The Linkage between Servant Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Review Paper

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ABSTRACT
This article discussed the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. It was revealed that there are inconsistency of the findings in the past studies. Besides, the lacking of empirical study on servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior is one of the issues in literature. This has triggered a need for further exploration on the linkage between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. It is suggested that more empirical researches to be conducted in the future to provide a more concrete evidences on the linkage between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior.

1. Introduction

Many companies emphasize on the efficiency of employees, thus, organizations have been seeking for the methods that can improve the employees’ performance and efficiency [1]. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been recognized as one of the significant factors that can enhance the organizational efficiency and overall productivity [2]. A company has more probability to be success when there are employees who exhibit citizenship behavior [3], as well as the working environment will be healthier, helpful, and caring which will help to improve the organizational performance [4]. In the discipline of management, an employee who exhibits citizenship behavior tend to act voluntarily to improve the organizational performance, although the action is not recognized in formal reward system [5]. From this statement, it suggests that the employees with citizenship behavior are willing to work beyond their formal job scopes to assist the company to reach success. As a result of its contribution to organizations, OCB has been obtaining attention from researchers in different fields, such as management [2].

One of the antecedents of OCB is known as servant leadership (SL). SL is about a leadership style that bring out the best of followers, where one-on-one communication is concerned to understand followers’ need [6]. There are many types of leadership in organizations, such as transformational leadership. However, among the types of leadership, SL received limited attention, especially its influence on OCB, as compared to other types of leadership [7]. Most of the researchers tend to focused on other leadership styles, such as transformational leadership [8-11]. Few scholars had been proved the contribution of SL to some behaviors of employees, such as organizational commitment [12]. Hence, it is expected that SL plays a role in influencing OCB.

In this competitive era, organizations have been competing to be outstanding with the assistance of technology, and the help of efficient employees [13]. In order to operate a company, employees play important role in organization [14]. Thus, it is critical to have engaged and dedicated employees in one organization in order to be competitive in this era [15]. However, it is reported by scholars that, the most severe human resource issue in Malaysian manufacturing industry is lacking of dedicated employees [16 & 14]. In other words, OCB issue happened in Malaysia manufacturing industry. There is a need to investigate the antecedents of OCB, especially SL because it has been receiving limited attention in the recent years, especially in non-western countries [17]. It was claimed that most of the studies were conducted in United States [17]. Besides, it was highlighted that, more empirical studies are needed because the findings on the linkage between SL and OCB are scarce [18]. Furthermore, it was claimed that the relationship between SL and OCB is still new in Malaysia context, hence, the linkage...
requires an in-depth research to examine the linkage in Malaysia [18]. From the statements of problem above, there is a critical need to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and OCB in Malaysia.

2. Objective

This article aims to provide some literature review on the relationship between servant leadership and employees’ OCB. Discussion on these two variable will be done based on the findings from previous studies.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Servant Leadership

Servant leadership concept is rooted from the philosophy of people-centered leadership [19]. In this leadership style, followers’ needs, goals, and desires are concerned by the leaders [6]. Through the understanding of followers’ goals, the servant leaders will assist the followers in accomplishing the goals or needs [6]. Servant leadership includes serving leaders themselves as a role model, inspiring followers with information, and providing constructive feedback as well as resources [20]. Servant leaders tend to be righteous and upholding high ethical in organizations [21]. Furthermore, servant leadership includes the action of providing cares for the followers, showing humility and integrity, trustworthiness, as well as being altruism to followers [22].

3.2 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The extra-role performance among employees has gained attention from recent researchers, where the research of OCB has been started [23]. OCB is known as employees’ behavior which is not restricted, not being recognized by the formal reward system explicitly, and improve the effectiveness of organization as a whole [24]. It was emphasized that, OCB should be in the form of voluntary, instead of being recognized by the official reward system in organization [25]. OCB is recognized as a unique and important aspect of the employees’ activities that influence the satisfaction of employees and the outcomes of organization [26]. Besides, OCB is also about the willingness of employees to act beyond their formal responsibilities in order to satisfy the stakeholders of company [27]. OCB is more likely and reasonable to be exhibited when the employees can exchange the reward in terms of social, where the perception of fairness is discussed [28]. When the employees are treated in the fair way, then the employees will reciprocate with OCB [29].

