiency can be subjected to various intra- and extra-organizational factors including the managers’ leadership style, therefore the present study is seeking to investigate the relationship between servant leadership style and work engagement with the managers’ efficiency in Zahedan Medical Sciences University hospitals.

Methodology: the current is a descriptive research of the correlation type which has been undertaken in 9 months in 2015 among the managers of the hospitals associated with Zahedan medical sciences universities. The number of the managers and supervisors of the hospitals was totally estimated to be 250 individuals by making use of the information acquired from the personnel department out of which 148 individuals were selected as the study sample volume. To collect the data there was made use of three standard questionnaires: Peterson’s servant leadership questionnaire (2003), Schaufeli et al work engagement questionnaire (2002) and Talcott Parsons efficiency questionnaire (1999). The data analysis by the use of descriptive and inferential statistics (Spearman correlation coefficient) was carried out in SPSS 19.

Findings: the study findings indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership and work engagement with managers’ efficiency (P<0.01). Also, the results indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between servant leadership components and work engagement with managers’ efficiency and a positive and significant relationship has also been found between job engagement components and the managers’ efficiency.

Conclusion: improving the leadership style components can enhance the job engagement and elevate managers and supervisors’ efficiency.

Keywords: efficiency, humbleness and modesty, dedication, reliability, work engagement.
Introduction:
Hospitals are among the greatest groups offering treatment and health care in public and private sectors and their work interactions with the patients is very extensive and high [1] in comparison to the other organizations offering health care services and inefficiency and inadequacy in their performances incurs detrimental results which cannot be compensated for [2]. Therefore, all of the countries are in need of efficient and motivated managers to fulfill their objectives in health sector. Schaufeli et al considered engagement as a construct independent from job burnout and they defined it as a positive, satisfying job-related mental state which can be determined through dimensions such as absorption, vigor and dedication and they have been extensively validated. Work engagement refers to the extent of the energy and engagement that a person feels regarding his or her job and to the extent s/he acts efficiently as well and it is comprised of three dimensions of absorption, vigor and dedication [3]. The subject of work engagement among the managers and the nurses is of a great importance. Job engagement is a concept which has a positive relationship with positive outcomes such as job performance, organizational civic behaviors enhancement and job satisfaction and it has a high negative relationship with intentions to leave [4]. Individuals with job engagement exhibit higher performances, they are found to be interested in their jobs and spend a lot of efforts in fulfilling what has been assigned to them and in facing the problems and hardship they are more stable and this directly influences the treatment affairs and the health care system accomplishment[6]. MirKamali defines “leadership as the power to attract the individuals and influence and affect them in such a manner that the followers voluntarily accept an individual’s leadership under certain circumstances” [7]. Louser recognizes “the leadership style as a combination of characteristics, skills and behaviors that are taken advantage of by the manager to interact with the staff” [8]. Also, the scientists in various fields of organizational behavior have offered various styles for the leadership and such styles differ to a great extent in different organizations around the world and they are shown to be influenced by the features and attributes governing an environment. One such a style which has been greatly under the focus by many is the servant leadership. The servant leader is intrinsically tends to provide service. The feature of providing service to others does not mean that the servant leader performs the works and the duties in his or her periphery, rather the focus of such a leadership and the leader is on this idea that the leader by any means improves his followers to reach their objectives and to provide service for the organization and the society and s/he reinforces the followers’ sense of independence. Servant leadership style is rooted in providing service to the others and this originates from the natural tendency to or feeling of providing service [9]. The servant leadership is an appropriate leadership style for the emerging challenging and novel role taken by the mangers. The servant leader does not possess a central position in the group. Rather, it provides the group with resources and supports them and these are carried out without he being expecting to be thanked or gratified [10]. In the theory of servant leadership the followers come first in superiority. The servant leadership constructs, according to Peterson, are love and kindness, humbleness and modesty, altruism, reliability, helpfulness, and empowerment [11]. In servant leadership
management theory offered by Denison kindness has been regarded as the main factor which causes a leader not to see an individual as only an instrument for accomplishing the objectives. Rather, every individual is considered as a human being with his or her needs and wants and various inclinations [12]. Humbleness and modesty are also intended to mean that the individual should not only pay attention and be considerate of his or her own rather s/he should attend to the others and take their capabilities and talents into consideration. Altruism means to help and assist the others and these are not incited by the motivation of receiving rewards from outside. Reliability is the sustainable and persistent confidence based on the individual’s truthfulness, ability and/or characteristics. Providing service and serving the others is the central core of the servant leadership and empowerment entails the inauguration of power to the others and for the servant leadership this is taken to include effective listening, the creation of sympathy and empathy in the individuals and underscoring the group and team work [10]. Therefore, the management and leadership style is a facilitating and motivating factor and it is shown to affect the staff efficiency and eventually the organization’s efficiency in a direct and indirect manner [15]. Undoubtedly, managers can display an optimum and proper performance through selecting appropriate leadership style and stepping in this trend and career will finally lead to loyalty, affective attachment, investing a great deal of effort to fulfill the organizational efforts, believing in the organizational values and generally it will create efficiency in an optimum and favorable level in the entire organization, or, quite conversely, they can cause a reduction in the staff engagement, job intricacies, frustration, job burnout, an increase in anxiety and irritability and wastage and diminishing of the organization’s human resources. Since, the managers’ job engagement is affected by the various factors both from inside and outside the organization including the leadership style factors and the managers play a pertinent role is servicing the people, thus the author of the current research paper is seeking to find an answer to the question as whether there is a statistically significant relationship between servant leadership style and job engagement with managers efficiency among Zahedan medical sciences university hospitals managers and if there is such a relationship how intensified is the leadership style and work engagement effects on the managers’ efficiency?

