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Abstract

The review on employee engagement shows the importance of leadership and trust. Literature on leadership researchers suggest the influential role of Servant leadership in employee engagement. According to emerging literature, there is a scarcity of studies with empirical relationships to servant leadership and employee engagement in general, and in developing countries in particular. Grounded in social exchange theory, the purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of servant leadership on employee engagement. Moreover, this paper highlights the role of trust as mediating mechanism among the selected variables. To test the relationship between the examined variables, four hypotheses were developed and validated through quantitative methodology by employing structure equation modelling through SPSS software. For this purpose, data was collected from employees working in different public sectors of Afghanistan. Data collection was made possible through an online data collection method with assistance of google forms. Links were shared among employees. A total of 237 responses were received and analyzed for the proposed relationships among constructs. The results of this study revealed that servant leadership significantly influences employee engagement. Findings also show that trust positively mediates between servant leadership and employee engagement.

Keywords: *Servant Leadership, trust, employee engagement, loyalty, commitment, outcome, Afghanistan public sectors.*

Introduction

In this dynamic business environment organizations are outcome-oriented (Aboramadan et al. 2020) and the quality and quantity of the performance is perfectly related to the employees engagement and commitment levels of the employees, and better performance relies mainly within the employees and the types of leadership (Schaufeli et al. 2008). and as well as a mediating factor which creates significant relationship between the leadership and the employee engagement such as trust factor (Klein, 2014).

The organizations are operated and managed by employees who are engaged in the organization through the leaders so, the employee plays vital role in the success and failure of the organization (Schaufeli et al. 2008). Engaged employees are having more loyalty and committed to the organization in comparison to the employees which are not engaged (Lovakov, 2016). The employees who are loyal and committed to the organization are those who are engaged more by the leader and this leadership style is more considering the servant leadership because the servant leadership style have the competencies to engage their employees and accelerates the level of the followers' engagement level in the organization.

A study carried out by (Bommer et al. 2018) that the researchers and scholars shall focus more on the contribution of servant leadership to employee engagement in the organization and it is significant effects. The reason for the suggestion is that more researchers carry out their studies and research around the servant leadership, not employee engagement if the researchers pay more of their attention to the significant effects and relationship of servant leadership on employee engagement and it is results in the employees' outcome and overall, on the organization's outcome.

Leadership is a phenomenon which seems more complex and many-sided and leadership is deemed as an important constituent in organization success and achieving organizational goals and objectives (Aboramadan et al. 2020). The type of leadership which is more recommended by researchers and scholars is servant leadership and stated that servant leadership accelerates trust between leaders and subordinators and both results in employee engagement in the organization (Klein, 2014).

According to (Hart, 1984) the servant leadership term is parallel to honourable bureaucrats, those who act in a way of morally significant manner, subsequently, and care more for those who are working as their followers or employees and most of their deeds and activities are based on trust which can benefit others than himself. The public sector organizations with particular attributes fascinate, select and motivate people (Taylor, 2013) and also, and the servant leaders are less dominant in the private sector and more prevalent in the public sector. Employee engagement for the organization to be more sustainable is critical (Shcaufeli & Salanova, 2007), sustainability is essential for any organization in any situation, and when the organization is sustainable, they achieve its goals and objectives which have been determined in the organizational strategy, and this comes with the employee engagement in the organization through the leadership style they adopt.

Besides employee engagement trust is also one of the main intrinsic encouragement tools, if the organizations seek to achieve a competitive advantage, focusing on team members is fundamental (Simmons, 2002) and (Payne et al. 2010). Furthermore, many research studies have been conducted and suggested considering trust as mediating factor in different types of leadership (Aboramadan, Dahlez and Hamad, 2020; Payne, Moore, Griffis, & Autry, 2011), Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the differential effect of servant leadership on employee's engagement with mediating role of trust.

Review of Literature

Theoretical Background

The foundations of the current research study are in line with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), this theory explains that the social behavior is the result of the exchange course and this theory much focuses on the maximization of benefits and in exchange the minimization of the cost and weigh the benefits with risks in social relations, if the risk is high so the individual stops the relationship because the relations are based on give-and-take. And this theory works as the give-and-take

The social exchange theory (Hereafter, SET) perfectly supports the selected variables in this study, where SET theory explains a mechanism through which servant leadership accelerates positive attitudes and behaviours in the organization among the employees. The behaviors adopted by the servant leadership are esteemed and valued with positive employee work-related outcomes (Aboramadan et al. 2020), and it has been claimed and justified that servant leadership in comparison to other studied leadership styles projects the outcome of the individuals and as well as the organization (Hoch et al. 2018).

