

The Effects of Servant Leadership and Organizational Trust on Social Workers' Organizational Effectiveness

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to identify the direct effects of servant leadership on social workers' organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior and the mediating effects of servant leadership through organizational trust, using Structural Equation Model. The results show that servant leadership has direct effects on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, and that it also has mediating effects on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. The mediating effects were found to be greater than the direct effects.

Keywords: *servant leadership, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior.*

1. Introduction

The role of leadership in social welfare organization has been discussed with the role of the supervisor. But since 2000, as the responsibility of social welfare organization continued to be strengthened, the importance of leadership role for effective management has been emphasize [1]. Therefore, more research on the leadership and management is needed to revitalize social welfare organization. Leadership has a decisive influence on organizational culture, and it is an important precedent factor affecting the behaviors of organizational members and the performance of organization

In particular, since Korean social welfare organizations are small in scale, leadership tends to have a direct impact on the organizational members as compared to other organizations. In the case of social welfare facilities, trust in the chief director can be linked directly to trust in the organization. In addition, previous studies of social welfare organizations show that the leadership of chief director has an influence on the general atmosphere of the organization and plays an important role in promoting positive organizational behavior as well as motivation of organizational members [2].¹

The influence of leadership on the attitudes and behaviors of organizational members has been continuously discussed. Very little empirical research, however, has focused on the effects of servant leadership. Therefore, this study focuses on the servant leadership which has been the focus of attention recently. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of servant leadership on the organizational performance and the behavior of organizational members in an era of loss of trust.

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In particular, this study empirically verifies the direct effects of servant leadership on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, and the mediating effects of servant leadership through organizational trust.

2. Theoretical Background

Servant leadership is a concept that is contrary to past hierarchical and authoritative leadership. In most organizations, leadership is a factor influencing organizational culture, and trust in leader is positively related to organizational trust and organizational effectiveness [3]. Servant leadership is the same. Servant leadership is a concept that emphasizes the service and devotion of a leader, who serves his subordinates and listen with a deep empathy [4]. In particular, servant leadership has an important impact on organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment [5].

Leadership has been reported to have a positive effect on organizational effectiveness, and empirical studies on the effects of servant leadership influencing organizational effectiveness have been steadily presented. In particular, previous research has confirmed that servant leadership has a positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior as well as job motivation, organizational commitment and job satisfaction [6].

Among the concepts related to organizational effectiveness, organizational commitment is a concept that includes the attachment to the organization, the willingness to continue to work in the organization, and the sense of belonging to the organization [7]. In addition, organizational citizenship behavior means doing extra efforts beyond the given role [[8]. The study of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior has been continuously presented. Previous studies suggest that preceding variables of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior are fairness, organizational trust, and leadership.

However, leadership is a primary preceding factor of other organizational variables because organizational effectiveness, organizational performance, and organization atmosphere such as organizational fairness and transparency are highly dependent on the quality of leadership.

3. Research method

3.1. Sampling

This study surveyed 400 members selected by stratification sampling method, who were working at 46 social welfare organizations. The valid questionnaires were 393 copies. The survey was conducted around Gyeonggi-do and Seoul.

3.2 Research Issues

The purpose of this study is to examine the direct effects of servant leadership on organizational effectiveness (i.e., organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior) and the mediating effects of organizational trust between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. Specific research questions are as follows.

First, does servant leadership affect organizational trust?

Second, does servant leadership affect organizational effectiveness?

Third, does organizational trust have a mediating effect between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness?

3.3 Measurement

The scale used in this study was the same scale which was applied in previous studies and the reliability and validity were reported.

Servant leadership was measured by the measure which was developed by Ehrhart (2004) and used in the study of Hong (2012). The measure consisted of 14 items, and was adapted to the social welfare organization (e.g., departmental staff → welfare center staff). As a 5-point scale from 'not at all' to 'very agree', the higher the score is, the higher the perception of director's servant leadership is. In this study, the reliability was .93 [9].

Organizational trust is based on a three-item scale composed by Lim (2011). The reliability of the previous study was .89 [10].

Organizational commitment is a one-dimensional measure which was developed by Poter, et al. (1974) and used in the study of Yang (2012) in Korea [11]. The items are composed of 9 items such as 'we are willing to try beyond expectation for the success of our organization,' 'we are proud to be a member of our organization,' 'we think our organization is the best place.' In Yang's study, the reliability was .92. The reliability of this study was .94.

