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Servant leadership approach and employee performance in Tanzania Teachers' Union in Dar es Salaam

SUMMARY The study assessed the application of the Servant Leadership Approach (SLA) on employee performance at the Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU). Specifically, it tested TTU employees' understanding of the application and association of SLA on employee performance improvement. The study used a descriptive design to analyse the characteristics of TTU leaders, servant leadership traits, and their impact on employee performance. Structured and unstructured questionnaires, interviews, observation and documentary reviews were used to collect data. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21) enabled the descriptive analysis of the data collected. The results indicated that TTU employees understand SLA and its associated traits well. Equally, TTU leaders apply several servant leadership strategies in running their offices. Leaders empower subordinates through task delegations, staff training and development programs, and the sharing of information through different digital platforms including WhatsApp groups. TTU fosters ethical conduct and has a code of ethics that is adhered to by all TTU employees. TTU's Council enhances participatory decision-making at the micro and macro levels. This study further revealed a direct relationship between the SLA and employee performance by increasing work morale, reducing service time out period, increasing service quality, and enhancing service culture. TTU can increase its employees' performance through an SLA by providing training programs for TTU leaders regarding servant leadership traits. Against this backdrop, TTU

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is recommended to promulgate a leadership policy emphasising using the SLA to serve its members properly.

KEYWORDS servant leadership, Servant Leadership Approach, Tanzania Teachers Union, employee performance, Tanzania

Introduction

The Servant Leadership Approach (SLA) has garnered significant attention from researchers and practitioners as an effective leadership approach for promoting well-being and performance, especially during disruption and transition (Odiri et al., 2023). Servant leadership (SL) is a leadership philosophy introduced by Greenleaf in his seminal work *The Servant as Leader* (1970), dictating the centrality of leaders serving others. The philosophy diverges from traditional leadership styles, which mostly accentuate leaders' authority and power (Limo, 2023). This is because servant leaders prioritise employees' needs and help them grow and perform to their full potential (Greenleaf, 1977). SL emphasises morality, ethics, and virtue, making it a growing area of research (Suhardi et al., 2022). Servant leaders are considered role models who can influence employees' service performance through a role-modelling process (Abdallah, 2023). Ullah et al. (2023) assert that servant leaders demonstrate their serving-oriented values, attitudes, and behaviours to employees by addressing followers' needs and interests. When employees are well-served by servant leaders, they are instilled with a strong desire and motivation to emulate these values, attitudes, and behaviour, thereby serving others (Wang et al., 2017). Although SL behaviour differs from that involved in serving customers, both inherently involve a serving orientation (Limo, 2023).

Leadership is essential to facilitate the required interaction to achieve a group's objectives and improve performance through strategies and techniques. Leadership provides purpose to collective efforts, sparking productive environments and innovative workers. Effective leadership demands the considerate application of power and focuses on salient issues affecting others' lives. Good leaders must comprehend the attitudes, values, diversity, and needs of their groups (Tinuoye et al., 2021). A servant leader values diverse opinions, cultivates a culture of trust, develops other leaders by teaching them to lead, provides growth opportunities, leads by example, helps people with life issues, thinks about others, and acts with humility. Limo (2023) adds that the servant aspect of SL involves reversing the hierarchy and serving everyone in society to develop great

relationships, achieve excellent outcomes, and ultimately delight customers. Saleem et al. (2020) argue that SLA shares various elements – personal integrity, ethical behaviour, altruism, and role modelling – with ethical leadership.

The dominant literature indicates a significant relationship between applying the SLA and work performance (Jana, 2020). Beyond affecting employee performance, the application of SLA enhances organisational performance as well. The SLA integrates the capabilities, skills, traits, and talents of workers (Irfan et al., 2022). Saleem et al. (2020) found empirically that SLA indirectly affects task performance by providing autonomy and self-sufficiency, resulting in higher performance levels among subordinates. Ndimbo (2023) asserts that SL practices in the Tanzania Police Force improve police officers' well-being, foster positive work relationships and enhance their overall performance. Such a position is seconded by Abdallah (2023) in her study on servant leadership practices at LETSHEGO Bank in Tanzania, which contended that authentic leadership, characterised by transparency, honesty, and consistency, strengthens the trust between leaders and employees, leading to a notable increase in job satisfaction. This viewpoint is further supported by Limo (2023), who pointed out that servant leadership practices at Tanzania Posts Corporation validated that SLA had a relationship with high job satisfaction among employees. The study found that employees' job satisfaction was attributed to leaders who respected and trusted their employees, prioritised their employees' needs over their own, were mindful of their limitations and mistakes, and took responsibility for their actions.