SET theory is also in-ling and applicable for the mediating variable of the current study.

Servant Leadership Concept

The researchers have paid more attention to servant leadership and its impacts on employees' engagement, work-related and organizational outcomes, loyalty and employee commitment. This type of leading style endeavours to fulfil the needs of their subordinators and this behaviour eventually motivates their subordinators to follow their leader (Greenleaf, 2002). Servant leadership focuses on how to drive their employees toward achieving organizational goals and objectives.

The recent definition provides by (Eva et al. 2019) for the servant leadership states that the servant leadership is: an additional-oriented style of the leadership which prioritises the needs and interests of the subordinators; and Turns their Concern and focus on their followers within the organization and larger communities rather than to concern their own need and interests. Servant leadership attention is on the development and growth of their subordinators and this type of leadership is different from the rest of the leadership styles. Servant leaders are authentic and ethical and through a special leadership style, they motivate their subordinators and followers (Autry, 2007). Servant leadership has been character stewardship, humility, acceptance of interpersonal, empowering and providing direction to the followers (Van, 2011).

The researchers state that the servant leadership demonstrates an organizational culture to meet the customers' needs, employee engagement and ethics between the team members in the workplace and as the result, the employees and leaders are enthusiastically trying to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization (Carter et al. 20114). The job of a servant leader is to empower their subordinators by trust and growth, and these factors stimulate their employees, where they make decisions which accelerate the success of the organization (Keith, 2015). Stone et al. (2005) explains it in different word; servant leaders focus more on proving services and motivation to their employees rather than directing their followers (Stone et al. 2004).

Furthermore, servant leader apprises their followers and gives them a sense of accountability regarding their personal development and growth (Ehrhart, 2004). The additional role which plays by the servant leader is ethical behaviour and inspiring their employees to not play disgraceful activities.

Employee Engagement Concept

Employee engagement is the result of leader behaviour and style they adopt in the organization which creates and improve loyalty, trust, output, job satisfaction and effort (Klein, 2014). The employee engagement plays a vital role in organizational success and failure and researchers have paid more attention to this factor (Schaufeli et al. 2008) and also what factors accelerate the level of engagement in employees is an interesting topic for the human resources scholars as well (Shuck et al. 2013).

Employee engagement is an invisible problem in Afghanistan's public sectors, the managers in public sectors are deliberately not engaging their employees in the organization. And they believe that once we engage our employees in work they will learn our skills and this can put our position in risk of losing it, and as well as the other reason is that if we engage our employees in the organization then they may understand our secrets.

Employees those work with more enthusiasm in the workplace are the employees who have more engagement in the organization and this inspires and gives energy to other

employees as well (May et al. 2004). In common, work engagement plays a vital role in job performance as well as in organizational performance which was suggested by the previous researcher (Shuck et al. 2013).

The definition of the employee engagement within work by (Schaufeli et al. 2002) is a positive fulfilling work-related state of mind which is characterized by energy, dedication and amalgamation, employee engagement is the level to which the employees are motivated for contributing to the organizational success and also have been ready and prepared for the endeavour to complete the giving tasks which are vital for achieving the organizational goals and objectives (Kowske et al. 2009). The employees who have higher continuation will and are associated with their work emotionally and mentally are those employees who are greatly engaged (Aboramadan et al. 2020). In contradiction, the employees which have more absentees, negatively behaviour and unethical activities are the employees who are not engaged (Blanchard et al. 2003).

In organizations, employee engagement is very important in the success of the organization the reason is that less engagement will lead to many problems along with customer dissatisfaction and work quality. Including other factors here are some factors which can accelerate the engagement and these factors are rewards, recognition and appreciation from the leaders' side (Aboramadan et al. 2020).

Trust Concept

The term trust is the level of employee's confidence which has in an organization in which S/he works and the level of organization's confidence in employees see that S/he will act with honesty in their actions and words (Klein, 2014).

Captivating the employees' trust in the leader is an important element for becoming an effective and successful leader (Wang et al. 2010). A leader to succeed needs to build trust to achieve the basic tasks assigned by the organization which are the organization's goals.

