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Servant Leadership in Agile Frameworks: A Catalyst for Collaboration and Innovation

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Servant Leadership in Agile Frameworks: A Catalyst for Collaboration and Innovation

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Abstract

Servant leadership transforms Agile Project Management by encouraging trust, collaboration, and empowerment. Servant leadership prioritises team members' needs, helping them thrive and contribute. This study examines how servant leadership in Agile frameworks affects team performance, innovation, and project outcomes. A comprehensive synthesis of theoretical viewpoints and empirical case studies investigates how servant leadership promotes adaptation, psychological safety, and shared decision-making to increase agility. The findings show that this leadership style improves teamwork, motivation, and problem-solving. The study covers significant problems, such as quantifying servant leadership's efficacy and overcoming objections to non-traditional leadership in structured organization. The research also addresses servant leadership conceptual clarity and implementation in dynamic project environments. The necessity for improved assessment methods to determine its genuine impact on Agile project success is highlighted. This study sheds light on servant leadership and Agile methodologies by connecting theory and practice. It seeks to improve project management leadership practices by increasing flexibility, creativity, and efficiency, enabling more human-centred and sustainable organizational methods.

INTRODUCTION

Robert Greenleaf introduced servant leadership, inspired by Jesus Christ. According to Greenleaf, servant leadership involves serving before leading. He stressed that true leadership starts with service and later becomes authority. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders and followers work together to boost motivation and morality. Greenleaf believed that organisations and individuals may improve the world by prioritising service.

The servant leadership model has evolved since its introduction in academics and professional practice. Servants are dedicated to the progress and well-being of individuals and communities. Servant leadership differs from traditional leadership, which seeks authority from the top. Servant leaders empower others, prioritise their needs, and create an environment where individuals can grow and succeed (Greenleaf, 1970). Peter Economy puts it simply: servant leadership reverses the corporate hierarchy, where employees serve their bosses, and places leaders in service to their people (2015). This leadership approach has clear benefits. Economy says prioritising employee needs can lead to happier, more productive workers and better corporate results (2015). Organisations that employ servant leadership concepts through management training boost performance by 15–20% and team productivity by 20–50%, according to empirical studies. Southwest Airlines, Synovus Financial Group, TD Industries, and other retail chains are among Fortune magazine's top 10 best workplaces for servant leadership (Wong & Davey, 2007; Heskett, 2013).

Further study by organisational psychologists like Adam Grant shows that servant leadership benefits leaders. Service leaders, according to Grant, acquire respect from their colleagues, find personal fulfilment, and improve their performance. Despite spending time mentoring, career counselling, and sharing expertise with their people, these leaders create beneficial networks, get critical insights, and obtain information that improves their productivity.

Becoming a servant leader is intentional and transformative. In Land on Your Feet, Not on Your Face (2010), Hessler emphasises that potential leaders must choose leadership. Let rid of old patterns and embrace personal growth to make this shift. It also requires risk-taking without instant success. Leaders who seek power, money, or recognition are misguided. True servant leaders have a higher purpose.

Developing a servant leadership mindset takes time. It requires self-reflection, learning, and persistence. Leadership development programs might take a year and require patience. Rushing causes uncertainty among peers and subordinates. Thus, slowly incorporating servant leadership into daily life is crucial. Leaders should assess their duties, delegate or eliminate work, and follow servant leadership ideals.

Transparency about this journey is key. Leaders should pledge to change and serve their teams for the organization's benefit. They should address genuine, pressing concerns rather than assumed ones, always considering their followers' views. Most essential, they must keep their promises to build trust. Being honest with the team about problems builds credibility. Regularly requesting feedback—even critical feedback—can be difficult, but mistakes and failures teach essential lessons. Simply asking for input is not enough; you must act on it.