The empirical studies on the relationship between SLA and employee performance above are by no standard exhaustive, and most authors pointed out that the research area is under-researched. This situation is evidenced by Eva et al. (2019), who indicate that there are only 64 studies from North America and 41 from the whole of Europe. Abdallah (2023), Ndimbo (2023), and Limo (2023) in their justification for SL studies in Tanzania pointed out limited studies worldwide, Africa and Tanzania in particular. Indeed, these three studies shed light on the association between SLA and job satisfaction. However, they are not dealing with SLA and employee performance. More importantly, they are not dealing with SLA in the trade union industry and most specifically TTU, which is among the trade unions which serve a large number of single cadre workers in Tanzania – Teachers. By May 2024, TTU had a total of 247,860 members, consisting of 113,645 women and 134,215 men (TTU, N/A.). This membership is larger than that of the other 13 trade unions in Tanzania, all of which are part of the Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (TUCTA), which, as of July 2024, had

a total membership of 650,000 (TUCTA, N/A.). As such, TTU accounts for about 38% of TUCTA's total membership.

This study uses the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory to discuss issues related to employee performance. LMX theory focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers, making the dyadic relationship the focal point of the leadership process (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010). According to Day & Misenko (2015), LMX theory recognises that both parties play a role in developing and maintaining high-quality relationships, leading to positive work-related outcomes such as follower satisfaction, commitment, performance, and citizenship. Behavioural theory guides this study by examining the specific objectives related to the application of SLA in TTU. The theory helps determine whether TTU employs this leadership style and analyses the social dynamics and reciprocity between TTU leaders and followers. The theory is used to explore the association between SLA and employee performance at TTU, testing various performance indicators against SLA applicability. Finally, the study discusses ways to improve employee performance through SLA, leveraging the participatory nature of LMX theory to gather constructive ideas for enhancing performance.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive research design to analyse the characteristics of TTU leaders against servant leadership traits, and their relationship with employee performance. The research was conducted in the Dar es Salaam region. Dar es Salaam was selected due to its diverse population, representing various ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds, offering a broader perspective on leadership styles compared to less diverse regions. This diversity enabled the researcher to examine leadership traits, accessibility, treatments, empathy, and support for subordinates, as well as socio-economic differences impacting employee commitments, task completion, policy adherence, engagement, and work quality within a compact area. All 10 TTU staff members of Dar es Salaam, 5 TTU chairpersons from 4 municipalities within the Dar es Salaam region, and 1 city council. Consequently, the study included all employees because the number was manageable (10). Questionnaires containing both closed and open-ended questions were employed to capture comprehensive information, allowing for quantitative and qualitative data collection. This mixed-method approach ensured a richer understanding of the variables under study. Data collected in the field were subjected to descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for

the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. This analysis identified patterns and correlations between leadership traits and employee performance, providing valuable insights to enhance organisational effectiveness within TTU.

Results and discussion

Understanding of SLA at TTU

The researcher was interested in establishing the understanding and application of SL among TTU employees. To realise this objective, a general question on what SL meant was posed to the participants. Out of the 10 TTU staff members interviewed, eight exhibited an understanding of the concept and its associated traits. Chiefly, the respondents related SL with a leadership style focused on fulfilling people's needs. Their descriptions included phrases such as "leadership for the people," "a leadership style that emphasises the leader's role as a servant," and "a type of leadership where a leader seeks to improve the group's performance by incorporating ideas from followers, even if they oppose his own.", underscoring the democratic and inclusive nature of SL. Some respondents mentioned issues related to the commitment of servant leaders toward team improvement and the growth of the people. In this, they said, "Servant leadership is about a leader being committed to the personal and professional growth of their team members. This involves providing development opportunities, offering constructive feedback, and supporting employees in their career aspirations" Not only that, but also some respondents mentioned issues related to understanding and being concerned with the feelings of their employees in this they said. "Servant leadership is about a leader aware of and sensitive to the emotional states of others and responds in a supportive and caring manner.

