



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Servant Leadership Impact:  
Practical Insights for the Nonprofit Sector**

by

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*I dedicate this project to my greatest inspiration and example of servant leadership, Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord. “For even [Jesus] came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45 ESV)*

## **Abstract**

Robert Greenleaf coined the term servant leadership in his essay “The Servant as Leader.” Servant leadership certainly aligns with the ethos of the nonprofit sector. This research works to better understand servant leadership, while identifying practical implications for individuals and organizations in the nonprofit sector. Through a literature review and expert interviews, this project explores the impact of servant leadership in the nonprofit sector, while identifying practical implications for individuals and organizations in the nonprofit sector. Some researchers have suggested using the term “stewardship” instead of “leadership” to reflect the spirit of servant leadership more appropriately. Most of the findings were positive. However, some obstacles were also identified during this project. Recommendations have been developed to address or mitigate the obstacles. This capstone is intended to benefit the nonprofit sector by raising awareness about servant leadership and providing practical insights as well as recommendations.

*Keywords:* leadership, lead like Jesus, nonprofit leadership, nonprofit sector, servant leadership, third sector leadership

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## **Section 1. Introduction**

Many factors can be used to define the success of a nonprofit sector; however, success depends on the type of leadership and the followers. The definition of leadership has continued to evolve over the years. In 1972, leadership was initially defined as "the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation" (Northouse, 2019). This implies that the type of leadership by then was authoritarian. However, researchers have questioned whether the leadership style has brought positive results for nonprofit organizations. Over the years, the researchers have researched whether servant leadership is more beneficial than the traditional leadership style. Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, and Jinks (2007) have defined leadership as "an imperfect art practiced by those who lead in which the leader defines reality for his or her followers while creating and nurturing a vision of a new, better reality to come" (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007). Most nonprofit organizations that practice servant leadership foster more positive relationships with the stakeholders. These stakeholders include the community members, the employees, the shareholders, and the government. This can be seen through the models and the leadership methods that the servant leaders have displayed. Researchers have come up with some of the models that would promote servant leadership and foster an organizational culture of servant leaders.

Greenleaf (1970) first developed the concept of servant leadership to communicate a better and more holistic approach of leadership where leaders serve the workers to benefit the organization. In later scientific research, Larry Spears developed ten characteristics or principles of the servant leadership model. These include persuasion, awareness, healing, listening, conceptualization, foresight, community building, stewardship, and empathy. Leaders can derive methods and models of promoting servant leadership at the workplace from the servant leader model's core principles and characteristics. This project will focus on a comparative analysis of

information collected via a literature review and will incorporate responses from interviews conducted with experts in the field of servant leadership.

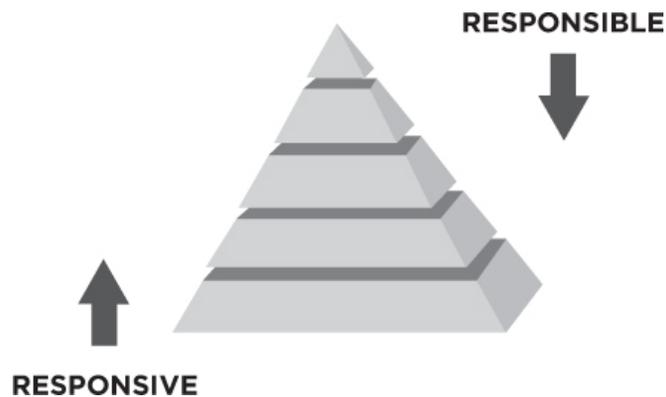
## Section 2: Literature Review

### Servant Leadership Overview

According to Blanchard et al. (2018), there are two parts to servant leadership: a visionary direction or strategic role – the leadership aspect of servant leadership; and an implementation or operational role – the servant aspect of servant leadership. Based on my experience, I agree with this definition of servant leadership. Too often, servant leadership is misinterpreted as weak leadership, people pleasing leadership, or some version of lazy faire leadership. Effective servant leadership is quite the contrary to these misguided interpretations. In fact, I have found servant leadership to require quite more intentionality, especially when transitioning from a command-and-control leadership style.

A traditional hierarchical pyramid is reflected in Figure 1, which demonstrates the responsibility remains at the top of the organization and those responsive are at the bottom.

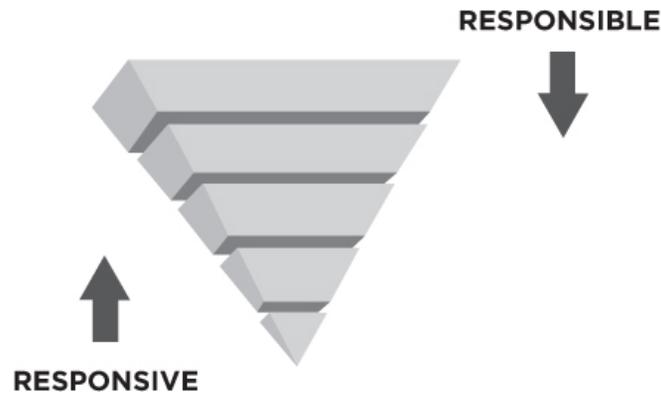
**Figure 1: Visionary/leadership role**



*Source: Blanchard et al., 2018.*

As displayed in Figure 2, a flipped organizational pyramid reflects an empowered organization with responsive leadership.