Leaders must incorporate constructive feedback, or employees will cease giving it. Leadership development organisations typically offer internal training or financial aid for external courses. If such materials are unavailable, individuals can join professional associations like the Project Management Institute for Strategic Management Society to study. Simple online searches provide several leadership-related white papers and expert videos. Structured education like university courses or leadership certificates can be helpful. Organisational success depends on leadership. After 80 years of research, experts have not found a paradigm that ties leadership styles to situational effectiveness (Jost, 2013). Understanding the influence of servant leadership requires studying leadership theory evolution. The first modern leadership theories focused on physical presence, social standing, and authority after World War II (Barling, 2014). Leadership studies focused on structure and task orientation in the 1950s and leadership behaviours in the 1960s. The 1970s established management authority, and the 1980s emphasised interpersonal, ethical, and motivating leadership (Barling, 2014).

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw systematic examination of transformational and servant leadership paradigms. Lawrence and Pirson (2010) found transformative, authentic, ethical, and servant leadership approaches in modern discourse. Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) say servant leadership supports follower development without affecting organisational outcomes. Its effectiveness is debatable due to a lack of actual studies relating it to corporate success.

Leadership effectiveness has been reassessed after corporate failures like Lehman Brothers, the 2008 financial crisis, and U.S. institutional governance issues. These disasters highlighted the need for ethical and sustainable leadership (Barling, 2014). Scholars have examined leadership models that blend ethics, social responsibility, and organisational effectiveness. Research reveals that transformational, servant, and spiritual leadership ideologies are similar. Latham (2014) suggests merging these concepts to improve organisational effectiveness. Zimmerer (2013) also rejects the idea that leaders must adapt to changing generations, arguing that servant leadership works well in modern organisations. According to Vann Meter & Roberts (2013), millennials—about 80 million people born between 1981 and 2000—are naturally inclined towards servant leadership and have good teamwork and ethical decision-making skills.

Leadership research now includes followers, peers, superiors, workplace surroundings, and organisational culture (Avolio & Weber, 2009). Servant leadership promotes trust, collaboration, and shared purpose, making it a fascinating modern leadership style.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, organizations have prioritized ethical leadership, employee well-being, and sustainable practices, highlighting servant leadership. Based on Robert Greenleaf's (1977) philosophy, this leadership style emphasizes service, personal and professional growth, and followers' needs before self-interest. Modern study has examined these ideas' applicability, benefits, and drawbacks in numerous circumstances. A study found that servant leadership improves organizational performance, employee engagement, and workplace culture. It boosts

employee trust, happiness, and commitment, lowering turnover and increasing productivity (Eva et al., 2019). This leadership style promotes community and collaboration, which is especially useful in team settings (Liden et al., 2014).

Being ethical and moral, servant leadership promotes justice, openness, and accountability in organizations. Leaders who take this approach are role models for ethical judgement and responsible leadership. In light of business wrongdoing and social responsibility, ethics are crucial (Sendjaya, 2015). The relevance of servant leadership across cultures is debated. Although its principles are universal, cultural differences may affect their efficacy. In collective civilizations, this leadership style fits communal norms, but in individualistic cultures, its humility and service may need to be adjusted (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Despite its benefits, servant leadership is criticized. In hierarchical or competitive environments, it may be unsuccessful (Stone et al., 2004). Empirical research has also struggled without a consistent measurement tool, although efforts to build trustworthy evaluation methods continue (Liden et al., 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic showed the importance of servant leadership in crises. Leaders with empathy, agility, and a focus on employee well-being were better prepared for remote work and economic instability (Roberts, 2020). This increased interest in servant leadership highlights its resilience and adaptability.

Prophet Isa in Islamic term applied servant leadership behavioral 2 thousand years ago. Savior or Prophet Isa used the term of servant as a synonym of greatness. Contrary to the popular opinion of the day, Jesus instructed that a leader's greatness is Measured by a complete commitment to serve fellow human beings. Prophet Essa gives us Associate in Nursing practice of leaders as servant once he known as by his disciples as teacher and Lord however within the same time, He washed his disciple's feet whereas fore mentioned "You called me teacher and Lord, then that I am. currently I am as your teacher and Lord washed your feet, therefore you have got to washed associate in nursing other's feet. this is often an example for you as an instructor and Lord". From this experience, we tend to terminate the principle of servant leaders is leadership power from 'power over' to 'power to', that's power as an enabling issue to settle on to serve others.