At its core, respondents demonstrated that SL exudes a culture of empathy. These responses correspond closely with the findings of Radi (2022) who highlights eleven SL traits at the workplace. These traits include: serving all employees, cheering the progress of all employees, fostering an encouraging atmosphere for employee performance, providing support to all employees, placing others' priorities over oneself, being willing to make sacrifices, empowering others, empathising, daring to accept criticism, appreciating all employees and providing guidance to all workers. Such alignment with Radi's extensive list reflects a profound recognition of the fundamental aspects of SL and its traits, highlights the comprehensive nature of their understanding and reinforces

the validity of their understanding. Such a position is anchored on the conviction that Radi's dimensions of SL offer a vigorous basis for understanding SLA. This understanding is vital for promoting a culture of SL, as it specifies a common recognition of the centrality of a leader's role in serving and supporting their followers (Pakpahan, 2021). This corresponds with Limo (2023), who found that promoting a culture of transparent communication of organisational goals and strategies, open-mindedness, and prioritising employee well-being are crucial for a successful workplace in SLA.

TTU employees' comprehension of servant leadership aligns closely with established SLA perspectives, confirming TTU employees' familiarity with its associated traits and suggesting that assessments of its application at TTU are from participants with informed knowledge of SL. This alignment also highlights the potential for implementing effective SL practices within TTU, leading to a more supportive and productive work environment for employees. Assessment of the application of SLA at TTU is presented below.

Application of SLA at TTU

This subsection provides results and discussions on the application of the SLA at TTU. It specifically delves into the following dimensions of SLA: commitment to service, empowerment, listening, ethical decision-making, inclusivity, team well-being, empathy, open communication, and integrity. Table 1 provides respondents' views on the application of SLA in the stated dimensions in terms of the percentage of their agreement and disagreement with the statements below.

Table 1. Application of SLA at TTU

| SN | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Leaders' commitment to serve is apparent at TTU | 1% | 9% | 70% | 20% |
| 2 | Leaders empower subordinates at TTU | 1% | 7% | 75% | 17% |
| 3 | Leaders listen to subordinates at TTU | 2% | 14% | 72% | 12% |
| 4 | Leaders make ethical decisions at TTU | 4% | 16% | 73% | 7% |
| 5 | Leaders' zeal to promote inclusivity is ostensible at TTU | 7% | 15% | 72% | 6% |

| SN | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 6 | Leaders' support for team wellbeing is obvious at TTU | 1% | 17% | 67% | 15% |
| 7 | Leaders display empathetic tendencies at TTU | 4% | 18% | 58% | 20% |
| 8 | Leaders communicate openly at TTU | 2% | 7% | 71% | 21% |
| 9 | Leaders' commitment to integrity is apparent at TTU | 6% | 7% | 77% | 10% |

Source: field data, 2024.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that 90% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that leaders' commitment to serving is apparent at TTU, and 10% felt otherwise. Specifically, 20% strongly agreed and 70% agreed, while 1% strongly disagreed and 9% disagreed with TTU leaders' commitment to serving. The high level of agreement suggests alignment with the SLA, which emphasises the leader's role in serving others and demonstrating a genuine commitment to the development and well-being of their subordinates, which is a hallmark of servant leadership (Surji, 2017). It further suggests that TTU leaders embody SL ethos effectively, and employees at TTU feel valued and supported by their leaders (Ullah et al., 2022). The commitment to service is foundational in creating an organisational culture that prioritises the needs of employees and stakeholders (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022). On the other hand, the 10% of respondents who disagreed epitomise variations in leadership practices across departments and/or individual expectations and experiences.