Trust has been considered a vital part of the relationship between employees and the organizations (Blau, 1964), the relationship between employees and the organization is established through trust and this relationship brings the organization to the age of success and survival in the uncertain external situation. Trust in the leader has been deemed a vital element of employee engagement (Wang et al. 2010), this shows that when the employees of the organization have trust in their leader employees become more engaged in their work and the organization. Trust also plays an important part in increasing the opportunity and chance for profits, survival of the organization in uncertain situations, and also in innovation of new process products and services behaviours of the employees (Shockley et at. 1999).

Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement

The relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement is the area of interest in managerial and as well as in academia the reason is these two factors together will lead to employee productivity and helps the mental health in organizations (Blanchard et al. 2003). Servant leadership plays a vital role in improving employee feelings about their work (Ayers, 2006), this feeling includes the psychological safety of the employee toward his/her work. The enthusiasm, energy and effort among employees accelerate by the servant leadership (Schaufeli et al. 2004). The subordinates practice positive emotions for their work (Page and Wong, 2000) the reason is that the servant leader cacaresore for their followers. And the caring of servant leaders for their employees forms psychological safety among the subordinates (Schaubroeck et al. 2011), and this eventually encourages employee engagement (Greenleaf, 2002), when the employees feel psychological safety in return their

engagement level is going to be in increased organization. The study researchers suggested that the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement should be more explored by future researchers and scholars (Bommer et al. 2018). The reason is that servant leadership motivates their employees and as the reshapes employee engagement level has been increased in the organization.

Literature proposed that the servant leadership and employee engagement variables have already been tested and that servant leadership has a positive effect on employee engagement (Tims et al. 2011: Walumbwa et al. 2010), but very few research studies have been carried out on the relationship of servant leadership and employee engagement. Furthermore, research studies (Carter et al. 2014; De Clercq et al. 2014; Kaur, 2018) found that servant leadership has a significant positive relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. Hence, on the foundation of existing literature, posit the following hypothesis:

H1. Servant leadership has a positive relationship with employee engagement.

Servant Leadership and Trust

Previous studies have shown a strong relationship between servant leadership and trust. The reason is that trust in leaders is deemed as a means to demonstrate the effects of servant leadership behaviour on employees' work attitudes (Van Dierendocnk, 2011). The dimensions through which the attitudinal response of employees to the behaviour of their supervisor is two are suggested by McAllister (1995); the first is instrumental in nature and the second one is more relational. Cognitive trust is related to the trust which results from a rational evaluation of the leader's salient personal characteristics such as competence, reliability, and dependability by employees (Wang et al. 2010). And the latter is deemed as affective trust, related to what develops from the emotional ties between employees and the leader as they engage in a process of social exchange (Yang and Mossholder 2010). Furthermore, research studies (Klein, 2014) found that servant leadership has a significant positive relationship with trust. Hence, on the foundation of existing literature, we posit the following hypothesis:

H2. Servant leadership has a positive relationship with trust.

Trust and Employee Engagement

The relationship between trust and employee engagement is an area of interest for researchers and scholars. The reason for this interest is that trust between employees leads to inclusive employee engagement (Klein, 2014). This theory advances the premise that employees reciprocate positive job attitudes and behaviour (Gouldner, 1960) as their affiliation with employees is established based on SET. Accordingly, when employees believe that the leader and organization are trustworthy and they feel secure in return, the employees reciprocate trust by becoming highly engaged in their work (Ugwu et al. 2014). Although literature proposes that trust and employee engagement variables have already been tested and trust has a positive effect on employee engagement (Klein, 2014; Wang & Hasie, 2013), very few research studies have been carried out on the relationship between trust and employee engagement. Furthermore, research studies (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Klein, 2014) found that trust has a significant positive relationship between trust and employee engagement. Hence, on the foundation of existing literature, we posit the following hypothesis:

H3. Trust has a positive relationship with employee engagement.