A one who has sturdy characteristics, expertise, and power to legitimate management and lead the others has identified and connected closely with the term of leadership for a protracted time ago. That "old" paradigm was breaking up by Greenleaf who give the new strong paradigm of leadership by servant leadership concept, instead of exhibiting their power and expertise, the servant leaders getting to be selflessly and on the far side oneself interest. The servant-leader is ruled by making among the organization opportunities to assist followers grow. According to Arlene Hall (1994) Doing menial chores does essentially indicate a servant leader. Instead, a servant leader is one who invests himself or herself in enabling, ennobling & empowering others, in serving them to be and do their best.

K Nair (1994) said if power dominates our considering leadership, we tend to cannot move towards the next normal of leadership. We tend to should place service at the core; for albeit power will always be related to leadership; it's just one legitimate use: service. Several

authorities on servant leadership have urged that to find out servant leadership, individuals need to endure a journey of finding private transformation. The secrets of servant leadership are step by step unconcealed to them through paying attention to their inner voices (self-actualization) as well as the voices of these who have discovered the truth. Drury in 2004 said servant leadership and job satisfaction were significantly and completely correlated, however that servant leadership and structure commitment, contrary to the theoretical literature, in contest a big inverse relationship, that means they were significantly and negatively correlated. Smith Montagno and Kuzmenko (2004) stated that the leaders driven by a sense of mission to recreate the organization to survive in difficult external environment. Individual growth is not unimportant; however, it should involve the organization's success within the external environment.

Servant leadership concentrates on stability and organic process of the organization by followers' personal growth as the foundation. It will take an extended time however it will be robust over the time to form the organization's sustainability and stability. Time issues for servant leaders aren't thought-about crucial because of their stress collaboration and integrity in develop their organization. The foremost vital in deciding process are reciprocally acceptable decision through smart understanding and therefore the maturity of followers. so, as that, the event of organization through servant leadership designs simply the impact goals, the last word goals are the expansion and follower's maturity.

Van Dierondonk (2010) the latest addition to the aggressive range of servant leadership lives was developed by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten. Once an intensive literature review, ninety-nine things were developed representing eight dimensions. In 3 steps, a combined wildcat and corroboratory correlational analysis approach resulted in an eight-dimensional measure of thirty items. The initial development samples were in Dutch; confirmatory factor analysis for an English-language (U.K.) sample confirmed the factorial structure. It looks to be the sole instrument with a good factorial structure that covers all six key characteristics of servant leadership the distinction establishes itself within the caution carried out by the retainer-first to form positive that other people's highest priority desires are being served. The foremost necessary test is difficult to administer. Do the people grow as individuals when served? Do they, whereas they are served, become wise, healthier, additional self-dependent and more probably become servants themselves? And, what's the impact on the smallest amount privileged in society they serve? Can such a person profit or a minimum of not be more deprived? Servant-Leadership indicates completeness. Even merely going by each the words "Servant" which suggests that the one that "serves": is also for financial gains or otherwise. Whereas "Leader" means the person who takes initiative in an exceedingly cluster state of affairs for the on the face of it commonweal or purpose or deceptively for private gain or otherwise.

Each of the words are contradictory similarly as compatible. Leadership is "act of taking the lead position. When we tend to mix the words to create a phrase Servant-Leader or Servant-Leadership, attributes of personal egoistical or financial gains become subservient or silent.

