

## The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Employees at Valiasr Academic Complex, Islamic Azad University-Central Tehran Branch

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### ABSTRACT:

The present study aimed at determining the relationship between servant leadership as well as its dimensions and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of employees at Valiasr Academic Complex (Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch). The research was applied, descriptive and correlational. Statistical population included 230 employees in first semester of educational year (2012- 2013), of which 144 employees were selected as the study sample size through proportional stratified random sampling method. Reliability of the standard servant leadership Sendjaya et al., questionnaire was 0.83 and 0.88 for Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter's standard organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire. Results revealed that while there was a significant relationship between servant leadership dimensions of voluntary subordination, authentic self, conventional relationships, responsible morality and transforming influence, and organizational citizenship behavior; there was no significant correlation between dimension of transcendental spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior.

**Keywords:** *Servant leadership, Organizational citizenship behavior, Altruism, Sportsmanship, Consciousness, Civic virtue, Courtesy*

### INTRODUCTION

The educational institutions face many challenges in the new age due to the fact that working in complicated and competitive conditions is a major characteristic of organizational institutions (Vigoda et al., 2007). There are some voluntary and discretionary behaviors in higher educational institutions that help the effective functioning of these institutions. These behaviors can be directly or indirectly beneficial to the teachers, directors,

students and employees. Bateman and Organ (1983) used the term organizational citizenship behavior in reviewing the relationship between job satisfaction and performance for the first time; meanwhile, the term was used by Koh et al. (1995) in reference to the educational institutions.

Valiasr Academic Complex as one of the most important academic complexes of Islamic Azad University competes closely with other

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universities such as State, Payame-Noor (distant) universities, etc. in attracting talented students. Therefore, it needs to improve its effectiveness and organizational functioning in order to maintain a competitive edge in this dynamic competitive environment. The organization citizenship behavior is one of the factors affecting the process of gaining competitive advantages. Thus, studying the organizational citizenship behavior as well as identifying positive and negative factors increases the level of citizenship behavior which subsequently leads to the effectiveness and competitiveness of the Valiasr Complex. The researchers believe servant leadership is one of the elements which can be effective in promoting organizational citizenship behaviors.

#### Literature Review

Servant leadership is a leadership style suitable for the new and challenging role of directors in educational settings. A university director does not have central position in the group as the servant leader. However, he/she provides resources for the group and supports its members, without expecting any special reward or appreciation (Black, 2008). The theory of servant leadership is one of the leadership styles proposed by Greenleaf (1977) in "*Servant as the Leader*" and he developed it in the 70s, during his career at different universities. Greenleaf believed that the servant leader has an innate desire to serve others. The characteristic of serving others does not mean the servant leader performs the tasks and duties of his/her followers, but the leadership focuses on improving the followers' competency to achieve their goals and serving the organization, and strengthening the sense of independence. The leaders of modern age will be those who help the group or the organization to recognize its potential needs and capabilities, integrates the insights of the group, and acts as a trigger of motive for the group (Gholipour et al., 2009). Sendjaya et al. (2008) state that dimensions of servant leadership includes authentic self, conventional relationships, transforming influence, transcendental spirituality and responsible morality.

#### Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Research has shown that organizational citizenship behavior helps maximize the organizational performance of companies (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The managers need to understand how various variables affect organizational citizenship behavior in order to create the proper working environment which motivates and satisfies their employees.

Kim (2006) defined organizational citizenship behavior as a behavior beyond the pre-determined organizational roles, which is intrinsic and its reward is not included in the formal reward system of the organization as well as being very important in promoting the effectiveness and successful functioning of the organization. Moreover, Vigoda et al. (2007) believe that organizational citizenship behavior includes various informal and discretionary helping behaviors which are performed or refrained by the employee as a free man with no regard to the formal rewards and punishments.

Podsakoff et al. (1991) believe that organizational citizenship behavior includes dimensions of altruism, sportsmanship, conscientious, civic virtue, courtesy, which are defined as follows:

- ✓ Altruism refers to helping other members of the organization with relevant tasks or problems, such as those employees who help newcomers and lower-skilled workers.
- ✓ Sportsmanship refers to the employee's tolerance of less-than-ideal organizational circumstances without complaining.
- ✓ Conscientious consists of optional behaviors that go beyond the minimum role requirements, such as an employee who stays more time at work or who spends less time for resting.
- ✓ Courtesy refers to the attempts made by employees to prevent work-related conflicts with others.
- ✓ Civic virtue refers to the employee's willingness to contribute to and having responsibility in the life of the organization and also presenting a proper image of the organization.