Trust's Mediating Role

The trust received more attention and was considered an interesting area for researchers and scholars. Trust as a mediating factor has been suggested by previous research studies (Aboramadan et al. 2020; Payne et al. 2010), and leads to employee engagement (Klein, 2014). Trust is defined as the degree of confidence of an employee in a leader or an organization and believes that they will take action with truthfulness in their words as well as in their actions (Klein, 2014). Employee engagement is very important to the organization's profit, innovation, employee behaviours, and organizational survival (Shockley et al., 1999). The literature proposes that servant leadership, trust, and employee engagement variables have already been tested and trust mediates a positive role between servant leadership and employee engagement (Klein, 2014). Very few research studies have been carried out and it could be claimed that (Klein, 2014) is the sole research study on the relationship of servant leadership with a mediating role of trust in employee engagement. Furthermore, a research study (Klein, 2014) found that trust has a significant positive influence on employee engagement and servant leadership. Hence, on the foundation of existing literature, it can be hypothesized:

H4. Trust mediates a positive role between servant leadership and employee engagement.

Model of Research

The following is the research model which is selected for the current research study the independent variable is servant leadership, mediating variable is trust and the dependent variable is employee engagement. The mentioned variables also include four hypotheses as follows.

Figure 1: Research Model
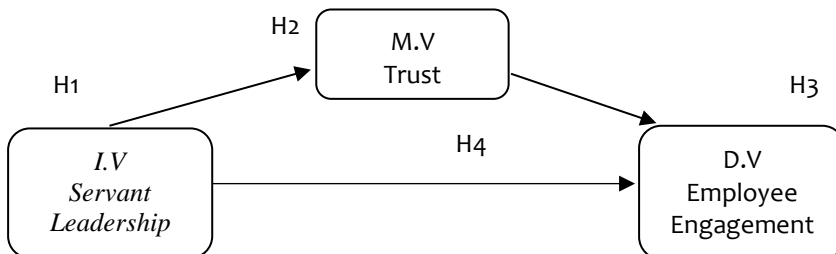
Source: Author's compilation

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy and Methodology

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), when the methodology of the research study is quantitative the current study intends to examine the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable and the research method of this study is quantitative. In the current methodology, the positivism philosophy is used in this research study the reason is that this study will examine the relationship between variables and hypotheses are tested. As the research study methodology is quantitative and with this methodology the positivism approach is highly recommended. And this research study is based on hypothesis testing through a subjective study questionnaire. The quantitative methodology is used and the quantitative data has been collected and uploaded to the SPSS system for the analysis, and the reason is that in this research study the hypothesis is tested

in the literature through the close-ended/structured questionnaire survey through 5-point Likert Scale.

Unit of Analysis, Instrumentation and Operationalization of the Variable

In this research study, the individual level analysis is adopted and the unit of study is the government employees the reason that some of the ministries attracted most of the skilful and higher education employees and also the whole system of the entities is digitalized and most of the staff are familiar with technologies and filling online forums and questionnaires through survey close-ended /structured questionnaire and in the questions regarding the selected variables are asked to express their thoughts regarding the selected variables. This study measures three variables; servant leadership as the independent variable, trust as mediating variable and employee engagement as the outcome variable. The servant leadership variable has been measured with 7 items scale which is adopted from Liden et al. (2015) with a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). The trust variable has been measured with 11 item scale which is adopted from McAllister's (1995) 5-point Likert scale. Employee engagement has been measured with 6 items on a 5-point Likert scale which is adopted from May et al. (2004).

Table 1: Instrumentation of Variables

Variables	N of Items	Source
Servant Leadership	7	Liden, R.C (2015)
Employee Engagement	5	McAllister, D.J (1995)
Trust	11	May, D.R (1995)

Source: Author's compilation

Date Collection Procedure and Techniques

In the current study, the data was collected through online survey distribution. The online questionnaire was designed in the Google Form and the link was sent through email with the assistance of Kardan University's administration colleagues from the official email circulation and Whats'up official groups for employees. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, comprising demographic questions, and the second part concluded with items related to the measurement of the variables of the study. In response, employees of different public sectors of the government (the ministries) have been targeted. The sample size is 264 and was distributed and collected from 237 respondents. indicating the reply rate from the respondents is 89.4 and 28 respondents are the remaining questionnaires that were not returned on time and late responses are rejected. The methods applied for analyzing data in the current research study include: respondents' profiles through descriptive analysis to segment the data; mean and standard deviation have been developed; data reliability through Cronbach's Alpha; data normality has been tested through Skewness & Kurtosis; regression and mediation analysis through the Kruskal Wallis test; and for testing the hypothesis for non-normal data, the spearman (rho) correlation is used.