**Figure 2: Implementation/servant role**



*Source: Blanchard et al., 2018.*

Based on research (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998), ten characteristics of the servant leader were identified, including: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. These characteristics are critically important and essential to the development of servant leaders.

**Figure 3: Ten Principles of the Servant Leader**



*Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from Greenleaf & Spears, 1998.*

## **Strategies for an Organizational Culture of Servant Leadership**

**Promote belongingness and eliminate the worker's sense of outsidership.** According to Gotsis and Grimani (2016), organizations can foster a culture of servant leadership by using inclusiveness strategies to promote belongingness and eliminate workers' sense of being outsiders. According to these authors, servant leaders use inclusiveness programs to promote identity and uniqueness among employees. This inclusiveness makes the employee fit into the workplace, develop a sense of 'I belong' with the company, and identify with the workplace team. Randel et al. (2018) support this argument by asserting that this identity over time develops a bond among workers and teams, which promotes belongingness culture and gradually influences the culture of servant leadership throughout the organization. Servant leaders have a key role in making the followers at the workplace develop this sense of identity. Promoting talent development at the workplace and promoting cultural awareness are techniques managers can use to promote diversity and eventual inclusiveness at the workplace. Over time, employees who previously felt like outsiders identify with groups, such as the talent team group, which give them a purpose with the company other than the sole interest of salary or wage.

Gotsis and Grimani's (2016) study agrees with this research's hypothesis that a nonprofit organization with servant leadership mentoring practices or programs increases participants' sense of belonging in their organization. Servant leaders should go the extra mile to create these programs that promote identity with groups and eventual social cohesion among the groups that collectively influence servant leadership conditions in the place of work. Gotsis and Grimani (2016) recommend that managers develop benefit systems for workers who identify with the workplace social groups. For instance, the manager can advise the business to start a company soccer team to compete in the national league and give workers a direct ticket for participation for workers who love soccer. These employees will now be a part of the company's soccer team that is not directly related to their job description and position. In the long run, these workers will have another purpose apart from the wage they attach to the company. By belonging to the

company's soccer team and identifying with fellow workers, the employees learn to serve colleagues as fellow teammates with love and care. Eventually, the manager will have successfully initiated a positive culture of servant leadership in this company. Nonprofit organizations can borrow the same strategy in implementing and cultivating positive servant leadership culture.

**Show workers compassion and treat them fairly.** Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) explain that compassionate love is the cornerstone of the servant leadership model. According to these authors, servant leaders must show compassionate love to their followers, which in turn influences positive leadership-related qualities such as stewardship, empowerment, sense of direction, and authenticity. These virtues are crucial for the followers, and those who effectively learn the skills through mentoring, observation, and coaching become future servant leaders. Therefore, the researchers argue that managers can effectively foster a culture of servant leadership at the workplace by developing compassionate love for their followers. This study argument is in support of this research's research hypothesis. Managers can develop compassion-showing initiatives and benefits at the workplace. For example, when workers at work experience tragedies such as losing a loved one or receiving news of their late-stage cancer, the manager should provide support systems for the employee out of compassion and desire to care for the worker in question. It is important to acknowledge that the business job description may not have cited that the manager should care for their wellbeing outside of work. Still, managers who extend beyond their job description to care for the worker wellbeing away from work are excellent examples of servant leaders. The workers get to sense this care and compassion from their leader and learn important lessons that they can replicate for their colleagues at the workplace. For example, a worker who once experienced an act of compassion from the manager when they lost a close relative will develop an urge to reciprocate the same care and compassion for a colleague who happens to go through the same pain. In this way, the compassionate act of the manager to one worker becomes contagious to a few other individuals at the workplace. In no time, the whole organization develops the same positive culture and attitude. Unfortunately, the manager needs to develop a sustainable culture and not only one incidence of doing good. Thus, managers need to develop benefit programs and initiatives that workers enjoy by belonging to

the company's team. For example, the company can develop a private welfare group contribution aimed towards helping workers at the workplace during their time of need. The servant-leader can campaign for those who wish to show and receive compassion from the welfare group at the workplace. In this way, the manager successfully uses compassion and care strategies to foster servant leadership.

Randel et al. (2018) state that promoting fairness among team members can play a critical role in developing a culture of servant leaders in their team. Servant leaders should treat all team members as equal partners with unique abilities that collaboratively conspire to give the maximum productivity every unit of labor in the company can potentially give. This optimal level of worker productivity is directly linked to organizational performance and success. Servant managers can rely on the fairness principles at the workplace in structuring both payment and reward systems in the business (Phillips & Ricke-Kiely, 2014). The manager as a servant leader should focus on fair pay for work for all workers irrespective of their race, gender, and nationality. Servant leaders understand that inequity based on gender, race, and nationality can have damaging impacts on workplace harmony and productivity. Based on gender, managers should ensure principles such as equal pay for equal work between male and female workers. Servants' leaders should also avoid bias in the reward system, such as promotion opportunities. Servant leaders consider both genders for promotion opportunities irrespective of the culture's masculinity versus femininity dimensions. Race can also be a dividing factor among workers when managers cannot ensure the equity of all workers. Servant leaders ensure fairness on a race basis by promoting all workers equally and rewarding them the same for White, African American, Chicano, and Hispanic workers. Eventually, workers in teams with equal gender and race rewards and opportunities promote a sense of equity and fairness among workers. The Salvation Army as an international organization is a great example of where servant leadership has ensured this equality irrespective of members belonging to minority groups and economically struggling social class (Phillips & Ricke-Kiely, 2014). Lumpkin and Achen (2018) support these arguments by arguing that leaders can foster servant leadership culture by ensuring fairness, trust, honesty, and respect for coworkers. By learning to treat everyone fairly and with honor and respect, workers develop key servant leader traits such as empathy and awareness.