A great majority of the studies indicate that the staff best perform in challenging rich and thick environments, and also in environments where their engagement is enhanced and augmented [16]. This means that the organizations should provide their staff with sufficient resources such as feedback, social support and the opportunity to obtain diverse and variegated skills. In fact, the researches indicate that the management can influence the staff’s demands and occupational resources and this can indirectly impact their engagement and performance [18, 19]. To preserve their competitive status in its comprehensive quality concept, the organizations move in the direction towards concepts such as learning, innovation and continuous improvement in a global and universal level [20], that is because the organizations as a system of individuals and human cohorts are exposed to accelerated and vast environmental changes and during the course of time they try to learn things regarding their undertakings and activities. In other words, organizations like the individuals are born with the ability to learn. Therefore, the subject of organizational learning has become the focus of the organizational and managerial modern theories and it can be concluded that one of the important challenges in various managerial levels is the increase in
the organizational learning potential [13]. So, the concept of work engagement emerged as a result of the shift in the studies trend to the opposite extreme of the job burnout. At first, the job engagement was conceptualized as the opposite end of the job burnout spectrum. Based on the various opinions declared regarding the issue, the work engagement points to vocational energy, attachment and effectiveness and it is exactly the opposite end of the job burnout idea. The staff members with job engagement tend to work hard and they enjoy a positive mental image by which they are enabled to accomplish numerous functions in an environment [22]. Some of the research studies have provided evidences for the relationship between the role played by stress and work engagement [3]. The study conducted by Khan and Iqbal [24] investigated the relationship between occupational stress and job engagement among 137 respondents from various organizations and the results were reflective of a high negative correlation ($r=0.79$). Furthermore, the organizations and their managers are completely aware that they are faced with rapid and complicated changes and variations and this indefinite and uncertain move towards the future is accompanied with the individuals’ demands for exhibiting a higher participation rate in all of the organizational levels and this has strikingly caused changes in the leadership perceptions, particularly in the communicational roles between the follower and the leader. The majority of the theories has been laid upon the foundation of the importance of the leader role regarding the followers to accomplish organization mission and there is posited the question that what would be the effect exerted by the leader on the staff vocational attitudes? Although many factors can be enumerated as having an impact on the staff attitude and behavior, the studies are suggestive of the idea that such attitudes are influenced by the leadership style in most of the fields [25]. The servant leadership style as a novel approach may be helpful for the organizational leaders from the perspective of enhancing the organizational members’ performances through training the staff members’ attitudes and their occupational behaviors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment [26]. Such a leadership style is not only a humanist style and based on the ethical principles, but it is also predicted that it can be fruitful for elevating the staff’s psychological strength and job satisfaction and productivity in the organizations [27].