Analysis and Results

Participants

The sample size for the current study is 264, which means the targeted respondents, and received 237 responses on time, indicating the reply rate from the respondents is 89.4, which includes 154 males and 83 females. The respondent age range was 20 to 50 years old, with 27.0 per cent between 20 and 30 years old, 47.7 per cent between 31 and 40 years old, and 25.3 per cent between 41 to 50 and above. Accordingly, the respondents' educational level, the range from school graduates is 3.4 per cent, university graduates 43.5, masters'

graduates include 53.2, which shows the greatest range, and 0 for doctorate graduates. Furthermore, the respondent's position range from the director was 10.1 per cent, sub-director level 35.8 per cent, general manager at 40.9 per cent, and manager level 13.2 per cent.

Data Reliability Analysis

The data reliability of the current research study is demonstrated as the analysis has been conducted with the application of the Cronbach's Alpha (a) test. Principally, the data is deemed and considered reliable for further analysis when the result is greater than 0.6, and if the value is less than 0.6, then the data is not conserved as reliable data. As it is shown in the table, the value for servant leadership is 0.92, and based on the accepted value, the data for SL is reliable and the data will give the same result anytime with the application of Cronbach's Alpha. Furthermore, the data for the trust variable as a mediating factor shows 0.85, which is greater than 0.6 and the data is considered reliable. Furthermore, with the application of Cronbach's Alpha for the EE variable as an outcome, it indicates a value of 0.93, which means all collected data is acceptable and reliable and produces the same result no matter how many times the Cronbach's Alpha is applied and tested.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Test

Variables	Number of items	Item deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
Servant Leadership	7	-	.92
Trust	11	-	.85
Employee Engagement	6	-	.93

Source: Data output from SPSS output table

Descriptive Statistics Analysis and Findings

For the purpose to collect the responses on all items the Likert's five-point scale has been conducted, (1 stand for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree). As it is indicated in the table the man of variables is close to 4 (more than 3). The SL mean value is 3.66 (SL=3.66) and for Trust, the mean value is 3.87 (Trust=3.87) as well for EE the mean value is 3.78 (EE=3.78) which specifies that all respondents to the questionnaire items are in agreement. Based on the table's figures, indicate that the data points tend to be very close to the mean and data points are not spread out over a large range of values.

Table 3: Descriptive Test

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S. D
Servant Leadership	237	1	5	3.66	.84
Trust	237	1	5	3.87	1.14
Employee Engagement	237	1	5	3.78	1.09
Valid N	237				

Source: Data output from SPSS output table

Data Normality

The researchers suggest that normalizing the data removes the edges of the data, so normality is less of an issue in structural equation modelling based on variance. Similarly, some experts examine the data for skewness and kurtosis, with an emphasis on extreme results. Consequently, univariate normality can be determined using skewness and kurtosis.

According to Skew, the distribution around the mean should be disproportionate. In positive skewness, the majority of the scores are below the mean, while in the negative skewness, the majority of the scores are above the mean. The peak of the distribution is indicated by kurtosis. Negative kurtosis has a smaller peak with long tails while positive kurtosis has a larger peak with short tails. Positive kurtosis is called leptokurtic, and negative kurtosis is called platykurtic. A significant skewness, significant kurtosis, or both may be discovered in the data distribution. According to the standard skewness index (z-score), positive skewness is greater than 3.0 and negative skewness is less than -3.0. Correspondingly, the values for skewness are +-1 and the kurtosis range is +-1 for univariate. Frequently, the values range for skewness is +-3 and the kurtosis range is +-10 multivariate.

As the results for univariate the value for SL is between (Skewness= -1.09 & Kurtosis=0.99) indicates normal, similarly for Trust (Skewness= -65 & Kurtosis=-151) respectively the value for EE is greater (Skewness= -1.38 & Kurtosis=2.02) which means non-normal for all three variables. The author suggested and used online calculation in *Web Power* (https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/kurtosis) for multivariate skewness and kurtosis and according to Mardia's multivariate showing in table 4.5.3 both the skewness and kurtosis (S=3.475718 & K=24.282042) greater than the range for normal data so, the results examine the data is non-normal and non-parametric tests shall be used.