When more and more team members learn from the manager and develop these positive traits, the company gradually adopts the servant leadership culture. These authors support this study's hypothesis that servant leadership mentoring within a nonprofit organization improves capacity for succession planning. Managers can mentor workers on treating others ethically, fairly, respectfully, and with dignity, which further improves their servant leadership traits. This strategy can be effective in helping nonprofit organizations develop positive servant leadership cultures. These resourceful cultures are necessary for business relationship management and overall organizational performance.

**Foster a culture of structural empowerment and effective succession planning.** Allen et al. (2018) argue that structural empowerment can be an effective approach that managers can use to foster a culture of servant leadership. These authors' key argument is that servant leadership fosters worker commitment through psychological and structural employee empowerment. This article is crucial to this study because it addresses many areas of investigation similar to this study's topic. The article also targets the same audience, nonprofit organizations, similar to this study. Allen et al. (2018) argue that servant leaders create autonomous and independent employees who can make reliable decisions on behalf of the team and organization at large through structural and psychological employee empowerment. Empowerment results from social support structures at the workplace that benefit the worker intellectually, emotionally, financially, and physically. Social support groups can be excellent examples of social support groups at the workplace that help improve worker empowerment. The business can also provide free counseling sessions for all workers at the workplace where workers can visit a professional psychiatrist for mental wellbeing at least once or more per month. These measures empower the employee by providing supporting structures such as necessary facilities and resources for intellectual, emotional, financial, and physical wellbeing promotion. An excellent example of a facility that the company can install at the workplace to boost empowerment is a worker's gym to promote positive health outcomes. Through these crucial worker empowerment programs, managers teach workers important aspects of investment in human capital by investing in other people. Managers as servant leaders make employees understand why firms make crucial decisions beyond the pay for employees to diversify

investment. For example, by understanding the importance of employee health on worker absenteeism and productivity, employers can open a gym for workers to keep fit and thus invest indirectly in future employee productivity. The important lesson here is that workers can serve others because by doing so, they serve themselves and the organization at large too. When workers understand these ripple effects of the servant leadership model, they adopt the culture, cultivate it, and share it with others in the organization and beyond the organization. Non-governmental organizations can use the same strategy to spread the culture of servant leadership in their workplaces. Allen et al. 's (2018) study support this study's hypothesis that servant leadership practices can influence worker capacity planning through structural empowerment of workers. These non-governmental organizations should specifically target psychological and structural empowerment as an effective strategy to foster a culture of servant leadership at the organizational level.

Lacroix et al. (2017) argue that servant leaders have the spark to ignite the servant leadership fire in an organization. According to these authors, succession matters lie at the heart of the organization and thus at the mind of the servant leader. Davis (2017) supports this observation by arguing that a servant leader must ensure successful transfer of power by planning ahead of their exit. Servant leaders understand that the most suited individuals to succeed them after retiring, resignation, or death are those who share similar ideologies, mission, and purpose. Servant leaders can identify these potential candidates early in the recruitment and selection process by identifying the workers who share the same purpose, mission, life goals, perspectives, ideologies, and even philosophy. Servant leaders should strive to use this opportunity to spread the culture among these potential successors because in doing so, they prepare them for the high position in advance. This move is critical as it eliminates the probability of culture death upon the manager's exit who pioneered the culture. This death with the pioneer model does not bring positive and sustained change in the management practice and hence cannot foster servant leadership culture. This culture can only develop where the leader has mentored other aspired workers to succeed them in the leader's exit from the company. These

workers will also borrow the culture of succession planning through mentoring and hence achieve cultural sustainability of servant leadership throughout the organization.

Lacroix et al. (2017) explain that the most effective aspect of servant leaders that makes them effective spark generators is persuading workers to accept leadership positions. The authors argue that workers shy away from leadership positions or want to keep off the responsibilities associated with a higher rank at the workplace. Lacroix et al. (2017) explain that workers who experience servant leaders mentoring have a higher probability of reduced leadership avoidance. By preparing workers to take up leadership positions, the servant leadership model automatically creates a campaign for its culture throughout the organization (Davis, 2017). Workers volunteer for leadership positions and elicit a positive sense of need for promotion among peers, creating internal competitiveness and positive workplace outcomes. This article expands this study's understanding of the impacts of servant leaders on the worker leadership avoidance index. The findings of this study open a new understanding of how role modeling and mentoring opportunities by servant leaders create more servant leaders in the organization and thus facilitate diffusion of the servant leadership culture. Non-governmental organizations should borrow the same strategy to mentor workers to become servant leaders and promote a culture of servant leadership in every department of the NGO.

