

Influence of Visioning on Organizational Commitment in Kenyan State Corporations

Mrs Wekesa S. Olesia¹, Prof. G. S. Namusonge², Dr. Mike A. Iravo³

*Department of Entrepreneurship, Technology, Leadership and Management
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.P.O. Box 62000-00200 Nairobi, Kenya.*

*Department of Entrepreneurship, Technology, Leadership and Management
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.P.O. Box 62000-00200 Nairobi, Kenya.*

*Department of Entrepreneurship, Technology, Leadership and Management
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.P.O.Box 62000-00200 Nairobi, Kenya.*

Abstract: Successful organizations are those whose managers go out of their way to ensure that employees are committed to their organizations. Committed employees usually exhibit the most positive work attitudes and performance. Having committed employees has therefore become very important to organizations both small and large. Empirical studies have established that leadership styles affect employees and employees who favour their manager's style are most likely to favour the organization more. In essence, employee commitment reflects the quality of an organization's leadership. The objective of this study was to establish the role of servant leadership on organizational commitment but with special emphasis on the visioning attribute. The descriptive research design was used. Further, the researcher adopted the mixed method approach where both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data was done. The target population for this study were the employees of the sampled state corporations in Kenya. A sample size of 385 respondents was selected using the Godden's sample size formula for infinite populations. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data that was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Obtained results showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between the servant leadership attribute of visioning and organizational commitment. It is recommended that leaders in the modern business world embrace servant leadership behaviors as they impact positively on employee's commitment.

Keywords: Visioning, Servant leadership, Organizational Commitment, State corporations in Kenya.

I. Introduction

As the world continues to witness many changes, the study of leadership theories and what makes a good leader becomes increasingly necessary. This is because it is widely acknowledged that organizations succeed or fail because of leadership. Leadership is being redefined with a lot of emphasis being put on service and stewardship rather than on control and power. Different styles of leadership and leadership theories have been created and implemented within organizations. One leadership style that is receiving an increasing amount of interest and recognition in recent years is servant leadership (Han, 2014). It is continuing to gain support and momentum as evidenced by the ever-increasing number of scholarly articles on servant leadership (Sendjaya&Sarros, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Hale & Field's, 2007; Earnhardt, 2008; West & Bocarnea, 2008; Ambali et al., 2011; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Mittal & Dorfan, 2012; Mahembe&Engelbrecht, 2013; Han, 2014; Wekesa, 2014; Ramli&Desa, 2014). The concept of organizational commitment is also attracting considerable attention and has become a central objective of human resource management. Committed employees are today said to be an organizations source of competitive edge and not necessarily products. Such employees are said to have a sense of purpose, they are clearly involved, and will help to solve the organization's problems. Given the contribution that a highly productive, trained and committed employee can make to organizational productivity, keeping such an employee should be a high priority for the organization (Nehmeh, 2009). This study aimed at establishing the role of servant leadership on organizational commitment in Kenyan state corporations but with special reference to the visioning attribute.

1.1 Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership style that is focused primarily on the growth of people. It is characterized by the interest to serve and empower employees. As Greenleaf pointed out, servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010). This leadership style comprises an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those who are led above the self-interest of the leader. A servant leader has true commitment to his or her followers and predominantly serves the needs of followers,

hence providing vision and empowerment, with service being the main activity of the servant leader (Sendjaya&Sarros, 2002; Spears, 2010). Servant leaders transcend individual self-interest by serving others and helping them to grow both professionally and personally. Rather than leading for personal gain, positional power, or glorified status, the servant leader is motivated by a desire to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977; Lussier&Achua, 2007 as cited in Ebener& O'Connell, 2010). Servant leadership theory moves beyond the traditional trait, behavioral and situational theories and changes the focus of the leader. Greenleaf (1977) asserted that servant-leaders put the needs and interests of others above their own. They make a deliberate choice to serve others, although this should not be associated with a low self-concept or low self-esteem. A strong self-image, moral conviction, and emotional stability are factors that drive leaders to make this choice (Sendjaya&Sarros, 2002). The servant-leader seeks to make sure that other people's highest-priority needs are being served. Servant-leaders seek to transform their followers to grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants (Greenleaf, 1977). It has been noted that some of Fortune's 100 best companies in America have practiced and recommended servant leadership (Levering & Moskowitz, 2000; Sendjaya&Sarros, 2002; Spears, 2004; Brownell, 2010 as cited in Han, 2014).

