

Servant Leadership and Diversity: A Focus on Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business organizations becoming global is nothing new in the current world due to the ever-shrinking physical and communication boundaries. Going global has its benefits and limitations. Benefits would be less expensive land, labor, and resources and reduced transportation cost by being present in countries with vast requirements for an organization's products or services. At the same time, the limitations would be to manage people or lead them toward shared organizational goals. India being a country with enormous opportunities has diverse cultures and practices. Thus, leading various people as employees would be a challenge. What may work in the Western countries may not work in India due to its vast diversity in culture, language, and ethnicity. This research aims to understand the servant leadership approach and if it would be applicable in India. In the context of diverse cultures, the authors analyze the servant leader's role in an organization and compare the practices of servant leadership in various other countries.

INTRODUCTION

Though not has been immensely popular, the term servant leadership is not a new concept. The term can be traced back to almost half a century when Robert Greenleaf introduced it in 1970 in an essay, “The Servant as Leader” (Greenleaf, 1998). Since then, the concept of Servant Leadership has been used, researched upon, and recommended by many authors and scholars. This kind of Leadership is now considered the highest form of Leadership which has now become an effective style of Leadership across the globe to confront emerging issues in the organizations.

In his TED Talk, ‘How Leaders Inspire Action,’ Sinek Simon, the leadership guru, emphasizes the importance of asking “Why.” Why do you wish to choose a particular path as a leader? The urge to lead must originate from a place of genuine self-reflection. It stems from Servant Leaders’ tendency to put everyone else first, just as any parent would for their children.

It has become ubiquitous for organizations across the globe to develop a culture of an inclusive leadership that sustains and embeds diversity, inclusion and equity. Diversity and inclusion is an integral component of leadership role and should be regarded as indispensable for organizational success and stakeholders’ wellbeing (Morris, 2021).

The servant leader is servant first. The leader inherently works with the intention to serve others. It is a noble philosophy of a loving mankind and practicing leadership to enrich the lives of individuals, to build better organizations and eventually to create a more just and caring world. A servant leader drives to work for the growth and wellbeing of individuals and other stakeholders in his organization. (Servant Leadership, 2020)

BACKGROUND PRINCIPLES

Anybody from the CEO to a team manager can be a leader. As a result, choosing a leadership style is a personal decision. A few principles must be followed to gain clarity and direction in any leadership activity. According to Sinek Simon, the following principles will enable a Servant leader to be effective.

1. **Active Listening:** Listening to the team is the first step toward active listening. Investing time wisely and paying attention to a team without disrupting the team members. Listening to each team member provides new perspectives and assists a leader in connecting the dots for a more structured and inclusive plan that benefits everyone.
2. **Empathy:** Empathy is a powerful emotion. Empathy, in the context of Servant Leadership, refers to the ability to understand others’ feelings without passing judgement or condemnation. Empathy is positively associated with job performance and is key to developing relationships. According to studies conducted by the Centre for Creative Leadership, empathy is positively associated with job performance and is crucial to developing relationships.
3. **Self-Awareness:** Based on his talks and readings with Robert K. Greenleaf, the Grandfather of Servant Leadership, Larry Spears, former Chief executive of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, cited self-awareness as one of the fundamental characteristics of Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1998). Self-awareness, he claims, enhances the Servant Leader. It aids in comprehending issues with values, job ethics, and power. It enables a Servant leader to see situations from

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