**Effective Communication to give worker feedback, get all workers on the same page and promote cross-collaboration among individuals and teams.** Luu (2019) discusses the role of servant leadership behavior on worker outcomes such as performance appraisal through worker feedback. Servant leaders differ from other managers because they are empathetic listeners who can read between the lines and understand the worker's pain through their feedback. Luu (2019) argues that the most effective servant leaders ask for feedback from the workers and go the extra mile of implementing the received feedback. In doing so, servant leaders promote a positive sense of significance and importance among workers. The subordinates get to understand that their opinion matters and count towards the decision-making process. The manager shows the workers that they understand their frustrations, needs, and expectations by acting swiftly on feedback. Luu (2019), however, cautions that the worker

feedback must be constructive and motivating the worker to perform better. The authors argue that managers who go hard on workers in the feedback process face a risk of creating division between workers and management. The authors argue that servant leaders must understand the most efficient ways of communicating feedback given the differences in workers' personality traits and cultural orientation. Continued feedback acquisition and implementation encourage workers to give feedback to their fellow workers and their management team. When this culture is repeated in several groups throughout the organization, managers can report having successfully ignited servant leadership at the workplace. In the long run, servant leaders cultivate the first culture of worker engagement, and later, workers borrow the culture of serving others through listening and giving feedback. This study argues that the feedback process can go a long way in helping managers grow a culture of servant leaders where there is none.

The findings from Luu (2019) support this study's argument that non-governmental organizations that practice servant leadership can foster a culture of servant leadership among followers. Luu's (2019) findings also support other scholars such as Sun et al. (2019). They also find servant leaders effective in feedback giving, resulting in more feedback giving, higher worker engagement, and eventual servant leadership culture among followers. Non-governmental organizations can use the strategy of feedback acquisition and implementation to help recognize workers, re-assure them that their decisions and opinions matter, and prepare them as future servant leaders by training them early to acquire and give constructive feedback to coworkers.

Xu and Wang (2020) discuss the positive impact that servant leadership has on worker teamwork perceptions and willingness to participate. According to the authors, servant leaders are successful champions of team collaboration by teaching the followers how to serve others. These authors argue that servant leaders emphasize creating value for the community and collective good through teamwork. By making workers operate and function as entire groups and units, a servant leader indirectly coaches the workers to work as a functional group where every employee understands their place in creating value for the entire community. Inevitably, followers who find themselves in these teams develop interpersonal skills that facilitate cross-

collaboration. The individual worker is now able to operate independently and perform even better when placed in a team. Followers learn crucial skills and values such as compromise for the collective good and emotional intelligence to understand the pains and frustrations of team members and be aware of how their actions influence the lives of others in the team, through this awareness and evidence of benevolence in workers' actions that hint to servant leaders that they have created worthy followers who are servant leaders themselves. Xu and Wang (2020) argue that servant leaders cultivate this positive culture among followers by facilitating high-quality team member exchange relationships. These high-quality exchange relations among workers align them with pursuing collective thriving. According to the authors, this drive for collective thriving leads to a culture of servant leadership, as every worker wants to help and assist others in contributing the best to the collective pool.

The study's key findings by Xu and Wang (2020) give more insight into the inquiry of the strategies that managers can use to foster a culture of servant leadership at the workplace. Therefore, these findings open the researchers' view of servant leaders as champions of teamwork and provide new knowledge on how high-quality team exchanges lead to collective thriving. This study argues that NGOs can use the same strategy of teamwork and cross-collaboration to cultivate a sense of collective thriving among individual workers that will collectively influence a culture of workers seeking to help colleagues do better at work and thus cultivating a culture of servant leadership throughout the organization.

An excellent leader is inseparable from effective communication. Abu Bakar and McCann (2016) argue that leader-worker dyadic communication has a mediating role in servant leader's impact on positive employee behavior, such as the free will to support others and remain committed to the organization. This argument is a crucial observation because it tells servant leaders what to expect from their communication approaches. Servant leaders must learn the different approaches that are effective in specific worker groups. Some employees prefer bottom-up while others prefer top-bottom approaches to communication. Servant leaders understand these differences and see diversity as a strength in the team and not a dividing rift among teammates. Communication plays a central role in mediating the relationships and interpersonal

relations among workers. Poor communication can lead to conflicts and divisions among workers and across teams. This division causes a rift amongst workers hence hinders teamwork and cross-collaboration. According to Abu Bakar and McCann (2016), servant leaders are concerned with effective communication that eliminates divisions, worker conflicts and facilitates healing for broken relations. Servant's mentor and coach workers to speak and communicate their minds and their emotions and frustrations about work-related and non-work-related experiences. In doing so, servant leaders make the worker's experiences the company's concern as the worker is equally concerned about the company's wellbeing. The end effect is a sense of 'I take care of you, and you take care of me' between the worker and the business. Managers can facilitate free and open communication channels to ensure that all workers and managerial staff are reading on the same page. According to the researchers, effective communication can help workers communicate their learned culture of serving others within and outside the organization. This diffusion of culture through communication creates more servant leaders from the manager who initiated the servant leadership culture.

The study by Abu Bakar and McCann (2016) expands on this paper's knowledge. The paper provides important background on how effective communication strategies can influence the diffusion of servant leadership culture. The observation that communication plays a mediating role in impacting positive employee behavior at the workplace sheds more light on the role of servant leadership in influencing organizational citizenship behavior. This observation helps this paper's researcher understand better the connection between servant leaders and the growing culture of positive organizational citizenship behavior. Non-governmental organizations and their managers can borrow the same strategy of keeping their communication lines and channels free and open to easily facilitate the diffusion of servant leadership culture throughout the organization.