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 92% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders empower their subordinates, and 8% felt otherwise. Specifically, 17% strongly agreed and 75% agreed, while 1% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders empower their subordinates. Empowering their subordinates in their professions, including giving them chances to participate in different forums, employees in Dar es Salaam. This result echoes Muzira et al., (2020) view that empowerment is a critical aspect of SL, fostering an environment where employees are encouraged to take initiative and contribute meaningfully to organisational goals. By empowering subordinates, leaders foster a sense of autonomy and competence among employees, which is crucial for organisational effectiveness and employee satisfaction (Limo 2023). Conversely, a disagreement level of 8% indicates a minority

of employees who do not feel empowered due to inadequate delegation of authority, insufficient opportunities for professional growth, or a lack of encouragement for autonomous decision-making (Ye et al., 2022).

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 84% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders listen to subordinates, and 16% felt otherwise. Specifically, 12% strongly agreed, and 7% agreed, while 2% strongly disagreed and 14% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders listen to their subordinates. The high level of agreement suggests the application of an essential element of SLA. Listening is a foundational SL attribute, accentuating vigorous engagement and empathy, which allows leaders to understand and address the needs and concerns of their subordinates (Vrcelj et al., 2022). The data indicate that TTU leaders are perceived to be good listeners, which can enhance trust and communication within TTU. Equally, 16% felt that their voices were not adequately heard due to poor active listening skills, inadequate communication channels, or a hierarchical culture that discourages open dialogue (Surji, 2015).

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 80% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders empower their subordinates, and 20% felt otherwise. Specifically, 7% strongly agreed and 7% agreed, while 4% strongly disagreed and 16% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders empower their subordinates. Such high agreement reflects a culture of ethical behaviour among TTU leaders, aligning with ethical leadership theories that prioritise moral values and integrity (Northouse, 2024). On the other hand, the 20% disagreement suggests concerns about the ethical standards of leadership decisions. This could be related to perceived inconsistencies, lack of transparency, or past incidents that have damaged trust. Emphasising ethical training and clear, consistent decision-making processes can help rebuild trust (Pakpahan, 2021).

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 78% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders promote inclusivity, and 22% felt otherwise. Specifically, 6% strongly agreed, and 72% agreed, while 7% strongly disagreed and 15% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders promote inclusivity. This high level of support for the dimension depicts the application of an SLA essential for leveraging diverse perspectives and fostering innovation (Vrcelj et al., 2022). This is because inclusivity makes employees feel valued, which in turn enhances their individual and overall organisational performance (Irfan et al., 2022). On the contrary, a 22% disagreement indicates notable concerns about inclusivity efforts. Employees may perceive a lack of genuine commitment to diversity or feel excluded from decision-making processes. Enhancing

inclusivity initiatives and ensuring diverse representation can address these concerns (Jaiswal et al., 2022).

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 82% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders support team wellbeing, and 18% felt otherwise. Specifically, 17% strongly agreed and 67% agreed, while 1% strongly disagreed and 17% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders support team wellbeing. Support for team well-being is indicative of a caring leadership style, which is central to servant leadership (Westbrook & Peterson, 2023). By prioritising the well-being of team members, leaders can create a supportive and healthy work environment (Saleem et al., 2020). The data suggests that TTU leaders are perceived to be supportive, contributing to a positive and healthy work environment. In contrast, the 18% disagreement highlights perceived deficiencies in supporting team wellbeing. This is attributed to inadequate attention to work-life balance, insufficient resources for stress management, or a lack of recognition for efforts. Prioritising employee well-being through targeted programs and support systems can improve this perception (Buick et al., 2024).

The findings in Table 1 further indicate that 78% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders display empathetic tendencies, and 22% felt otherwise. Specifically, 20% strongly agreed and 58% agreed, while 4% strongly disagreed and 18% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders display empathetic tendencies. Empathy is a crucial trait in SL, enabling leaders to understand and connect with their team members on a deeper level (Zeeshan et al., 2021). The 78% agreement rate suggests that leaders are perceived to display empathy, which enables leaders to connect with their employees, understand their concerns, and provide appropriate support (Jana, 2020). Contrary, the 22% disagreement suggests that many employees do not see their leaders as empathetic due to a lack of emotional intelligence, insufficient personal engagement with employees, or unaddressed conflicts (Karimi et al., 2021).