### **Servant Leadership**

A central tenet of servant leadership theory is to place followers' interests above one's own (Joseph and Winston, 2005). Several authors suggested servant leadership may be more conducive to organizational citizenship behaviors due to its focus on follower development, community building, authentic leadership, and shared leadership (Laub, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008). 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. Followers service to others and stewardship of organizational resources could be construed as organizational citizenship behavior.

Freeman (2004) believed that servant leadership is a key leadership style which is suitable for running the educational organizations in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, it is expected that this leadership style have a positive effect on promotion of organizational citizenship behaviors. In the following paragraph, some relevant research findings are mentioned.

Walumbwa et al. (2010), based on their findings, recognized that servant leadership raises the likelihood of organizational citizenship behaviors. According to them, servant leaders have a positive influence on the workspace by creating a shared sense of services in the work environment and a shared sense of justice (i.e. procedural justice), and this shared sense leads to the increase of organizational citizenship behavior.

Therefore, the researchers' concern is finding the answer to the question: Can the servant leadership have a relationship with the organizational citizenship behaviors performed in Valiasr Academic Complex?

The conceptual model of the study is presented in figure 1, after reviewing the theoretical principles and research background. As it is implied from the presented model, the researchers aim to investigate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis one (H1): There is a relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis two (H2): There is a relationship between authentic self and organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis three (H3): There is a relationship between conventional relationships and organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis four (H4): There is a relationship between transforming influence and organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis five (H5): There is a relationship between transcendental spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis six (H6): There is a relationship between responsible morality and organizational citizenship behavior.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The present study is applied, descriptive and correlational in terms of purpose, the method of obtaining the data and conduction respectively. In addition, the study is quantitative in terms of the collected data which was collected through distributing some questionnaires for obtaining the opinions of employees of Valiasr Academic Complex of Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran branch in educational year (2012- 2013); and the collected data was analyzed using descriptive (mean, median, variance, standard deviation, frequency distribution tables and diagrams) and inferential statistics (multivariable regression, Pearson correlation coefficient and Shapiro–Wilk test).

Statistical population of the study consisted of all the university employees (male and female) of Valiasr Academic Complex of Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran branch in first semester of educational year (2012-2013), which was a total number of 230 people. In this study, a sample size of 144 people (58 female and 86 male) was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table and stratified random sampling method (proportional to the number of female and male employees). In order to be on the safe side and to increase the confidence level of the study sample, 152 employees were chosen as the sample, among which the questionnaires were distributed, and all questionnaires were returned (response rate %105.5).