## **Methods to Promote Servant Leadership at the Individual Level**

**Portraying stewardship and emotional healing that leads to positive relations for better psychological health.** Stewardship and servant leadership have been the focus of most nonprofit organizations as they reflect on growing trends in most organizations. Stewardship has been defined as having the ability to hold something in trust for another. The leaders play a significant role in holding the organization in trust for the betterment of the community. Stewardship in servant leadership requires the willingness of the leaders to be accountable for the wellbeing of the organization by operating in serving others rather than controlling the followers. Walker (2003) explains how nonprofit organizations can heed the call to servant leadership and stewardship.

According to Walker (2003), the article supports the hypothesis that the effective practice of servant leadership fosters more positive relationships with the stakeholders through the incorporation of stewardship roles within an organization at the individual level. They display greater accountability that goes beyond stakeholders' values and customer service satisfaction. Performance-oriented skills are incorporated through continuous response to the public's expectation of offering better services to the community. Stewardship has helped nonprofit organizations redistribute power within the organization to build on the next generation for the organization. This is done by enlisting community members' participation, organizing the community, and facilitating social activities to bring their talents to help people in the community. In employee benefits, stewardship has been viewed as a vehicle that facilitates fundamental changes in a nonprofit organization. With stewardship, it offers a better choice of employee's attitude and positive employees' spirit to offer the same when offering their services to the market. The service they receive from their leader will signal the same response to the followers. For example, the servant leader is expected to lead by example by demonstrating the values and behaviors that promote better customer service. He or she must have the confidence to stand up for his followers when their acts are not in line with the organization's values.

Therefore, servant leaders' effective practice of stewardship fosters a fruitful and positive relationship with all the stakeholders in an organization.

According to Rivkin, Diestel, & Schmidt (2014), they argue that servant leadership has been positively related to employees' psychological health. These leaders have indeed been people who shape employees' needs and create a conducive working environment that fulfills their needs. Through a critical examination of employees needs and the proposed relationship that they may have so that the servant leaders can be able to identify the needs and be willing to support them (Rivkin et al., 2014), from the result of the study, they concluded that servant leadership could be regarded as an important determinant of the psychological health of the employees. Through this, there is a positive attitude toward work by the employees, thus enabling them to have a conducive working environment.

According to the author (Rivkin et al., 2014), servant leaders can also promote positive relations in the organization through inward awareness that enables the leaders to understand their strengths, weaknesses, their relations, and concerns as well as have an impact on their actions. The outward awareness of a servant leader can portray positive relation with the employees through stewardship and persuading people through words and actions, committing to the growth of the whole community and the employees as well as building the community through social activities such as engaging them in the talent competition and also engaging them in educational forums that enlighten them on the importance of community participation in an organization (Rivkin et al., 2014)—having relations-awareness and situation awareness skills give the servant leader the ability to identify situations, historical, religious, and social elements in complex situations such as the current covid 19 pandemics. Through this, the article supports that servant leaders have a great impact on the psychological health of most of the employees and therefore impact the whole community.

Jit, Sharma, & Kawatra. (2017) article justifies servant leadership's need to enhance the well-being/ emotions healing to his followers to create a positive working environment. This character relates to having the ability to relate to the emotional health and wellbeing of the

people. It also involves the ability to support the followers physically and mentally to ensure that they maintain a healthy working environment.

According to these researchers, they support the hypothesis that servant leadership can enhance and promote the wellbeing of its followers and therefore foster a positive working climate and relationship among the shareholders. The sense of the follower's wellbeing, in turn, contributes to greater organizational commitment, and this justified their findings: " the greater the organizational commitment, the higher the employee's job satisfaction and lower is the employee's turnover"(Jit et al., 2017). A servant leader always builds not just the mental and emotional workforce of the followers, but he also teaches a sense of collaboration among the members: cohesiveness and a sustainable relationship by having the ability to understand and address their feelings and emotions.

According to Jit, Sharma, & Kawatra (2017), servant-led organizations that corporates cohesiveness and collaboration are always able to increase the pro-social behaviors and altruistic behaviors among the followers and the stakeholders, and it, in turn, improves the performance of the organization. Their findings suggested that servant leaders, with their orientation of healing, compassion, and altruism, call them to adopt approaches that enable them to manage their followers' emotions. Their manifestation can be manifested in three-step behavior: 1. listening patiently to the followers and discussing the issue; 2. empathetically handling the issue by comforting and calming the follower and then counseling the suffering follower; 3. taking the initiative and personal responsibility to provide support to the follower which can either be emotional, social, financial, or administrative support.

They can create a healthy working environment by ensuring that the employees have the knowledge, the required resources, and the support to canary out their duties effectively (Jit et al., 2017). This ensures that the employee's relationship with the organization remains positive, and this increases the performance. The researchers argue that the servant leaders should engage

the community in carrying out their roles and ensuring that their activities fully satisfy the members, hence providing better customer services.