Table 4: Skewness & Kurtosis Tests

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Servant Leadership	-1.09	.099
Trust	-.65	-.151
Employee Engagement	-1.38	.202

Source: Data output from SPSS output table

Regression Analysis

The direct effect of SL on EE The R-sq value indicates that SL has a direct effect on EE of 18.6 percent, and the results also show that there is a positive and significant relationship between SL and EE as (= 43 percent), which supports Hypothesis 1. Frequently, the effect of SL on trust is 34 percent, and the = 58.3 percent, which shows there is a positive and significant direct effect between SL and trust, which supports Hypothesis 2. Furthermore, the direct effect of trust on EE, the R-sq value indicates that trust has a 45.7 percent direct effect on EE, with the positive and significant relationship between trust and EE shown as (= 64.3 percent), supporting Hypothesis 3.

The indirect effect of SL on EE is where trust partially mediates the relationship between the independent and the outcome variable. The indirect effect of SL on EE R-sq value indicates that SL has a 45.9% indirect effect on EE, and the results show a positive and significant relationship between SL and EE (= 57%), which supports Hypothesis 4. According to the results, it is established that trust positively mediates between SL and EE. Respectively, the previous researcher (Klein, 2014) stated that trust mediates a significantly positive role between SL and EE.

Table 5: Regression & Mediation Tests

Predictors Direct effects	Trust			Employee Engagement		
	β	R2	Adjusted R2	β	R2	Adjusted R2
Servant Leadership	.583**	.340	.347	.43**	.186	.183

Trust Indirect Effect	.643**	.457	.455
Servant Leadership$_s$	.057	.459	.455

**= p<.01, *= p<.05.

Source: Data output from SPSS output table

Hypothesis Test

The correlation among the variables The results of the correlation among the variables are reported in this table. The correlation results indicate that SL is positively correlated with trust (r = 0. 583**. P 0.01), which is desirable for Hypothesis 2, and also positively correlated with EE (r = 0. 432**. P 0.01), which provides support for Hypothesis 1 and together gives assistance to Hypothesis 4 as well. Moreover, trust is positively correlated with EE (r = 0. 676**, P< 0.01), which supports Hypothesis 3. According to the results of regression and correlation analysis, which have already been confirmed, all the hypotheses have been accepted, which have been developed and claimed in the literature section of the current research study.

Table 6: Correlation Test

	1	2	3
Servant Leadership	1		
Trust	.583**	1	
Employee Engagement	.432**	.676**	1

**= p<.01, *= p<.05.

Source: Data output from SPSS output table

Summary of Findings

Researchers have paid more attention to servant leadership and employee engagement (Aboramadan et al. 2020) and (Bommer et al. 2018). The current research study aimed to add to the literature on servant leadership and employee engagement with the mediating role of trust as suggested by the previous researcher (Aboramadan et al. 2020) with consideration of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) in the context of Afghanistan public sector entities. Accordingly, all the hypotheses that were developed in the literature were supported. The servant leadership examined is significantly positively related to employee engagement and trust positively and partially mediates between servant leadership and employee engagement. The current research study results are aligned with previous research findings. Researchers conducted a study that showed servant leadership accelerates trust between leaders and subordinators and both results in employee engagement in the organization (Klein, 2014). This shows the significant and positive relationship between SL, trust, and EE. Servant leadership is positive and significant and is associated with an effect on employee engagement (Tims et al. 2011; Walumbwa et al. 2010). The researcher conducted a study and found that trust has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (Wang & Hasie, 2013). Meanwhile, some researchers found in their research studies (Carter et al. 2014; De Clercq et al. 2014; Kaur, 2018) that servant leadership has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement. Thus, with the above-mentioned research studies' findings, the current research study after the analysis confirms its consistency. According to the findings, organizations and leaders should adopt the servant leadership style to cultivate trust and improve inclusive employee engagement (Klein, 2014). The findings of the mentioned article confirm that the SL has a positive and significant relationship with EE, as well as a mediating role of trust between SL and EE, which leads to increasing the level of employee engagement with the assistance of the independent variable.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between SL and EE along with the mediating role of trust in the context of Afghanistan's public sector organizations. The current study's findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between SL and EE, as well as the fact that trust positively and partially mediates the relationship between SL and EE.The results proved that the SL has a direct effect on EE and trust, as well as an indirect effect on EE through trust. The results of the study proved that a high level of employee engagement leads the organization to achieve its goals and objectives, and that this results in the organization's being successful and surviving in an uncertain situation (Schaufeli et al. 2008). Once the organization is successful, this brings greater income both to the organization and as well as to the employees (Schaufeli et al. 2008) & (Aboramadan et al. 2020). Another empirical finding of this research study is that the higher level of employee engagement in an organization leads employees to be loyal and committed to the organization in comparison to employees who are not engaged (Lovakov, 2016). This study also suggests, as a result of the findings, that the public sector and leaders should consider and adopt the servant leadership style to nurture trust and improve inclusive employee engagement (Klein, 2014). Servant leadership behavior is important and their behavior with subordinators leads to a positive organizational outcome (Aboramadan et al. 2020). The results of the current study supported the objectives of the current research study that the SL has a positive and significant effect on EE and is in line with (Tims et al. 2011; Walumbwa et al. 2010). Furthermore, the SL is associated with a positive and significant effect on trust and is aligned with (Wang & Hasie, 2013). According to the findings of the current study, trust has a positive and significant effect on EE, which is consistent with Klein, (2014). Frequently, the very last objective of the study has been achieved as a result of the findings of this study, which trust positively and partially mediates between SL and EE, in line with Klein (2014).