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 92% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders communicate openly, and 8% felt otherwise. Specifically, 21% strongly agreed, and 71% agreed, while 1% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders communicate openly. Open communication is vital for transparency and building trust within an organisation. Leaders who communicate openly create an environment where information flows freely, and team members feel informed and engaged (Zeeshan et al., 2021). A high total agreement (92%) indicates that open communication is a strong attribute of TTU leaders. Open communication fosters transparency

and trust, essential for effective leadership and organisational cohesion (Jana, 2020). Conversely, the 9% disagreement level concerning open communication indicates a small minority still perceive a lack of transparency.

The findings in Table 1 also indicate that 87% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that TTU leaders demonstrated a commitment to integrity, and 13% felt otherwise. Specifically, 10% strongly agreed, and 77% agreed, while 6% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed with the contention that TTU leaders demonstrate a commitment to integrity. The 87% agreement rate reflects a strong perception of integrity among leaders at TTU. Integrity is fundamental to servant leadership, ensuring that leaders act consistently, honestly, and ethically (Abdallah, 2023). Contrawise, the 13% of respondents who disagreed underscore past integrity issues, perceived inconsistencies, or unclear ethical guidelines. Reinforcing a culture of integrity through consistent behaviour and clear ethical standards can address these concerns (Rahmadani et al., 2020).

The findings and discussion suggest a strong application of SL traits, with high levels of agreement across all dimensions of SL examined at TTU. These findings are consistent with theoretical and empirical literature, underscoring the positive impact of servant leadership on organisational culture, employee engagement, and overall performance. By adhering to these principles, TTU demonstrates a commitment to creating a supportive, ethical, and inclusive work environment, which is crucial for the long-term success and well-being of TTU and its employees. These attributes contribute to a positive organisational culture and can lead to higher employee satisfaction and performance.

SLA and Employee Performance AT TTU

The study assessed the association between the SL approach and employee performance. Guided by Leader Member Exchange theory (LMX), the study was able to find the association between the two variables and find out how they influence each other. The findings revealed that there is a direct association between the application of the SL approach and employee performance, as exemplified in Table 2 below.

Table 2. SLA and Employee Performance at TTU

| SN | Statement | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|--|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | All levels of leadership have autonomy that makes employees free in decision-making and motivates them to accomplish work on time | 10% | 50% | 40% |
| 2 | Delegation of tasks without interference from top leaders motivates goal attainment | 20% | 40% | 40% |
| 3 | Open lines of communication encourage sharing ideas, concerns, and feedback enhance creativity and employee performance | 30% | 30% | 40% |
| 4 | Regular feedback and reflection sessions at TTU provide opportunities for leaders and team members to afford peer appraisal that helps employees to undertake their tasks | 10% | 40% | 50% |
| 5 | The ethical and moral leadership style at TTU helps employees to make right decisions in their works | 30% | 40% | 30% |
| 6 | TTU leadership focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. Hence, employees maximise the quality and quantity of tasks accomplished | 30% | 40% | 30% |

Source: field data, 2024.

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 90% of the respondents agreed to different degrees of autonomy to improve employee performance at TTU, and 10% felt otherwise. Specifically, 40% strongly agreed, and 50% agreed, while 10% disagreed and none strongly disagreed. This indicates that most employees feel empowered through autonomy, aligning with servant leadership principles where leaders prioritise employee freedom and decision-making (Suhardi et al., 2022). Autonomy is a core element in promoting intrinsic motivation and timely task accomplishment, reflecting the servant leader's role in enabling rather than controlling (Ullah et al., 2023). However, the 10% who disagree may indicate that in certain areas or departments, there could be limitations or inconsistencies in leadership autonomy, perhaps suggesting a need for a more uniform application of this principle across the organisation (Rahmadani et al., 2020).

The findings in Table 2 also indicate that 80% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that delegation of tasks improves employee performance at TTU, and 20% felt otherwise. Specifically, 40% strongly agreed, and 40% agreed, while 20% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. Effective delegation without interference supports goal attainment, which is key in servant leadership. This

approach emphasises empowering employees by trusting them with responsibilities, fostering accountability, and enabling personal and professional growth (Ye et al., 2022). The 20% disagreement could reflect experiences where some employees feel micromanaged or lack clear delegation, impacting their motivation and effectiveness (Ndidi et al., 2022).