Organizational citizenship behavior was based on the challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior measure (5 items) developed by Mackenzie et al (2011) and used in the study of Hong (2012) in Korea [12].

3.4. Analysis

The data were analyzed by using IBM SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 23.0. The general characteristics of respondents and the average of major variables were analyzed by descriptive statistics. The relationships among servant leadership-organizational trust-organizational effectiveness were analyzed by Structural Equation Modeling. The statistical significance of indirect effects in path analysis was assessed by the Sobel test.

4. Results

4.1 General Characteristics of Respondents

Among 393 respondents, 109 (27.9) are men and 282 (72.1%) are women. The average age is 32.9, and average total work experience is 6 year and 9 months.

Table 1. General Characteristics

General Characteristics		Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	109 (27.9%)
	Female	282 (72.1%)
Age	Min=21 Max=54	M= 32.9 (SD=6.5)
Work experience	Min=6 months Max=312 months월	M=81 months (SD=61.1)

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation of Major Variables:

As for the average of variables, servant leadership was 3.76, organizational trust was 3.82, organizational commitment was 3.79, and organizational citizenship behavior was 3.78. The

correlations between the variables were relatively high. In particular, the correlation between organizational trust and organizational commitment was as high as .707, and organizational citizenship behavior had a relatively low correlation (.360) as compared to organizational commitment.

4.3. Model Fit

The model fit was confirmed as acceptable as shown in [Table 2].

Table 2. Model Fit

	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA-
Model Fit Index	1160.517***	421	0.911	0.898	.912	0.066

*** p<.001 / -Lo: .061, Hi: .071

4.4. Relationship among Leadership-Organizational Trust-Organizational Effectiveness

The results show that servant leadership has not only direct effects on organizational commitment (.299) and organizational citizenship behavior (.160), but also indirect effects on organizational commitment (.369) and organizational citizenship behavior (.200). The indirect effects were found to be statistically significant. In particular, the mediating (indirect) effects of servant leadership on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior through organizational trust were found to be greater than the direct effects of servant leadership on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

Table 3. Relationship among Leadership-Organizational Trust-Organizational Effectiveness

	Estimate	Estimate (Standardized)	Z	P-value
Servant Leadership → Organizational Trust → Organizational Commitment	.382	.369	6.882	.000
Servant Leadership → Organizational Trust → Organizational Citizenship Behavior	.162	.200	3.662	.000

5. Suggestions

Because social welfare organizations provide services to clients, voluntary and dedicated attitudes of social workers in social welfare facilities are directly related to the quality of services for clients. Therefore, many previous studies intended to derive implications for organizational management by examining the preceding factors influencing organization effectiveness such as organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

The purpose of this study is to identify the empirical effects of preceding factors affecting the positive attitudes of social workers such as organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors. In particular, this study focused on the influence of servant leadership, which is oriented toward horizontal relationship with organizational members, rather than the authoritarian, hierarchical, and vertical leadership of leaders. In addition, this study verified the mediating effects of organizational trust in the relationship between leadership and organizational effectiveness.

The results of this study show that servant leadership has a positive effect on organizational effectiveness and that mediation effect of organizational trust on organizational effectiveness is greater than direct effect of leadership. Based on these findings, implications for organizational management are as follows.

First, social welfare organization has been dominated by the supervisor's supervision, and the discussion about leadership stayed at the conceptual level. In the future research, more empirical studies on the effects of leadership affecting the effectiveness of social welfare organizations should be actively pursued.

Second, in order to develop positive organizational behavior of social workers such as organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, it is necessary to take proper steps to adopt the democratic and devoted servant leadership to social welfare organizations rather than the authoritative and hierarchical management methods.

In the case of social welfare organizations, the authority of leader is acknowledged to some degree because of the strong tendency of professional bureaucracy. However, recognizing that cooperative, democratic and empathic leadership can be more effective than authoritative leadership, efforts to incorporate the elements of servant leadership in the process of organizational management should be strengthened.

Finally, considering that organizational trust has a great influence on the positive organizational behavior of organizational members, it is necessary to establish a social welfare organization as a fair, transparent and reliable organization. To this end, trustworthy organizational culture and ethical management system need to be built not only by the leader but also by the organizational system.

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