According to Van Dierendonck (2011), the lack of an accurate definition of servant leadership by Greenleaf has given rise to many interpretations exemplifying a wide range of behaviors. Spears (2004), was among the first people to translate Greenleaf's ideas into a model that characterizes the servant leader's behavior. He listed ten characteristics that he perceived servant leaders portrayed and they included listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment and building community. Over the years, many other authors and writers have developed other models. Laub (1999) developed a conceptual model consisting of six servant leadership characteristics which include; develops people, valuing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership and sharing leadership. Russell and Stone (2002) identified twenty attributes observed among servant leaders. They further categorized these attributes into nine functional attributes and eleven accompanying attributes which include; Vision, modeling, communication, persuasion, honesty, pioneering, credibility, listening, integrity, appreciation, competence, encouragement, trust, empowerment, stewardship, service, delegation, visibility and influence. Patterson (2003) noted that servant leadership is a natural extension of transformational leadership and she came up with a model which comprises of seven dimensions of agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment and service. Enhart (2004) identified major behaviours of servant leaders as forming relationships with subordinates, empowering subordinates, helping subordinates grow and succeed, behaving ethically, having conceptual skills, putting subordinates first and creating value for those outside the organization. Other attributes of servant leadership include emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinate first and behaving ethically (Liden et al., 2008). Most recently, VanDierendonckandNuijten(2011) have described servant leadership in using eight dimensions which have including empowerment, humility, standing back, authenticity, forgiveness, courage, accountability and stewardship. Visioning is an attribute that has been studied and mentioned in several models as being very specific to servant leadership (Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Page & Wong, 2000; West & Borcarnea, 2008). This study gave special reference to this attribute as it is very significant in servant leadership from the literature reviewed.

1.2 Visioning

Visioning is one of the necessary leadership tasks, but servant leaders have a different approach to visioning (Page & Wong, 2000). Servant leaders typically have a passionate zeal for creating a preferred future and their deep desire to pursue this vision is done on the basis of humility, empathy, compassion and commitment to ethical behaviour. In short, they articulate a vision then enable, ennoble and empower those around them to work for the attainment of that vision (Lad & Luechauer, 1998 in Page & Wong, 2000). The central role of the servant leader is establishing a strategic vision for the organization (Covey, 1996; De Pree, 1997; Maxwell, 1998 in Russell & Stone, 2002). Servant leaders must dream while remaining in the past and focused on the future because this allows the leader to take advantage of the opportunities of the present (Bennett, 2001). Servant leader's advance shared vision through personal example and appealing to higher ideals such as serving the community. This shared vision inevitably leads to teamwork. In servant leadership, employees will usually be driven by an inner motivation to attain the vision of the organization. The servant leader will engage all of them and inspire each of them to stretch and use whatever talents they have in order to attain this shared vision (Page & Wong, 2000).

In the visionary role, leaders are expected to define the direction of the organization and they need to communicate what the organization stands for and how organizational values encompass the individual values of its members (Blanchard, 2000). When it comes to vision and values, the leader has to say it over and over and over again until people get it right (De Pree, 1997). A vision can only have an impact on the employees when communicated to them effectively so that they are in a position to understand how they fit in this future

envisaged state. The servant leader's job is to encourage people to share their good ideas and to eventually create a shared vision that everyone cares about (Lubin, 2001). The mark of a leader and the attribute that puts him or her in a position to attract followers is when the leader demonstrates the ability to see more clearly the best destination for the organization (Taylor, 2002). It is usually important for leaders to gain the input, insight and involvement from all key people in the organization in formulating the vision or mission statement. A leader has to internalize this vision and to communicate it in such a way that employees are inspired to work towards that vision. There are a number of empirical studies that have supported this variable (Russell & Stone, 2002; Dennis & Winston, 2003; Hales & Fields, 2007; West & Bocarnea, 2008).

1.3 Organizational Commitment

No organization could ever achieve its goals without having committed human resources (Mazarei et al., 2013). Organizational commitment is therefore an issue of great significance to an organization as it is concerned with an employee's eagerness to go above and beyond the call of duty while performing his or her duties and it also about the employees desire to maintain membership with an organization. Like a strong magnetic force attracting metallic objects to another, it is a measure of the employee's willingness to remain with a firm in the future (Newstrom, 2009). Employees can therefore be said to be committed to an organization if they continue with their association with the organization out of their own free will and also exert a lot of effort towards the achievement of an organization's goals. Committed employees exhibit the most positive work attitudes and work performance (Ambali et al., 2011). Positive outcomes of organizational commitment include low turnover rates, higher work motivation, less tardiness and absenteeism, higher job performance, adherence to company policies and greater organizational citizenship behaviour (Ricketta, 2002; Meyer et al., 2002; Bakan et al., 2011). Further, there is an improvement in customer satisfaction because long-tenure employees have better knowledge of work practices, and customers like the familiarity of doing business with the same employees, they make referrals resulting in new customers and even pay a premium price (Newstrom, 2009). Costs associated with high turnover and absenteeism are avoided when employees are committed to their organization.