**Ensuring that there is the conceptualization and persuading them through fostered listening skills.** This character has been related to the ability to dream great. It has visionary objectives for the organizations. a servant leader should look beyond the day-to-day realities and take the bigger picture from what is happening. Lubin (2001) identifies the behavior of visionary leaders in the success of an organization and how it fosters positive relations among the stakeholders. A visionary leader can identify how the future looks and the organization's possible success and failures.

According to Lubin (2001), he supports the hypothesis that a servant leader with visionary and conceptualization traits can always foster positive relations with the stakeholders. They always create a robust organizational strategy that can achieve the organization's goals and objectives. Creating a mission statement and a vision statement for the teams make it clear how the follower's roles will aid in achieving the organization's long-term objectives. The public will be able to identify the organization's impacts in ensuring the growth of the community. They will be able to identify the areas they will need to participate in achieving their goals.

The servant-leader also facilitates the development of long-term focus for the teams to stay motivated in achieving the goals without getting any distractions. Employees need to be kept focused throughout the season of achieving the goals, and this can be done by actively involving the followers in the activities (Lubin, 2001). stakeholders such as the shareholders and the government always want to understand the vision and missions before they invest in any activities. They will want to know how these activities will benefit the community and them as the investors and if the mission and visions are clearly stated. They will be able to work together with the nonprofit organization, therefore, fostering positive relations.

Rennaker's article explains how communication skills and persuasive actions are crucial components of servant leadership in fostering positive relations among the stakeholders. He suggested that it is important for a servant leader to have a communicative pattern that consists

of listening and persuasive influence to the followers to attribute to servant quality leadership. Rather than the servant leader using authoritarian methods, he should use persuasion patterns to encourage people to take necessary actions in the organization. They should also aim to build consensus in a group so that everyone in the organization can support the leader's decision.

Rennaker(2008) article supports my hypothesis that both persuasive skills and good communication among the servant leaders are paramount to achieving positive relations among the stakeholders in the organizations. for the servant leaders, they are required to persuade the community members that whatever activities that they are about to carry out in the community will benefit them and their generation to come by ensuring that their communication skills are well figured out and that he maintains a positive attitude of the listening towards the organization (Rennaker, 2008)—for example, persuading the public that the organization is about to drill a borehole in a community to prevent water shortage during the drought season. The community is supposed to donate some of their lands to the organization to take place. A servant leader will have to ensure that the community understands the importance of the dams in providing water by encouraging the people to take action and donate the lands.

The servant leaders will have to elaborate and persuade them on the importance of investing in their organization among the shareholders. When they come to terms with the benefits and feel that they are satisfied with the vision and activities, they will invest in the organization, therefore fostering a positive relationship in the organization.

**Ensuring that there is self-awareness among the employees.** From the article done by Melchar & Bosco. (2010), they analyze how servant leadership can incorporate values and cultural traits that attract or develop their employees and other servant leaders. Using the survey, they suggest that the characteristics portrayed by a servant leader always led to higher performance of the organization and thus show that they are leading by example. The results of

their study prove that they can develop a culture of followers who are servant leaders themselves through the creation of awareness to the followers.

Through servant leadership, the leaders can look at themselves, think deeply about their actions to the community and the stakeholders, and then consider how their actions align with the organizations' values (Melchar & Bosco. (2010). One can become self-aware by knowing their strengths and weaknesses and asking for people's feedback to facilitate personal growth. Serving by example is an important trait for all servant leaders since they can improve the relationship between the stakeholders.

Identifying personal value as a servant leader enables one to discover what is truly important to you and are the actions truly important to him and the team. Identifications of personal strengths and weaknesses, the leader can succeed more in managing his employees. Similarly, they can suffer fewer problems if they know their weaknesses by managing them so that they don't affect the organization's outcome.

In this article by Patterson, he shows how servant leadership can encourage meaningful and optimal human functioning with a strong essence of community participation. The researchers argue that the compassion and love of servant leaders is the cornerstone of promoting positive relationships among the stakeholders and the organization (Patterson, 2010). this article takes the virtues perspectives and significantly shows how servant leaders can empower and stewardship through love and comparison.

Some of these virtues required include forgiveness, gratitude, humility, and altruism. Once the servant leaders can show gratitude to the community members for accepting their collaboration, it will foster positive relations among them through appreciation by the community members. Through humility, the servant leaders can humbly request for the participation of investors and shareholders in their organization, considering that they will lead to growth in the organization. According to Farling et al. (1999), servant leaders can provide vision, gain credibility, and trust from the employees and the community members by focusing on bringing out the best in their followers. Through this, they always rely on communication to

understand the desire, needs, abilities, goals, and potential of each of the employees (Patterson, 2010). This can only be achieved when there is love and compassion from the leader to the employees. With this knowledge, servant leaders can now assist the employees in achieving their potentials and their goals.

**Contribution to the community throughout the crisis period.** In research by Song (2020), the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and leadership during a crisis is highlighted and associated with servant leadership. In recent days, the world has been faced with a pandemic that has caused suffering and pain to most of the world. The leaders have been left in a dilemma on how to react to the cruel reality. The servant leaders are left with the choice of whether to prioritize serving the organization first or first fight for the survival of the people. They are left to prioritize the organization making a profit or care about the wellbeing of the people. As servants, they are expected to serve the sick, the vulnerable in society, and the forgotten people.