Table 2 further indicates that 70% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that open lines of communication improve employee performance at TTU, and 30% felt otherwise. Specifically, 40% strongly agreed, and 30% agreed, while 10% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. Servant leadership stresses the importance of open lines of communication. Here, the data suggest that while many employees see value in open communication, enhancing creativity and performance, a significant portion feels there is room for improvement. Servant leaders encourage feedback loops, which build a collaborative culture (Ally et al., 2021). For those who disagree, there may be perceived barriers to effective communication, such as hierarchical boundaries or inadequate feedback mechanisms. This emphasises the need for TTU leadership to strengthen communication channels, ensuring all employees feel heard and valued.

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 90% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that regular feedback and reflections improve employee performance at TTU, and 10% felt otherwise. Specifically, 40% strongly agreed, and 50% agreed, while 10% disagreed. The high agreement highlights the value of regular feedback and reflection in servant leadership. This collaborative peer-appraisal process aligns with the servant leader's emphasis on fostering an environment of continuous learning and growth, contributing to task execution efficiency, which is also termed as Team Member Exchange (TMX) as noted from (Suhardi et al., 2022). The 10% disagreement may point to inconsistent implementation or gaps in how these feedback sessions are conducted, potentially leaving some employees feeling overlooked or unsupported (Jana, 2020).

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 90% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that ethical and moral leadership improve employee performance at TTU, and 30% felt otherwise. Specifically, 30% strongly agreed, and 40% agreed, while 30% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. Ethical leadership is a cornerstone of the servant leadership model. However, the division in responses may indicate inconsistencies in the perception or application of ethical standards across TTU. Stronger integration of ethical practices could enhance decision-making and align employee behaviour with organisational values (Tinuoye et al., 2021).

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 90% of the respondents agreed to different degrees that leaders 'affinity to community wellbeing improves employee performance at TTU, and 30% felt otherwise. Specifically, 30% strongly agreed, and 40% agreed, while 30% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. Servant leadership emphasises not just organisational success but the well-being and development of employees and their communities. The mixed response suggests that while a good proportion recognises this focus at TTU, others feel it may not be fully realised or visible in their work experience. A deeper commitment to servant leadership might be needed to enhance the impact on both task quantity and quality. The 30% disagreement may indicate that some employees do not feel that their personal development or well-being is prioritised. This could point to the need for more visible and consistent efforts in nurturing employee growth, perhaps through tailored development programs, wellness initiatives, or community engagement activities (Ullah et al., 2022).

Generally, the high satisfaction rate depicted in Table 2 augurs very well with the principles of the SLA. The SLA principles posit that higher levels of employee satisfaction and organisational commitment are influenced by leaders who prioritise serving their employees. Such a nexus is well articulated by the dictates of social exchange theory, contending that employees return the leaders' positive treatment with higher levels of commitment and performance. Such a position aligns with servant leadership's core philosophy, which considers leadership as serving employees' needs, nurturing a collaborative, ethical, and growth-oriented environment for impacting employee performance and well-being. Implementation of SL principles like autonomy, delegation, and feedback mechanisms at TTU proved to be useful in enhancing employee performance. However, it's worth noting that the minority voices against the application of SLA at TTU suggest potential organisational blind spots. Therefore, such dissatisfactions have to be addressed as part of the leader's responsibility to serve all employees and ensure inclusivity.