It is evident that the sport organizations should stop living in the past and prepare themselves for securing their real needs of the today’s sport world. It is necessary for them to change their attitudes, behaviors and strategies, even if such changes cause changes in their structure, organization and managerial principles. Izadi et al in their own study came to this conclusion that the servant leadership style has a considerable effect on the nurses’ performances and those of the managers and the supervisors who make special use of such a style in administrating their departments can succeed in their occupation [28].

✔ Materials and methods:
The present study is a descriptive research and it is an applied one from the perspective of the objectives and nature because it is planning to develop knowledge and awareness for applying it in a certain field in the hospitals. The current study has been conducted once in a 10-monthly time span in 2015, therefore, temporally the current study is considered as a cross-sectional research. The study population includes the managers and the supervisors of Zahedan medical
sciences university hospitals which incorporate 5 hospitals in the Zahedan County, Imam Khomeini Hospital in the city of Khash, Razi Hospital in the city of Saravan, and Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) hospital in Chabahar all of which are associated with Zahedan medical sciences university. The total number of the managers and the supervisors in the present study was estimated as equal to 250 individual by taking advantage of the personnel department. The study sampling method was a randomized sampling method proportionate to the study population volume which was chosen to be as equal to 148 individuals based on Morgan’s table. The information gathering methods in the present study are: library research including the native and foreign books and journals and searching in the information database (internet). To find access to the theoretical principles of the study and to apply the experiences accumulated by the other researchers the use of questionnaire was considered as the main tool for gathering the information to acquire and extract the data required for the current study.

1. The revised servant leadership questionnaire: the servant leadership style questionnaire was prepared by Peterson [11] and it contains 20 questions which were modified by the researcher and it assesses four factors including providing service (questions 1 to 5), humbleness and modesty (questions 6 to 10), reliability (questions 11 to 15) and kindness (questions 16 to 20) and its reliability and validity have been confirmed.

2. Work engagement questionnaire: in the present study work engagement questionnaire was applied which was constructed by Schaufeli et al [3] and it is comprised of 17 questions and they are to assess three subscales including 1. Being engaged at work, 2. Being devoted to work, 3. Being absorbed to work.

3. The truncated Talcott Parsons efficient performance questionnaire containing 16 questions which evaluated efficiency in four dimensions of adaptation, objective actualization, coherence, persistence and continuation.

In the present study, although there has been made use of standard questionnaires for collecting the information, but in order for the study credibility to be increased the researcher attempted to verify the content validity of the questionnaires. To guarantee the questionnaires’ content validity, there has been taken advantage of the assistant and supervising professors and also the organizationally specialist experts. Through acquiring the ideas and notions of the aforementioned individuals and figures the necessary modifications were carried out in the questions and by doing so it was made sure that the questionnaires assess the intended characteristics. To calculate the questions reliability we have made use of Cronbach’s alpha method for 30 samples of the questionnaires in the form of pretests. The total reliability of the questionnaires was obtained for the servant leadership style questionnaire, job engagement and managers’ efficient performance based on Cronbach’s alpha method, which are 0.917, 0.879 and 0.863, respectively.

To analyze the data extracted from the questionnaires the SPSS 19 software was used and it is worth mentioning that Cronbach’s alpha method was applied to compute the questionnaires’ reliability and the correlation tests were used to investigate the study hypotheses.
Data analysis

Main hypothesis:

There is a positive and significant relationship between the servant leadership style and work engagement with managers’ efficient performance in the hospitals belonging to Zahedan medical sciences university.

H0: There isn’t a positive and significant relationship between the servant leadership style and work engagement with managers’ efficient performance in the hospitals belonging to Zahedan medical sciences university.

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between the servant leadership style and work engagement with managers’ efficient performance in the hospitals belonging to Zahedan medical sciences university.

According to the results obtained from Spearman correlation test in table (1), it was indicated that the correlation coefficient between the servant leadership style and the managers’ efficiency is equal to $r=0.700$ and the correlation between the servant leadership style and the managers’ efficient performance is equal to $r=0.736$ and according to the significance level ($\text{sig}=0.000$, $P<0.01$) it was found that a statistically significant relationship does exist here. Therefore, the H0 hypothesis presuming that the absence of a significant relationship can be accordingly rejected. And the H1 hypothesis claiming the existence of a statistically significant relationship can be confirmed subsequently. So, it can be stated that the main hypothesis of the present study has to be confirmed and that there has been found a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style and job engagement with managers’ efficiency in the hospitals associated with Zahedan medical sciences university.