According to Song (2020), servant leadership is the ethic of love, care, and service to the least privileged people. During this period, the leaders have promoted positive relationships among the organizations and the stakeholders. The leaders can foresight the future of the organization and make a judgment on their actions that will favor both the present and future needs of the organization after the pandemic.

Due to their empathetic nature, the servant leaders listen and care for the people who have been affected by the crisis by offering them emotional and financial support. Through feeding programs, nonprofit organizations have been able to carry out food donation programs to help those in the community during this pandemic. They have also offered an allowance to their employees to enable them to take care of their families. Through the servant leaders, the relationship between the nonprofit organizations and the stakeholders has continued to improve.

The research project has explored the importance of corporate social responsibility using this pandemic period and the challenges the servant leaders are facing to ensure that they can promote positive relationships with the shareholders and achieve the organizational goals and

missions. The authors have supported the hypothesis that the nonprofit organization has managed to maintain positive relations among the community members and the shareholders throughout this pandemic through servant leadership.

### **Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

The purpose of this research is to examine the benefits of servant leadership through an individual and organizational framework, highlighting practical implications to help individuals and organizations in the nonprofit sector. The qualitative study utilized a mixed method approach with secondary data, including a literature review and interviews with subject matter experts in the field of servant leadership. This project focused on a comparative analysis of the information collected via a literature review and incorporated responses from expert interviews. This project set out to answer the following questions:

Research Question #1 (RQ1): What models or methods best promote servant leadership within an organization at the individual level?

Research Question #2 (RQ2): What strategies are effective to foster an organizational culture of servant leadership?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three experts: all currently serve on at least one nonprofit board of directors, all have over 10 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, and all have served in both operational and strategic capacities within the nonprofit sector. These interviews were conducted to obtain additional perspective on the research questions. The questions asked are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Semi-structured interview questions**

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Interview Questions	
1.	Do you think there is a legitimate place for servant leadership in the nonprofit sector?
2.	What are your feelings about the characteristics of servant leadership?
3.	Are any of characteristics more important to you?
4.	Can you describe any aspects of servant leadership as the concept relates to your identity?
5.	What principles of servant leadership will help others be accountable?
6.	How do you help those you serve be accountable?
7.	What models or methods best promote servant leadership within an organization at the individual level?
8.	What are some of the personal roadblocks that managers would have to conquer in order to move towards servant leadership?
9.	What strategies are effective to foster an organizational culture of servant leadership?

## Section 4. Data Analysis

The following tables represent the themes, subcategories, and exemplar quotations from the three expert interviews based on this capstone project’s stated research questions.

**Table 2: Themes with subcategories for RQ1**

RQ1. What models or methods best promote servant leadership within an organization at the individual level?	
Theme #1: Communication	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
listening	<p>“...listening is an essential element.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Leaders who usually listen gain more insight into various pertinent issues experienced within the organization’s workplace.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Servant leadership within a non-profit organization, through the application of listening and empathy principles, can significantly promote succession planning and increase the achieving pace of the organization.” Interviewee #3</p>

empathy	<p>“...with empathy and understanding of the team, it facilitates psychological safety within the workplace.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Servant leaders show empathy and strive to understand others.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Servant leadership within a non-profit organization, through the application of listening and empathy principles, can significantly promote succession planning and increase the achieving pace of the organization.” Interviewee #3</p>
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Theme #2: Empowering

Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
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responsibilities	<p>“...servant leaders should be able to understand their responsibilities.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Clearly defined responsibilities is critical.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Effective servant leadership requires empowering others with responsibilities.” Interviewee #3</p>
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stewardship	<p>“...the servant leadership method should promote stewardship.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Stewardship in the nonprofit sector is a reflection of the trust afforded by the public and must be maintained through accountability and transparency.” Interviewee #2</p>
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Theme #3: Standards

Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
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example	<p>“Leading by example to encourage servant leadership leads to increased productivity.” Interviewee #1</p>
	<p>“Leading by example promotes more trust and respect, leads to higher productivity, loyal employees, and encourages commitment within an organization.” Interviewee #2</p>
	<p>“Promoting servant leadership within a non-profit organization requires an appropriate example to enhance the necessary behavior and inspiration within the work.” Interviewee #3</p>
learn	<p>“...efficient application of servant leadership within a non-profit organization requires willing individuals who are ready to learn” Interviewee #1</p>
	<p>“Servant leaders are teachable and learn to teach others.” Interviewee #2</p>
	<p>“There is a need to learn, teach, develop, and practice various skills and mindsets to promote servant leadership.” Interviewee #3</p>

**Table 3: Themes with subcategories for RQ2**

RQ2. What strategies are effective to foster an organizational culture of servant leadership?