Improving employee performance through SLA

The current study wished to establish ways and means of improving employee performance through SLA. Results and discussion on this objective are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Improving SLA for Performance Improvement

| SN | Improvement | Percentage |
|----|--|------------|
| 1. | SL Training | 70% |
| 2. | Enhancing Ethical Conduct | 70% |
| 3. | Establishing a Mentorship program | 80% |
| 4. | Improving communication and feedback mechanisms | 60% |
| 5 | Formalising the SL leadership style to the institution | 50% |

Source: own work.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that 70% of respondents believe in the need for Servant Leadership training. This corresponds with the study of Irfan et al. (2022). Training is fundamental in fostering a servant leadership culture, and the development of servant leaders requires intentional effort to cultivate characteristics such as listening, empathy, and stewardship (Ndimbo, 2023). Providing SL training ensures that leaders at all levels understand the principles and behaviours expected of them, such as prioritising the needs of employees and the community (Limo, 2023). The fact that 70% of respondents highlight this as a priority underscores the importance of equipping leaders with the tools and knowledge to implement servant leadership effectively.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that 70% of respondents see a need to enhance ethical conduct. Wang et al. (2017) Ethical conduct is a core component of servant leadership. Leaders are expected to model high ethical standards and make morally sound decisions, prioritising the well-being of both individuals and the organisation (Abdallah, 2023). A focus on enhancing ethical conduct aligns with the findings from previous discussions on leadership at TTU, where ethical leadership was seen as an area needing improvement. The emphasis on ethics reflects the broader servant leadership goal of promoting integrity and trust within the organisation (Tinuoye et al., 2021). This finding signals that employees desire stronger ethical guidance from leaders to reinforce trust and alignment with servant leadership values.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that 80% of respondents support the introduction of a mentorship program. Mentorship is a key aspect of servant leadership, where leaders act as mentors and coaches to help employees grow both personally and professionally (Blake-Beard et al., 2021). Establishing a mentorship program would not only support individual employee development but also create a culture of continuous learning and support within the organisation (Baran & Zarzycki, 2021). The high percentage of respondents (80%) recognising

the value of mentorship aligns with the servant leader's role as a guide and facilitator, which can lead to improved employee performance and job satisfaction. Mentorship programs also build a sense of community and shared purpose, essential components of servant leadership.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that 60% of respondents highlight the need to improve communication and feedback mechanisms. Open and transparent communication is a hallmark of servant leadership (Suhardi et al., 2022). The fact that 60% of respondents prioritise improved communication and feedback mechanisms indicates that while some systems may be in place, there is a desire for more effective and consistent channels. Servant leaders actively listen to and engage with their teams, promoting an environment where feedback is welcomed and acted upon (Saleem et al., 2020). Effective communication enhances trust and fosters innovation and collaboration, contributing to overall organisational performance (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018). The desire for better communication could indicate that current mechanisms are either insufficient or underutilised, limiting the potential for employee input and growth.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that 50% of respondents suggest formalising the servant leadership style within the institution. Formalising servant leadership within TTU would institutionalise its principles and practices, ensuring consistency across all levels of leadership. According to Limo (2023), formalisation can help embed servant leadership into the organisational culture, making it a core aspect of how the institution operates. This might involve incorporating servant leadership principles into job descriptions, leadership evaluations, and organisational policies. While 50% support formalisation, the relatively lower percentage compared to other areas suggests that there might be differing opinions on how rigidly servant leadership should be institutionalised, with some preferring a more organic adoption. Nonetheless, formalisation can offer a clear framework for aligning leadership practices with the servant leadership philosophy, contributing to long-term performance improvement (Ndimbo, 2023).

The data and discussions under the section acmes crucial areas for improving SL at TTU, with the highest priorities being the establishment of mentorship programs and training on SL principles. Such priorities depict the core SL literature, stressing personal growth, open communication and ethical conduct as vital for creating a high-performing organisational culture. Calls for improving communication and formalising SL express a wish for structural changes that guarantee SL principles are consistently embedded within the entire institution to enhance leadership effectiveness and employee performance at TTU.

Conclusion

The study's focus was on the role of SL and employee performance. The discussions above point out that there is a positive relationship between SLA and employee performance. The majority of TTU employees proved a good understanding of the approach and were able to share their opinions on how the approach is applied at TTU. The study exhibited that SL is applied in areas like serving employees and members, empowerment programs to employees and members, leaders, listening skills, having empathetic decision making, supporting team spirit, ethical conduct and encouraging diversity and inclusivity. The study concluded that the use of SL strategies in TTU leaders has positively influenced employee performance as it makes employees more engaged, reduces service delivery time, improves the quality of service and has the power to extract internal energy from its employees. However, the approach has a negative side as well; as it is time-consuming, it can lead to misinterpretation of the concept and power relations plus overdependence of employees to their leaders. Based on the positives of SL on employee performance, leaders should be exposed more to the SLA because it could help them to learn SL traits of empathy, collaboration and culture of service, persuasion, commination, trustworthiness, healing, appreciation, stewardship attitude among employees, which can contribute decisively to employee performance.