The model of organizational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) was used in this study. This model includes three levels of commitment and it is possible that an employee can display aspects of all of these types of commitment in the organization that they are working for. These three levels of commitment include affective, normative and continuance commitment. Affective commitment is one's desire to belong to the organization (Bergman, 2006 as cited in Ramli&Desa, 2014) and they stay out of their own free will. In normative commitment, employees feel they have to remain in the organization which means that they feel they are trapped in the organization. It basically reflects a sense of obligation on the part of the employee to maintain membership in the organization (Kamarul&Raida, 2003). Continuance commitment is based on Becker's (1960) side bet theory which states that as individuals remain in employment for longer periods, they accumulate investments which become costly to lose. Continuance commitment therefore refers to the employee's recognition of the costs associated if he or she leaves the organization (Ramli&Desa, 2014). The main focus of this study was with the affective dimension of organizational commitment since employees with strong affective commitment are more willing to engage in organizational citizenship behaviours than those with weak affective commitment Nehmeh (2009).

1.4 Visioning and Organizational Commitment

West and Borcanea (2008) conducted a study on servant leadership and organizational outcomes: Relationships in United States and Filipino Higher Educational Settings and measured servant leadership using Hale and Field's (2007) servant leadership dimensions instrument. They measured the servant leaders' constructs of service, humility and vision. Their study found that there exists a significant positive relationship between the servant leadership dimensions and affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction. A vision helps employees make better, more informed decisions by keeping their eye on the bigger picture. Perhaps most importantly, employees who understand and participate in the organization's vision are inspired, energized and feel ownership of that vision and the decisions management makes as a result of the vision. When employees own the vision of the organization, they are motivated to work towards the realization of that vision which in turn will cause them to be committed to the organization they work for. Servant leadership contributes to organizational commitment because it builds or creates a trusting, supportive community which fosters creativity and innovation (Moghaddam& Ansari, 2013).

1.5 Contextual Perspective

The Kenyan government forms state corporations to meet both commercial and social goals (Njiru, 2008). These corporations are very important to the Kenyan economy as they provide essential products and services and also offer employment to many people. The organizational commitment of these employees is

significantly related to the quality and quantity of service delivery. Leadership has specifically been identified as a key element of service firm's success due to the importance of cooperation, learning and customer relations in this kind of environment (Gupta et al., 2005; Morales & Montes, 2005; Douglas & Fredendall, 2004 cited in Melchar & Bosco, 2010). In order to satisfy their customers in today's very competitive work environment, it is imperative that the needs of the internal customers who are the employees be first taken care of by the leadership of these corporations so that they become more committed and in turn can give satisfactory service to the external customers. Writers have said that servant leadership ought to be a natural model for the public sector and it is best suited for the sector (Spears, 1996; Barbuto & Wheeler 2002, 2006). State corporations in Kenya as is the case in most African countries have been faced with a number of challenges. Employee absenteeism, lateness, corruption, theft, high rate of complaints, low quality work output, high turn-over of professional staff, mismanagement, bureaucracy, wastage, incompetence and irresponsibility by directors and employees are some key problem indicators in the state corporations (Chepkilot, 2005; Miring'u, 2011).

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Effective leadership has been said to be very essential for organizational success as it greatly determines the commitment of the organizations most essential resource which are the employees. Most of the studies on servant leadership and organizational commitment however have been carried out using Western and Asian samples (Wei & Desa, 2013). There are limited studies that have been conducted outside this context (Nelson, 2003; Koshal, 2005; Hales & Fields, 2007; Kipkebut, 2012). This study aimed at further exploring servant leadership and organizational commitment in the context of Kenyan state corporations with a view of filling this gap. In light of the employee commitment issues and the challenge of leadership in the Kenyan state corporations, the objective of this study was to establish the role of the servant leadership attribute of visioning on organizational commitment in these corporations.