Table 1: Spearman correlation coefficient test results between the servant leadership style and work engagement with managers’ efficient performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Servant leadership style</th>
<th>Work engagement</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Servant leadership style</td>
<td>R 1</td>
<td><strong>0.763</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.700</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>R <strong>0.763</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>0.617</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>R <strong>0.700</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.617</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** Correlations are significant in the error levels below 0.01.

The first specific hypothesis:

There is a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style components and managers’ work engagement in the hospitals of Zahedan medical sciences university.
H0: There isn’t a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style components and managers’ work engagement in the hospitals of Zahedan medical sciences university.

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style components and managers’ work engagement in the hospitals of Zahedan medical sciences university.

According to the findings of Spearman correlation test presented in table (2), it was indicated that the correlation coefficient between providing service and work engagement is equal to \( r = 0.458 \), and it is \( r = 0.825 \) for humbleness and modesty and work engagement, it was also found for reliability and work engagement as equal to \( r = 0.329 \) and it is obtained \( r = 0.825 \) for kindness and work engagement and based on the significance level (sig = 0.000, P < 0.01), it can be declared that there is a significant relationship between servant leadership style components and work engagement. Therefore, the H0 hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between these components and the work engagement is accordingly rejected and the H1 hypothesis claiming the existence of such a significant relationship can be subsequently confirmed.

Table 2: Spearman correlation coefficient test between servant leadership style components and managers’ work engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work engagement</th>
<th>Providing service</th>
<th>Humbleness and modesty</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Kindness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td><strong>0.458</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.825</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.392</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.825</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** Correlations are significant in the error levels below 0.01.

✓ **Second specific hypothesis:**
There is a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style components and managers’ efficient performance in the hospitals associated with Zahedan medical sciences university.

H0: There isn’t a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style components and managers’ efficient performance in the hospitals associated with Zahedan medical sciences university.

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership style components and managers’ efficient performance in the hospitals associated with Zahedan medical sciences university.

According to the findings resulting from Spearman correlation test given in table (3) it was made certain that the correlation coefficient between providing service and efficiency is equal to \( r = 0.583 \) and it is obtained to be \( r = 0.572 \) for humbleness and modesty, for reliability and efficiency it was calculated as equal to \( r = 0.633 \) and for kindness and efficient performance it has
been shown as equal to \( r=0.572 \), and according to the significance level (\( \text{sig}=0.000, P<0.01 \)) it can be acknowledged that a significant relationship exists between the servant leadership style components and the efficient performance, so the \( H_0 \) hypothesis implying the absence of such a relationship is consequently rejected and the \( H_1 \) hypothesis or the very study hypothesis can be confirmed.

Table 3: Spearman correlation coefficient test between servant leadership style components and managers’ efficient performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficient performance</th>
<th>Providing service</th>
<th>Humbleness and modesty</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Kindness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td><strong>0.583</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.572</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.633</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.572</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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</table>

** Correlations are significant in the error levels below 0.01.

Third Specific hypothesis:
There is a positive and significant relationship between the work engagement and managers’ efficiency in Zahedan medical sciences university hospitals.

\( H_0: \) There isn’t a positive and significant relationship between the work engagement and managers’ efficiency in Zahedan medical sciences university hospitals.

\( H_1: \) There is a positive and significant relationship between the work engagement and managers’ efficiency in Zahedan medical sciences university hospitals.

The work engagement in the present study has been comprised of three components of work absorption, dedication and engagement and to investigate the aforementioned relationships with the managers’ efficiency we made use of Spearman correlation test and according to the study findings obtained from Spearman correlation test tabulated as table (4), it was shown that the correlation coefficient between engagement and efficiency was calculated as equal to \( r=0.577 \), and between absorption and efficiency it was found as equal to \( r=0.522 \) and between dedication and efficiency it was indicated to be equal to \( r=0.450 \) and according to the significance level (\( \text{sig}=0.000, P<0.01 \)) a significant relationship was found to exist between work engagement components and efficient performance, so the \( H_0 \) hypothesis claiming the absence of a significant relationship between the above-mentioned items can be accordingly rejected and the \( H_1 \) hypothesis or the very study hypothesis is consequently confirmed.