Thus Servant-Leadership is AN act of being each simultaneously. According to Arlene Hall (1994) Doing menial chores doesn't essentially indicate a servant leader. Instead a servant leader is one who invests himself or herself in enabling, ennobling &empowering others, in serving to them be and do their best Greenleaf (2008) says there is not any single guideline obtainable to imply what it'sthat produces one a servant leader, however the main focus in servant leadership is on a fair community, smart citizenship, and mistreatment persuasion According to Savage, Austin and Honeycutt (2011) that publicly use servant leadership, with the aimof unveiling the perceived structure barriers that stop servant leadership practices and explore however business leaders link their servant leadership practices to their organization's effectiveness Gunnarsdóttir in (2014) states that to be responsible is a vital part of servant leadership and relates this to the acceptance of high standards at work, whereas Coetzer, Bussin, and Geldenhuys in (2017) consider that accountability, for example, suggests that holding others accountable and setting clear expectations Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2015) that state that responsibility is very important for each performance management and learning as accountability helps the leader to produce direction, however the key purpose is that accountability makes certain that individuals feel chargeable for their results. Numerous writers measured the mystical and non-secular foundations of the servant leadership concept.

Akuchie (1993) tested an unattached Bible passage associated to servant administration and proven its distinctiveness to the distinctive worldly empathies of the front-runner's situation and standing. Akuchie recommended the efficacy of this lesson for each day life, however this work no longer consisted of an outline for expertise servant management equally wonderful as of different sorts of management. Others cast-off Biblical records to genuinely demonstrate the hypothesis (Hawkinson &Johnson, 1993; Snodgrass, 1993). In 2002 Sendjaya & Sarros handed down the identical Bible account as Akuchie to announce that Jesus Christ delivered the concept of servant leadership, not Greenleaf to ordinary human effort (Sendjaya 2002 p. fifty-eight). They debated that this administration opinion remained so animated to Christianity that it turned into netted through all 4 gospel authors. Just few rare activities in Jesus' bureau are mentioned via all 4 gospel authors. Other writers have transcribed servant leadership from a supplementary realistic stance, lacking mentioning the larger frame of works past Greenleaf (Blanchard 1998), Those well-known media assistances have preserved the statistics and information hole and fastened servant leadership's increase as an experimental admissible hypothesis. Graham (1991) remained several of the first to carry out a relative evaluation among servant leadership and different headship theories, however this turned into not accompanied up with experimental research. Graham determined that servant leadership became different from the Weberian (convincing) kind fascinating leadership, the behavior (superstar) type fascinating control, however very similar to Burns in early 1978 concept of 19 variant leaderships. Graham, did nevertheless, discriminated against servant leadership from advanced concepts of changing leadership, relating servant management as actuality greater approximately the supporter and few approximately the enterprise (Avolio, 1994 Bass, 1985). The servant leader became characterized as both inspirational and supplying a high-quality

ethical route to their supporters: modest, unrealistic, provider-orientated, and trusting in the need for self-sufficiency and growth according to Graham in 1991. Spears, that observed Greenleaf as CEO of the Greenleaf firm center for Servant management, commenced to organize the regular subject matters he noticed in Greenleaf's literatures. 10 important issues explicated were: listening, sympathy, recovery, consciousness, encouragement, conceptualization, farsightedness, stewardship, promise to the increase of humans, and constructing network as per Spears in1995 but, Spears did no experimental trying out of these magnitudes to prove them. as a substitute, the warm temperature of the assembly became subjugated to have an effect on its increasing fame. Spears written, co-authored, or corrected numerous extra books on servant leadership (Spears 1997, 2001, &2004).