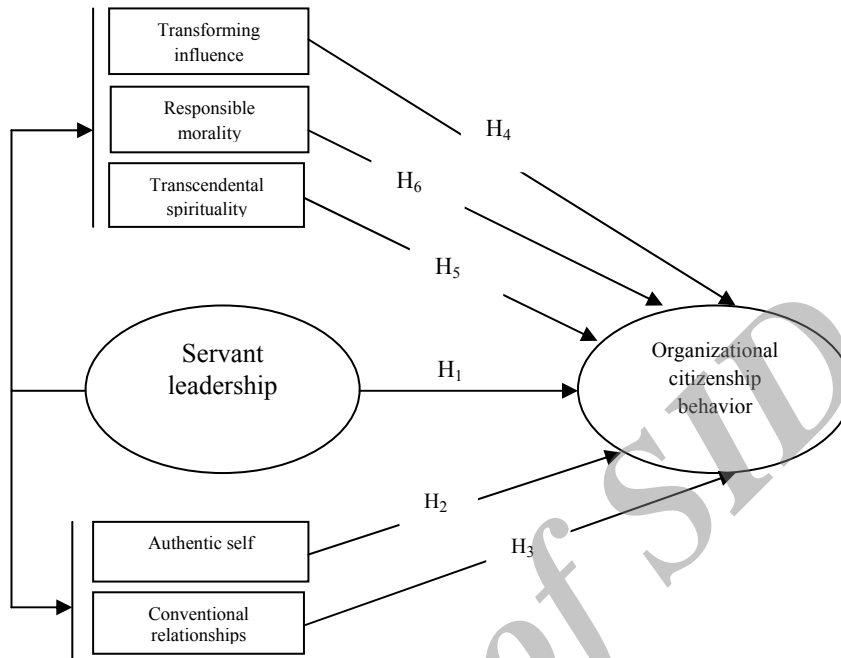


Figure 1: The conceptual model of the study

The questionnaire of the present study included two sections; the first section contained the questions related to servant leadership (predictor variable), which was based on the standard questionnaire of Sendjaya et al. (2008), with 6 sub-tests (authentic self, conventional relationships, transforming influence, transcendental spirituality and responsible morality). The second section of the questionnaire was specific to organizational citizenship behavior (criterion variable). The questionnaire was designed by Podsakoff et al. (1991) and was translated and used by Shokrkon et al. (2002) for the first time. This questionnaire included 24 questions which measured the sub-tests of altruism, sportsmanship, conscientious, civic virtue and courtesy.

In order to determine the validity of the questionnaire, the content-related validity was used. For this purpose, the questionnaires were examined by the respective academic experts, and then the final questionnaire was prepared

after some modifications. Besides, in order to measure the reliability, a first sample including 30 questionnaires of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior questionnaires were pre-tested, then the reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha using the data obtained from the questionnaires and employing SPSS software; as a result, the reliabilities of servant leadership questionnaire and organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire were 0.84 and 0.88 respectively. These results showed that the employed questionnaires had acceptable reliability, since the obtained alpha coefficient was above 70 percent. The related literature confirmed such reliability, too.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Examining the Normality of the Variables

In order to test the normality of the data, the Shapiro–Wilk test and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test were used. The findings revealed that significance level was above 0.05 in all

distributions. Therefore, it can be stated that the distribution pattern of all variables is normal. As a result, for measuring the correlation between variables, the Pearson correlation was used.

**Hypotheses Testing**

*Hypothesis 1: there is a relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior of employees of Valiasr Academic Complex of Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran branch.*

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation was used, and the correlation between servant leadership and organizational

citizenship behavior can be seen in table 1. As observed below, at the confidence level of %95, there is a significant relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, with a correlation of 0.258.

*Hypothesis 2 to 7: there is a relationship between dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior.*

In order to test the above hypotheses, the Pearson correlation was used, and the matrix of correlation between dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior can be seen in table 2.

**Table 1: Pearson correlation between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior**

Significant relationship	Significant figure	Correlation coefficient	Variable name
Exists	0.02	0.258	Organizational Citizenship behavior Servant leadership

**Table 2: The matrix of correlation between dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior**

organizational citizenship behavior	Transforming influence	Transcendental spirituality	Responsible morality	Conventional relationship	Authentic self	Voluntary subordination	variable
							Voluntary subordination
					1	0.622**	Authentic self
				1	0.489**	0.417**	Conventional relationship
			1	0.704**	0.310**	0.288**	Responsible morality
		1	-0.070	-0.124	0.098	0.085	Transcendental spirituality
	1	0.610**	-0.030	0.022	0.094	0.021	Transforming influence
1	0.208**	0.070	0.306**	0.364**	0.262**	0.233**	organizational citizenship behavior
	0.010	0.388	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.004	

\* Significant correlation at the level of %0.05

\*\*Significant correlation at the level of %0.01

Reviewing the results shown in the above table reveals that dimensions of voluntary subordination, authentic self, conventional relationship, responsible morality and transforming influence have a positive significant correlation with organizational citizenship behavior at the significance level of 0.01; and the most correlation is observed between dimension of conventional relationship and organizational citizenship behavior (%36.4). But no significant correlation between dimension of transcendental spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior is observed. Therefore, the hypothesis about the significant relationship between dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior is confirmed with respect to dimensions of voluntary subordination, authentic self, conventional relationship, responsible morality and transforming influence.

Formerly, the researchers mostly considered the in-role performance of employees in order to review the relationship between job behaviors and organizational effectiveness. Since about 15 years ago, the researchers have differentiated between in-role and extra-role performances. Organizational citizenship behaviors are one of the most common cases of conceptualization and operationalization regarding extra-role behaviors.