Table 4: Spearman correlation coefficient test between the work engagement and managers’ efficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficient performance</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Dedication</th>
<th>Absorption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td><strong>0.577</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.450</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.522</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlations are significant in the error levels below 0.01.
Conclusion and discussion:
The results of the study indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between leadership style and work engagement with managers’ efficient performance. Also, the servant leadership style and work engagement can be predictive factors for the managers’ efficiency. Thus, according to the today’s variations and changes particularly in environments related to the nurses, the managers can employ servant leadership style and its dimensions (kindness, providing service, humbleness and modesty, reliability and improvement) and work engagement and its components to be able to be able to promisingly elevate the managers’ efficiency. Therefore, it is suggested that the organizational learning culture should be institutionalized in the organizations to set the ground for increasing the managers’ and staff’s knowledge and skills and awareness and to lead to their professional development. So, for the same reason it is suggested that the managers should be vanguards of providing service and serving the others including the individuals inside and outside the organization and they should consider service-provision as their own duty and to give first degree priority to the interests of the others to be able to act as patterns and role-models for the staff and through this grow their employees in such a manner that serving others can be institutionalized in them and in doing so they do not fall short of any effort and endeavor and identify themselves through their occupation, organization, peers and customers and to feel satisfied and engaged in their occupations and serving the others. And in the meantime, it is worth mentioning that organizational learning contributes to the organization of the collective perceptions and arousal of the intra-cohort interactions which it can per se be effective on the augmentation of work engagement.
The results obtained in the present study perfectly conforms to the results obtained by Akharbin et al who indicated that servant leadership style components directly exert a positive and significant effect on the work engagement. The results obtained in the study performed by Izadi et al [28] indicated that the servant leadership style considerably influences the nurses’ performance and the managers and supervisors who overtly and explicitly take advantage of such a style can succeed in carrying out their tasks and responsibilities in their departments which is to some extent consistent with what has been obtained in the present study. Ziraygar et al (2005) evaluated the relationship between the leadership styles and managers’ efficient performance in the executive managers of the health centers in South Carolina University and the results indicated that the transformational leadership is in a positive and significant relationship with the managers’ efficiency, subordinates great efforts and objectives accomplishment. Also, the use of transformational leadership model can lead to the improvement in the quality of the medical centers. Grossman [30] in a study indicated that the relation-oriented managers outperform the task-oriented managers and their organizations enjoy a better efficiency. The results obtained from the study conducted by Igli et al [31] and Grossman [30] correspond to the results obtained in the current study. Therefore, the staff members who exhibit higher levels of work engagement are highly motivated and interested in their jobs and they are more likely to show resistance and endurance when confronting with the work hardships and difficulties. Khorram et al [32] also in another study entitled “servant leadership style and work engagement in non-governmental organizations in Islam Abad, Pakistan,” came to this
conclusion that the servant leadership style can corroborate the work engagement and this style is in a strong and intensified relationship with staff job satisfaction and job interests. Eherhat [33] in his study showed that the servant leadership style can move in the direction of elevating the employees’ work engagement through developing, growing and creating personal objectives parallel to the organizational objectives and supporting the staff. Also, the results obtained in the current study and the other results are confirmatory of the positive relationship between leadership style and managers’ efficient performance. These findings are corresponding to the heretofore studies such as Boss, Massi and Cuki [34] and the results obtained in the present study like the results obtained by Brown et al [35] are indicative of the transforming leadership positive effect on the staff satisfaction. In the study which was performed regarding the efficient managers in the theoretical high schools in the city of Tehran suggested that the efficiency of the managers who have higher education levels is more pronounced than the managers who do not.

✔ Acknowledgemens:

The present study is a result of a BA dissertation research entitled “the survey of the relationship between the servant leadership style and work engagement with the managers’ efficient performance in Zahedan medical sciences university hospitals” with the identification code no.576475 in Islamic Azad University Tehran north branch. And the author is hereby glad to express his gratitude from all of the officials working in Islamic Azad University Tehran north branch and Zahedan medical sciences university hospitals and also Zahedan medical sciences university managers are thanked for their helps and cooperations in accomplishing the present research project.
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