4. Methodology

A comprehensive search on the journal databases was done on the topic of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior. Literature based on the recent studies was targeted for this review. Hence, we looked for the articles dated between 2013 to 2017 from the databases such as Elsevier and Scopus.

There are five inclusions that we concerned when we did the searching of articles. The first inclusion is, we included those studies which are empirical. Second, we included the studies which were conducted on real corporate personnel sample because the linkage between the variables will be focused on corporate personnel. Third, we included the topics which are relevant to our variables. Fourth, we included the studies which their variable of OCB was self-rated instead of being rated by co-worker or superior. This is because we focus on self-rated organizational citizenship behavior. Fifth, we included those studies which reported the reliability and validity of their instruments due to it might affect the validity of the studies’ result.

5. Findings

Literature was beneficial for understanding the linkage in this review paper. The literature has helped to reveal the findings on the linkage between SL and OCB. The positive behavior from servant leadership such as helping the growth of followers, is important to influence the willingness of employees to show OCB [30]. From this statement, it can be seen that, if leaders perform servant leadership, the tendency of showing OCB among followers might be increased. As reviewed by the authors, there are few past studies that studied the relationship between SL and OCB. Servant leadership is able to influence OCB, where it was revealed that SL has significant positive linkage with OCB [31]. It is claimed that SL is significantly related to OCB [32]. If SL is performed in organization, the level of OCB will be increased. This shows that SL plays critical role to affect OCB. However, it was claimed that, although SL is influential in organizations, there are limited studies
conducted to examine the linkage between SL and OCB [17].

There are researchers found that there is significant relationship between SL and OCB. It was revealed that, SL is moderately related to the OCB [33]. This indicated that when leaders are willing to serve the followers voluntarily, the employees tend to exert OCB. When employees obtain assistance from leaders at workplace, the employee is prone to have higher willingness to show OCB, such as helping the colleagues [33]. While, another study showed that there is a very weak linkage between SL and OCB [34]. It was different with the previous study, [33] measured OCB in two dimensions, while [34] measured OCB as a whole. From this difference, it can be seen that, the intensity of linkage could be different when the researchers measured variables with different dimensions.

Apart from that, it was claimed that SL has high relationship with OCB [35]. The result was consistent with [36] study, where it was mentioned that there is significant relationship between SL and OCB. Different from previous studies, [36] measured OCB in one dimension only, which is OCBI, when the relationship between the SL and OCB was examined. On the other hand, [18] measured the relationship between the SL and OCB from one dimension to another. It was revealed that almost all the SL dimensions have significant relationship with OCB, for example, empowerment, and forgiveness [18].

In addition, it was revealed that there is a low but significant relationship between SL and OCB [6]. In the study, the scholar measured SL as a unidimensional factor. Another study argued that there is moderate and significant relationship between SL and OCB [37]. Different from [6], [37] adopted Organ’s OCB model. This suggests that, when the scholars adopted different models, the results might be different and inconsistent.

However, although most of the scholars revealed significant relationship between SL and OCB, it was revealed that there is no significant linkage between SL and OCB [7]. Contradictory with previous studies, SL has no impact on OCB in their study. On the other hand, it was found significant relationship between SL and OCB [38]. The dimensions of SL such as emotional healing has significant relationship with OCB. This could be due to different working contexts, where [38] respondents were from banking sector, while [7] respondents were teachers in school. From these studies, it can be seen that the linkage between SL and OCB are remained ambiguous due to the findings of linkages are not consistent among the scholars.

In a nutshell, the linkage between SL and OCB remained inconsistent in the past studies. It can be seen that some of the scholars mentioned there is significant relationship between the variables, while some scholars found that there is no significant relationship between SL and OCB. Besides, more future studies are needed to prove the linkage between the variables.

6. Conclusion

To summarize, there was a lack of attention being paid to the relationship between servant leadership and OCB. Besides, there are inconsistent findings found in the previous studies. These statements of problem had triggered the awareness of the need to conduct a research in order to investigate the relationship between the variables among the employees. It is expected that the finding from the future empirical studies will be able to guide the corporate personnel in managing the organizational citizenship behavior among the employees in corporates.

Reference


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