Theme #1: Commitment

Sub Categories

Exemplar Quotations

community	<p>“Integrate servant-leadership concepts into community leadership organizations.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Developing partnerships with other organizations focused on servant leadership in the community can effectively supplement internal efforts.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Servant leaders recognize the importance of including the broader community and stakeholders.” Interviewee #3</p>
philosophy	<p>“Institute policies reflective of your organization’s philosophy on servant leadership.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“It is vital to communicate your organization’s philosophy on servant leadership to emphasize the highest possible level of commitment.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Demonstrating a commitment to servant leadership through an articulated philosophy is not enough. It must be followed by supporting actions!” Interviewee #3</p>
Theme #2: Programs	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations

Theme #3: Unite	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
training	<p>“Offering servant leadership courses within your organization can be extremely beneficial for leaders and staff.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Courses or trainings related to servant leadership can help equip nonprofit organizations to more effectively serve within communities.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“For organizations unable to develop servant leadership courses or trainings, partnering with other organizations to get this training could be a more feasible option.” Interviewee #3</p>
evaluation	<p>“Adding a servant leadership component to performance evaluations can be an encouraging way to emphasize the organization’s commitment.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“A broader evaluation of the organization’s current leadership practices can be valuable to developing a broader approach to implementing a more holistic approach to servant leadership.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Measuring the progress of organizational efforts is an important aspect of evaluation, serving as guidance to redirect, reinforce, or sustain.” Interviewee #3</p>

<p>common purpose</p>	<p>“Servant leaders recognize a greater good and common purpose, which transcends merely accomplishing a mission or associated goals.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Working together for the common good is a cornerstone of servant leadership.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Without a common good, servant leadership more reflective of transformational leadership.” Interview #3</p>
<p>communicate</p>	<p>“Communication is key!” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Communication goes both ways. Yet, listening is the priority for a servant leader.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“Without effective communication, servant leadership cannot work in any organization.” Interviewee #3</p>
<p>empower</p>	<p>“Servant leaders empower their employees.” Interviewee #1</p> <p>“Empowerment comes from a place of understanding and trust.” Interviewee #2</p> <p>“To empower is to demonstrate trust.” Interview #3</p>

## **Section 5: Implications and Recommendations**

Based on the literature review and data analysis, the following obstacles and recommendations have been developed for the benefit of individuals and organizations in the nonprofit sector.

### **Obstacle 1:**

Many organizations in the nonprofit sector are still organized in the traditional department silos. These department leaders would need to take initiative to focus on servant leadership. However, some leaders may not be comfortable with deviating from the traditional autocratic style.

### **Recommendation 1:**

Leadership in the nonprofit sector should demonstrate a commitment to servant leadership, articulating a philosophy and following up with related actions.

### **Obstacle 2:**

Many individuals lack professional preparations for leadership.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Organizations in the nonprofit sector can develop internal courses and trainings to support an environment conducive to servant leadership.

### **Obstacle 3:**

Smaller nonprofit organizations have limited resources and limited bandwidth to adopt a new leadership approach.

### **Recommendation 3:**

Smaller nonprofits should partner with other organizations in the community to obtain access for management and staff to courses and training, which will prepare them to become effective servant leaders.

## **Section 6: Conclusion**

In summary, servant leadership is one of the most effective leadership strategies that promote teamwork, collaboration, fairness, love, compassion, and interdependence at the workplace. Managers can use several effective strategies to foster an organizational culture of servant leadership. Examples of these strategies include the use of effective communication to give worker feedback, get all workers on the same page and promote cross-collaboration among individuals and teams. Managers can also foster a culture of structural worker empowerment and effective succession planning. Managers can also foster growth in servant leadership culture by promoting belongingness and eliminate the worker's sense of outsidership. Managers can also show workers compassion and treat them fairly as a strategy to boost their sense of servant leadership. This report has identified key methods that best promote servant leadership at the individual level. Some of these methods include portraying stewardship and emotional healing that leads to positive relations for better psychological health among workers. Managers can also use a persuasion approach to foster listening skills among employees. Another approach managers can use is ensuring that there is self-awareness among the employees. Finally, managers can use the positive contribution to the community throughout a crisis period as a method to effectively impart servant leadership skills among followers. These key methods and strategies can be used to grow a culture of servant leadership among organizations and individuals in the nonprofit sector.

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## Author's Bio

Michael Ohaneson is the Co-Founder and Executive Director at Blessing Bags International (BBI), a Christ-centered nonprofit organization focused on sharing God's love through care packages and empowering families of all ages and abilities to serve together. In his role, he oversees the administration, programs, and strategic plan of the organization. His key duties include fundraising, marketing, and community outreach. His general responsibilities include board governance, financial performance and viability, organization mission and strategy, and organization operations.

Prior to BBI, Michael's professional experience spans across private, public, and social sectors with 22 years of leadership experience. He has coordinated initiatives in several countries including Kuwait, Mexico, Pakistan, South Korea, UK, and USA. Some of his previous position titles have included Chief, Emergency Programs; Chief, Special Programs; Program Security Officer; Security Team Lead; and Supervisory Management Analyst. These positions include his work within the White House, within several agencies at the Defense Department (DoD) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). In addition to his various official titles, Michael effectively served as a liaison to more than 20 agencies, including the State Department (DoS), National Security Agency (NSA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Homeland Security Department (DHS), General Services Administration (GSA), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), National Security Council (NSC), and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).

During his studies at the University of San Francisco, he focused on the impact of servant leadership on the nonprofit sector for his Master's in Nonprofit Administration capstone exercise. Michael has previously completed graduate and undergraduate studies in business management. He is a 14th generation Floridian, tracing back his ancestral roots to Ponce de León. Michael is married to Jennifer Ohaneson, author of *Growing a Servant's Heart: 52 Gospel-Centered Service Projects for Families with Children of All Ages*. Michael and Jennifer have been blessed with 12 amazing children and 3 grandchildren.