Study Limitations

The current research study provides theoretical and practical but still carries some limitations which need to be discussed in future studies. The current study carried a total of 24 items. There is evidence in favour of short-scale items over large ones. The reason is that the respondents' responses may be influenced by time constraints using multiple items and large sentences in the items, and these can aggravate respondents' behavior (Colquitt, Scott, & Le Pine, 2007). Secondly, the current study focuses on the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. Therefore, in the future, researchers may consider comparing two different styles of leadership and their effects on employee engagement. Third, while the current research study focuses on the role of trust as a mediating factor between servant leadership and employee engagement, future research might consider the level of overload among staff (Avery et al., 2010). The reason is that this will provide an easy and better explanation for why some employees are more engaged and some are not. And finally, this research study is in the context of Afghanistan-Kabul, the capital public sector organizations. Therefore, future researchers might also consider the public sectors in the provinces and collect the data from multiple and diverse contexts.

Recommendations

It is strongly advised because the theoretical implication is that public sector organizations should focus more on engaging employees and cultivating employee trust.And it is frequently recommended that the organizations, as well as the leaders, consider and pay more interest in adopting the servant leadership style in the organizations (Klein, 2014), which results in developing trust between leaders and employees and accelerating employee engagement. Once the employees' engagement level increases, the employees become more loyal and committed to the organization, which the stated statements are also desired and supported by the findings of this study.

Implications

Accordingly, there are few theoretical implications of this study, which indicates its importance. The current research study highlights the effects of servant leadership with the mediating role of trust on employee engagement in the context of Afghanistan, with a focus on the government and public sectors.This study helps to well understand the concept of employee engagement in public sector organizations and the theoretical treatment for the level of employee engagement will be useful in analyzing the organizations' success and failure. From the managerial perspective, this study provides a roadmap for leaders on how their behavior and the style of leadership contribute to the success of the organization as well as employees.

The current study also expanded knowledge in public sector organizations, where the concept of employee engagement is almost non-existent. And the leadership, who are in top management, believes and considers employee engagement to interfere with their job, and the employee will revile and discourse the ways in which they are dealing with their work. The top management also believes that if they engage the employees, this will result in the employee taking our job and the position will be insecure. Another important contribution of this study is that the servant leadership style can strengthen trust between the top management and the employees in the workplace and create a secure working environment in which employees feel secure about their job and position.

Furthermore, there are a number of practical implications of the current study. Firstly, the current study may be the first conducted on the effects of servant leadership and trust on employee engagement in the public sector of Afghanistan. Since the analysis found a positive and significant relationship between and among the variables, such as servant leadership as an independent variable, employee engagement as a respondent variable, and trust as a mediating variable. Frequently, the study model was found to be statistically and based on analysis fit. According to the results and the conclusion of the study, the problem which has been stated in this study and the research study has been conducted on solving, as employee engagement is a global issue but specifically in Afghanistan's public sector, and as organizations and businesses mainly operate with employees, if employees are not engaged, this will result in the organization's failure. Employee engagement is deemed as an essential element in the success of organizations (Schaufeli et al. 2008), as these statements are confirmed and desired with the results of the current research study.

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