In 1997 Bowman mentioned the shortage of experimental assistance in theoretical literatures inside the famous media. other followers additionally commenced to distinguish, after which report, the dearth of experimental confirmation underlying the concept. In 1999 Farling, Stone & Winston cited the shortage of pragmatic proof inside the literatures on servant leadership. They formed a model of servant management primarily built on an assessment of the works. At the same time as they did inspire other investigators to get involved in more experimental studies, five adjustable they identified within the works (imaginative and prescient, impact, credibility, trust, and provider) have been no more experimentally stuck than the variables originated in the movement of 20 works they disapproved. Their termination changed into that servant leadership become a shape of revolutionized leadership as per Burns in 1978. Wheeler and Barbuto in 2002 proposed the theory of servant management as intangible in the principal workings of Green-leaf and Spears. They defined 11 qualities which includes the 10 traits from Spears, and single no longer discovered in Spears, however which they manipulated changed into a supplementary governing subject with Greenleaf, specifically calling. This initial images however became stuffs for experts and required the hypothetical and experimental upgrading had to support the servant management collect to an operational phase. Polleys in 2002 discovered servant leadership as an expected remedy for management distresses at a college. Servant leadership has been transformed into outstanding from frequent leadership patterns - trait ideas, behavioral concepts, and possibility philosophies- but no differences have been completed to fascinate or change leadership. Polley's viewpoints had been like those of Graham in 1991 & Bowman 1997 in supporting servant leadership per Burn's in 1978 alternative leadership. Stone and Russel in 2002 revised the works and projected nine 'useful' qualities of servant management (visualization, morality, honesty, trust, transporter, demonstrating, ground-breaking, gratitude of others, and authorization) and eleven 'accompanying' qualities (communique, trustworthiness, capability, wardenship, prominence, influence, urging, snooping, inspiration, instruction, and assignment). They also claimed that the servant leader should be a mentor if you want to enlarge their supporters, and that ethics and middle isolated opinions had been the qualifications to servant leadership. According to Patterson in 2003, a more sacred perception of servant management carried chief principles such as affection, modesty, humanity,

forming 21 artistic and perceptive for followers, being innocent, helping, and allowing their followers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Positivism, which emphasises observation and empirical data, underpins this study. Verifying assertions and comprehending causal processes are the main analysis criteria. This strategy solves problems using positivist data. Theory comes from academic research papers and pertinent literature like books, while empirical data comes from semi-structured interviews.

To get knowledge from available data, the research uses an empirical approach. This process includes recognising the problem, creating research objectives, choosing techniques, collecting data, and evaluating the results. A deductive technique was used to generate a theoretical framework and create an organised plan to test it. The study focusses on theoretical analysis to understand Pakistani project management techniques. The focus is on modern agile management ideas and their practicality.

Qualitative research uses open-ended questionnaires. It allows for in-depth analysis of participants' personal experiences and case studies. The study's qualitative analysis emphasises respondents' perceptions and insights over statistical data. No quantitative methods were used in the investigation. Analysing the data for patterns and themes deepens theoretical understanding.

The study targets Pakistani software and IT companies. Electronically picked companies from personal and professional networks were random. Data collection involved questionnaires and one-on-one interviews.

Selection of suitable candidates from a defined population was sampling. The research focused on Pakistani IT enterprises using agile project management. Key staff and executives from these organisations were selected based on professional and personal relationships. All selected participants had substantial information technology experience, making their insights valuable to the study.

Due to IT sector resource constraints, twelve Pakistani software firms provided data. Software development firms have been around for a while. Due to their busy schedules, managerial staff replied in writing to interviews. We requested fifteen enterprises to collect a lot of data to verify accuracy and reliability, but only ten responded

Quetta, Balochistan's SME sector was the focus of the study. Companies were chosen based on professional and personal connections. Written responses were collected during semi-structured interviews. Urdu was used for most interviews. Transcripts were verified with interviewees to verify their responses to reduce translation problems. All participants approved the transcript. This study acquired primary data to solve the research challenge. This information was collected through organised, unstructured, or semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and surveys. Secondary data was collected from multiple sources for objectives unrelated to this study. Stats and research from past studies were utilised.