II. Theoretical Review

a) Trait Theory

Trait approaches, which were the earliest to be employed, seek to identify the traits of leaders, in other words, what characterizes leaders as opposed to those who are not leaders. The theory suggests that some people were born to lead due to their personal qualities, while others are not. The most noticeable components of this theory are that successful leaders all over the world and throughout history are born with innate qualities such as personality traits, social traits, ability traits and physical traits. The groupings of leadership traits vary from one scholar to another. Stogdill (1948) outlined eight traits namely intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence and sociability as key traits. Daft (2005), argued that the traits that distinguish leaders from non-leaders are intelligence, height and energy while Northouse (2007) contends that the key traits of leaders will include intelligence, sociability, self-confidence, determination and integrity. This theory suggests that leadership is only available to the chosen few and not accessible to all. These approaches have however been criticized for this very reason and also because there has been little consistency in the list of traits that research has uncovered (Derek et al., 2008).

b) Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

The LMX theory was first illustrated in the works of Dansereau et al., (1975, in Rimes, 2011). It is one of the most recent theories of leadership that focuses on the interactions between followers and leaders (Northouse, 2007). It describes how a leader and an individual subordinate develop a relationship as they influence each other and negotiate the subordinate's role in the organization (Yukl, 2005). The quality of the relationship is reflected by the degree of mutual trust, loyalty, support, respect, and obligation. Essentially, the supervisor, the subordinate or both evaluate the relationship according to the quality of the interaction and these perceptions have a fundamental influence on individual outcomes (May-Chiun Lo et al., 2010). According to the theory, leaders usually form different kinds of relationships with various groups of subordinates. One group (the in-group) will usually be favoured by the leader and will receive more attention and support from the leader than the out-group (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This theory has been criticized because the leader forms different relationships with different groups of employees and so the employees can not all be treated in the same way.

c) Servant Leadership Theory

Servant leadership, first proposed by Greenleaf (1970) is a theoretical framework that advocates that a leader's primary motivation and role is service to others. Greenleaf first coined this modern term servant-leadership in 1970 in the essay entitled, *The Servant as Leader* (Spears, 1996). Servant leadership is a type of leadership which comes under the democratic style. This theory advocates that a leader's primary motivation and role is to serve and meet the needs of others, which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership. Servant leaders develop people, helping them to thrive and flourish (Russell & Stone, 2002; McMinn,

2001). Servant leadership is therefore a belief that organizational goals will be achieved on a long term basis only by first facilitating the growth, development and general wellbeing of the individuals who comprise the organization (Stone et al., 2003). The best test of the leader is whether those served grow as persons and whether while being served they become healthier, wiser and more able themselves to become servant leaders (Wheeler, 2011). Most leadership types concentrate on the well-being of the organization while servant leadership puts more focus on the followers (Taleghani&Mehr, 2013) and aims at putting the well-being of the followers before other goals. The servant leadership theory with its focus on the follower was therefore found to be the most appropriate theory for this study.

III. Methodology

This study was designed to establish the role of visioning on organizational commitment in Kenyan state corporations. The target population for this study were all the state corporations in Kenya. The sample size determination formula for infinite populations (Godden, 2004) was adopted to determine the sample size for this study. A sample of 385 employees from the state corporations was used to collect the necessary data. The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire which had Likert scale questions and also open ended items.

Measurement

The researcher sought and obtained permission to use the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (Dennis, 2004) and the Servant Leadership Profile (Page & Wong, 2000, 2003) in order to measure the servant leadership attribute of visioning. Items touching on visioning were picked from the two instruments. A five point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree were used to establish the perception of employees towards their leaders with a view of determining whether they exhibited the stated servant leadership attribute. The questions addressed behaviors that are easily observed by any followers so that prior knowledge of the servant leadership theory was not required. This servant leadership attribute has been measured in other studies (West & Borcanea, 2008; Liden et al., 2008).

In order to measure the perceived levels of organizational commitment, the researcher sought permission to use the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment (Meyer & Allen 1991, 1997). The TCM Employee Commitment measures three forms of employee commitment to an organization which are Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) and the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS). The researcher used the original and revised ACS scale since the main component of organizational commitment of interest was affective commitment. Affective commitment was measured on a five point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Three- Component Model has been used in several other studies (Ambali et al., 2011; Rimes, 2011; Carder, 2012; Wei & Desa, 2013).

IV. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 18.0. Descriptive analysis using frequencies, percentages and means was used together with binary logistic regression for analysis of the data. Statistical significance was determined based upon a significance level of 0.05.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis of a five point Likert scale (5=strongly agree to 1 =strongly disagree) was used to establish the role of visioning on organizational commitment. From the results of the study, more than half of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all the statements that applied to the servant leadership attribute of visioning. A great majority of the respondents agreed that this servant leadership variable contributed to organizational commitment. This supported previous study (West & Bocarnea, 2008) that indicated that visioning was a predictor of organizational commitment.