Regarding the effect of OCB on organizational outcomes such as organizational effectiveness, organizational functioning, organizational success, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, etc., it is very important to identify what factors can effectively result in such behaviors. For this purpose, it is attempted in this study to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior of employees of Valiasr Academic Complex of Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran branch, and now the researchers will discuss and conclude based on the research hypotheses:

The results of the present study revealed that, generally, there is a relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior of employees of Valiasr Academic Complex of Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran branch, and this finding is consistent with the research results of Walumbwa et al. (2010). From among the dimensions of servant

leadership, the dimensions of voluntary subordination, authentic self, conventional relationship, responsible morality and transforming influence have a positive correlation with organizational citizenship behavior. The most correlation is observed between the dimension of conventional relationship and organizational citizenship behavior (%36.4), but there is no significant correlation between the dimension of transcendental spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis about the significant relationship between dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior is confirmed. Although some papers which have reviewed the relationship between servant relationship and organizational citizenship behavior, have been published, there is no research investigating the relationship between the dimensions of servant leadership (i.e. six dimension presented in this study) and organizational citizenship behavior. The results related to this hypothesis is consistent with the research results of Naderi and Ghahremani (2010), Ghalavandi et al. (2010) here in Iran as well as researches conducted by Walumbwa et al. (2010) out of Iran, whose results indicate the effect of servant leadership on organizational citizenship behavior.

The relationship between dimension of voluntary subordination and organizational citizenship behavior is positive. According to this dimension of servant leadership, the leader looks for opportunities to serve others, regardless of the position of the people being served. He/she gives higher priority to the needs and interests of others than his/her needs and interests. He/she uses his/her power to serve others rather than achieving his/her personal ambitions. He/she listens wholeheartedly to his/her employees, and helps them without expecting any reward or appreciation. Therefore, as expected, this dimension of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, which is rooted in the voluntary behaviors of the employees, have a positive relationship with one another, and as it increases, the organizational citizenship behaviors of the employees boosts.

The relationship between the dimension of authentic self and organizational citizenship behavior is positive. It is because in case of this dimension, the leader does not act on the

defensive when facing any matter. When criticized, he/she focuses on the message itself not on the one criticizing. When failed, he/she is not afraid of admitting his/her mistakes. He/she allows his subordinates to question his/her decisions and actions, and at appropriate times, allows them to control the situation. Thus, as expected, this dimension of servant leadership has a positive relationship with the behavior and, as it increases, the citizenship behaviors in employees boosts and vice versa.

The relationship between the dimension of conventional relationships and organizational citizenship behavior is positive. In case of this dimension, the leader firmly expresses his/her trust in the employees and proves it in practice. He/she accepts the employees as they are, regardless of their failures. He/she respects the personality of employees as the person he/she is, not the person he/she likes to be. He/she treats equally and fairly with all the people in the organization. Of course, the most correlation was observed between this dimension and organizational citizenship behavior.

The relationship between the dimension of responsible morality and organizational citizenship behavior is positive. The leader, who has a responsible morality, takes a resolute stance on moral principles. He/she emphasizes on what is right rather than what is good. He/she encourages the employees to ethically get involved and engaged. He/she increase the employees' capacity and capability for moral actions. Thus, as expected, the responsible morality of the leader and director has a positive relationship with organizational citizenship behavior.

In case of the dimension of transcendental spirituality, the leader gives much attention to the spirituality of affairs. He/she helps the employees to find the clarity of purpose and direction. He/she promotes the values which are beyond personal interests and material success. He/she helps the employees to create a spiritual sense in their daily work life. There is no significant relationship observed between this dimension and organizational citizenship behavior. The reason for this needs more investigation; however, one of the reasons may be the fact that citizenship behaviors are voluntary behaviors and are resulted from inner feelings of people. If the leader directly performs

behaviors which cause the employees to feel he/she intends to incline them toward citizenship behavior, these behaviors can be ineffective in them.

The relationship between the dimension of transforming influence and organizational citizenship behavior is positive. According to this dimension, the leader creates a common insight for inspiration and giving meaning to work. He/she guide people by personal modeling and he/she himself/herself is the role model. He/she persuades the employees to guide others by serving them. He/she allows the employees to experience different things and be creative without being afraid and having stress. He/she pictures the best outcomes of work for the employees. Thus, as expected, transforming influence of the leader and director has a positive relationship with the organizational citizenship behavior and strengthens these extra-role behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

Regarding the research findings, which show servant leadership is effective in increasing organizational citizenship behaviors of the employees, and also with respect to the correlation between five dimensions of servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, it is suggested:

- ✓ In performance appraisal systems for directors, the extent of conformity with servant leadership characteristics shall be focused on, and shall be considered at time of their selection and promotion.
- ✓ The organization citizenship behavior and evaluation methods, self-evaluation and their promotion shall be taught to the employees by holding conferences on servant leadership concepts and designing training courses.

It is also recommended to conduct future researchers on the other factors which may influence organizational behavior citizenship among higher education academic and non-academic staff.

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