Even though the study found several SLA strategies utilised by TTU leaders and employees, this doesn't mean that TTU applies the approach of SL as their leadership policy. This is because TTU has no leadership policy, as findings revealed that it has just leadership guidelines that govern its leadership practices. Since TTU is the largest trade union in Tanzania representing all primary and secondary school teachers in Tanzania Mainland, it has to rethink its leadership policy and adapt to SL. Such an approach can enhance service delivery to its members by nurturing positive employee performance and a strong service-oriented culture among members and other stakeholders. Though both employees and leaders can enjoy SLA, it is only the leaders who have the power to determine its applicability and not otherwise therefore, the culture can be further built by encouraging TTU leaders to embark on providing training related to SL to its leaders so as they can learn the traits and key fundamentals of SLA.

This study assesses the nexus between SL and employee performance at TTU in Dar es Salaam. Further research could explore areas such as SL and members'

agility in trade unions, focusing on the relationship between SL and members' adaptability within the union. Such a study would investigate how SL within trade unions stimulates members' engagement, satisfaction, and overall perception of the union's value. Another potential area is the role of SL in conflict resolution within trade unions. This study could examine the effectiveness of SL approaches in managing internal conflicts and explore how SL influences resolution methods and the long-term effects on union cohesion and functionality. Furthermore, research on SL and innovation in trade unions could be valuable. This study could explore how SL affects the adoption of innovative practices within trade unions, including the use of technology, administrative structures, and operational strategies. It would aim to uncover the link between leadership style and the union's ability to adapt to shifting labour market conditions.

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Podejście do służebnego przywództwa a efektywność pracy w związku zawodowym nauczycieli Tanzanii w Dar es Salaam

STRESZCZENIE W badaniu oceniono zastosowanie podejścia służebnego przywództwa (SLA) w odniesieniu do wyników pracowników w Tanzańskiej Unii Nauczycieli (TTU). W szczególności zbadano zrozumienie przez pracowników TTU zastosowania i związku SLA z poprawą wyników pracowników. W badaniu wykorzystano projekt opisowy do analizy cech liderów TTU, cech służebnego przywództwa oraz ich wpływu na wyniki pracowników. Do zebrania danych wykorzystano kwestionariusze strukturalne i niestrukturyzowane, wywiady, obserwacje i przegląd dokumentacji. Pakiet statystyczny dla nauk społecznych (SPSS, wersja 21) umożliwił analizę opisową zebranych danych. Wyniki wskazały, że pracownicy TTU dobrze rozumieją SLA i związane z nim cechy. Podobnie liderzy TTU stosują kilka strategii przywództwa służebnego w zarządzaniu swoimi biurami. Liderzy wzmacniają pozycję podwładnych poprzez delegowanie zadań, szkolenia i programy rozwoju personelu oraz dzielenie się informacjami za pośrednictwem różnych platform cyfrowych, w tym grup WhatsApp. TTU promuje etyczne postępowanie i posiada kodeks etyczny, którego przestrzegają wszyscy pracownicy TTU. Rada TTU wzmacnia partykypacyjne podejmowanie decyzji na poziomie mikro i makro. Badanie to ujawniło ponadto bezpośredni związek między SLA a wydajnością pracowników poprzez zwiększenie morale w pracy, skrócenie czasu przestoju usług, poprawę jakości usług i wzmacnianie kultury usługowej. TTU może zwiększyć wydajność swoich pracowników poprzez SLA, zapewniając programy szkoleniowe dla liderów TTU dotyczące cech przywództwa służebnego. W tym kontekście zaleca się, aby TTU ogłosiło politykę przywództwa kładącą nacisk na wykorzystanie SLA do właściwej obsługi swoich członków.

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