4.2 Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

The model tested was as follows;

$$Y = \text{Logit}(p) = \text{Log} \frac{P}{1-p} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where;

Y= Represents the dependent variable, Organizational Commitment

P = Probability of being committed to the organization

1- p = Probability of not being committed to the organization

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = The regression coefficient

X_1 = Represents visioning

E = Error term

A binary logistic regression analysis was carried out to predict organizational commitment in Kenyan state corporations using visioning as the predictor variable as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between Visioning and Organizational Commitment

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Constant	0.042	0.125	0.111	1	0.739	1.042
Visioning	0.377	0.132	8.172	1	0.004	1.458
-2 Log likelihood	315.445					
Cox & Snell R Square	0.032					
Nagelkerke R Square	0.043					
Chi square	8.749			1	0.003	

A test of the full model against the constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that visioning reliably differentiated between those committed to state corporations or not (Chi square=8.749, p-value <0.05 with d.f= 1). Nagelkerke R squared of 0.043 indicated a moderate relationship between prediction and grouping but on overall prediction, success was 59%: 48.5% for no commitment and 69.1% for commitment. The Wald criterion demonstrated that visioning made a significant contribution to prediction of organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.377$, Wald = 8.172 and p-value <0.05). B column indicates the magnitude and direction of the given independent variable in relation to organizational commitment. The coefficient gives us the change in proportion of organizational commitment given a unit change in visioning. It can be concluded that employment of the servant leadership attribute of visioning increases the likelihood of organizational commitment by 0.377. Exp (B) value indicated that when visioning is raised by one unit, the odds ratio is 1.458 times as large and therefore organizations exhibiting servant leadership attribute of visioning are 0.458 times more likely to have committed employees as summarised in equation 1.

Logit (p) = 0.042 + 0.377 (Visioning).....Equation 1.

V. Discussion of Findings

In servant leadership, employees will usually be driven by an inner motivation to attain the vision of the organization. Leaders provide a vision, gain follower’s confidence and have influence on others (Farling et al., 1999 as cited in Cerit, 2010).The servant leader will engage all of them and inspire each of them to stretch and use whatever talents they have in order to attain this shared vision. According to the findings of this present study, visioning makes a positive contribution to organizational commitment. This finding supports the study conducted by West and Bocarnea (2008) that established a significant positive relationship between servant leadership attribute of visioning and affective organizational commitment but contradicts Moghaddan and Ansari (2013) and (Hajjaj, 2014). Servant leader’s advance shared vision through personal example and appealing to higher ideals such as serving the community. This shared vision inevitably leads to teamwork. In servant leadership, employees will usually be driven by an inner motivation to attain the vision of the organization. The servant leader will engage all employees and inspire each of them to stretch and use whatever talents they have in order to attain this shared vision (Page & Wong, 2000).

VI. Recommendation

Commitment is an issue of great significance to an organization as it is concerned with an employee’s eagerness to go above and above the call of duty while performing his or her duties and it also about employees desire to maintain membership with an organization. Since the servant leadership style of the supervisor has an influence on organizational commitment, it is essential that supervisors re-evaluate their leadership behaviours. This study brought out the critical role of visioning on organizational commitment. On the basis of the obtained results, management in state corporations should focus on increasing organizational commitment through the adoption of the servant leadership attribute of visioning. Employees need to understand and participate in the organization’s vision formulation and implementation. This will make them inspired, energized and feel ownership of that vision. When employees own the vision of the organization, they are motivated to work towards the realization of that vision which in turn will cause them to be committed to the organization they work for. It is recommended that leaders should inspire employees with their enthusiasm and confidence towards accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives and direct them towards achieving the vision of the organization. There is need to have leaders retrained and exposed to servant leadership attributes especially visioning so as to increase not only organizational commitment but organizational productivity as well.

VII. Conclusion

The relationship that a leader builds with employees goes a long way in not only developing their skills and competencies but also improving organizational productivity through enhanced organizational commitment. Servant leadership is one of the contemporary leadership styles that is said to be relationship oriented hence

increases organizational commitment. This leadership style has been said to be the key to the better world that people are yearning for that is freer, healthier, more humane and more prosperous. The findings of this study have lent credence to these observations. Servant leadership is not a model that is applicable to American societies only but it is also applicable in Africa and Kenya in particular. The obtained results have established that the leaders in the Kenyan state corporations do exhibit servant leadership behaviours and specifically visioning thus contributing significantly to organizational commitment. It is evident that employees become committed to their organizations when supported by appropriate leadership styles. There is need therefore for the government and specifically the state corporations to enhance and strengthen the practice of servant leadership through training and retraining of both leaders and employees.

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