SCIENTIFIC CREDIBILITY

Validity is a look at to decide whether the questioners take a look at what they're purported to measure or if they measure another element that isn't essential. The diploma to which the check produces equal consequences under managed situations is known as reliability, whilst the importance and appropriateness of the exams is called validity. The interview is constructed with basic concerns of validity and reliability; we accompanied fine practices, inclusive of providing a short assessment for studies purposes at the start of the survey. It becomes ensured that the interview will be completed within 8 to ten minutes. some factors of the survey are classified as obligatory, along with personal records and organizational info. Participation is voluntary and the respondents can choose now not to reply. The questioner is based on an agile project management technique.

INTERVIEWS & RESULTS

Surveys were used to accomplish the research. Interviews were conducted in mid-November 2024 to assess how project professionals manage software-based tasks and achieve desired results. Ten IT executives from Pakistan came, including seasoned project managers with proven project execution skills. The poll asked about age, gender, income, education, employment, and contact information. Respondents also discussed their companies' backgrounds, industries, operational structures, business models, vendor connections, and work environments.

Nine out of 10 respondents said their organisations used Agile techniques. Most respondents said the switch from traditional to Agile project management was easy because it increased efficiency. Some stated that conventional employees needed time and effort to acclimatise. Implementing Agile was difficult due to increased employee and management time commitments, the need for specialised training, lack of Agile awareness, resistance to daily stand-up meetings, and cost overruns due to project scope changes. Agile improved project outcomes and product quality for nine out of 10 respondents. One respondent noted that Agile had pros and cons. The study also found that most respondents innovated products often to meet market and customer needs. Innovation was key to project success, with respondents reporting higher profitability and customer happiness. Some companies examined innovative methods before applying them to confirm their efficacy.

Nearly all respondents said their leadership teams actively supported Agile deployment through workshops and training. Management practices like time commitment expectations, limited Agile knowledge, daily progress reports, working with multiple vendors and systems, frequent scope changes, and increased costs due to evolving project demands caused problems for some employees. Participants generally agreed that Agile was far more effective than traditional project management. They cited lower project failure risks, better target achievement, simpler planning and execution, and higher customer satisfaction. Agile's flexibility, transparency, and communication-focused approach improved product development and delivery cycles, according to several. In conclusion, Agile project management outperforms traditional methods in efficiency, risk management, and client satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study defined four goals in response to the increased interest in servant leadership and research on it. Before defining servant leadership, we explored how management literature has conceptualised it. Second, we critically assessed servant leadership measurement tools and found that Liden et al. (2015, 2008), Sendjaya et al. (2018, 2008), and van Dierendonck et al. (2017) and Nuijten (2011) had the most robust scales after rigorous validation and methodological scrutiny.

Third, we mapped servant leadership's theoretical framework to give researchers a complete picture of the field's study. Finally, we proposed a research agenda to improve servant leadership research by filling gaps and improving methodological rigour. Over the past two decades, servant leadership research has advanced, but its conceptual and empirical overlap with transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership remains controversial. Existing studies also have design flaws that limit their insights. Despite these obstacles, we think it's too soon to abandon or change the field. Lack of construct clarity, poor measurement techniques, and incorrect research designs are the main difficulties. Addressing these challenges and following this review's recommendations can help servant leadership research become more sophisticated and influential, contributing to leadership research in the future.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Karachi and Lahore, two of Pakistan's most important cities and the foundation of the country's booming software industry, should be included in this study to broaden its scope. These cities are perfect for studying how software companies use agile methodologies and the results they get because of the significant roles they play in the country's information technology sector. Still, studies need to look beyond the IT sector to see if agile adoption can be useful in other industries like manufacturing, automotive, and more if we want a complete picture of the phenomenon.

Examining the ways in which these sectors adopt and make use of agile frameworks, this research hopes to reveal the transformative power and wider adaptability of agile approaches. In addition to demonstrating agile practices' efficacy in software development, an analysis spanning industries will provide insight into how these approaches improve responsiveness, innovation, and efficiency in manufacturing and industrial settings. By broadening the scope of the research in this way, we can gain a better understanding of how agile concepts can be applied to other areas, leading to a more agile-driven corporate environment.

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