COM 822-60: Persuasive Communication (Spring 2024)

Effective Leadership Styles For Effective Social Change

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**Essay statement**

**The Church's Servant Leadership over Authority Leadership: Social Change**

The following is an academic essay statement on the topic of servant leadership in poverty reduction efforts: Sure, here's the rewritten text: Poverty is a pervasive problem that affects millions of families worldwide, including you and me, because when you watch the sufferings of the poor and you have the heart to help, then you are not an exception. Poverty is an enemy of human dignity, self-esteem, and potential. According to Kathy Lee Sullivan, Northcentral University, 2020, “the poor cry out for something to change. They cry out for food, health care, transportation, education, good governance, and the hope for a better future and well-being for their children. Aid has been presented in many ways to the African people mostly in the form of food or financial aid. These forms of aid may be needed in some areas of Africa particularly in Kenya, but they are not the answer to the complex factors involved in poverty project development."

While various approaches have been employed to combat poverty under authoritative leadership, it is servant leadership that addresses the complex factors of poverty. Servant leadership prioritizes the needs and perspectives of those being led over the leader's authority and power, making it a more effective approach to reducing poverty than authoritative leadership. This essay examines the principles of servant leadership and their application in poverty reduction efforts. It argues that servant leadership is a more effective and promising approach to reducing poverty compared to authoritative leadership. We will explore how servant leadership can empower individuals, families, and communities to overcome poverty and reach their full potential. Poverty is a pervasive issue with far-reaching effects on families worldwide. Through my research, it has been shown that servant leadership is growing in importance in addressing poverty. A leadership approach based on empathy and serving others has the potential to empower individuals, families, and communities to thrive and overcome poverty. Kindness and empathy in leadership are not only effective but also essential for the growth and success of any organization or community.

**Servant Leadership's Core Values Over Authoritative Leadership**

1. In a study by Lo., P Et al (2020), it is stated that servant leadership succeeds based on three key factors. One of the primary distinctions between servant leadership and authoritative leadership lies in their perspectives on collaboration. Servant leaders prioritize collaboration and actively engage with individuals and families to identify their distinct needs and develop strategies for overcoming poverty. They acknowledge and leverage the unique talents and skills of each person to promote a fair and just society. On the other hand, authoritative leaders tend to emphasize compliance, imposing top-down solutions and expecting individuals and families to comply. This approach may provoke resentment and resistance, potentially hindering efforts to address poverty. Lo, P, Et al (2020) and peers added

**2.** According to the researchers, servant leadership focuses on empowering individuals and families, while authoritative leadership tends to reinforce feelings of helplessness. One key distinction between the two lies in their approach to empowerment. Servant leaders aim to equip individuals and families with the skills and knowledge they need to become self-sufficient, acknowledging that systemic issues often contribute to poverty. They strive to create a more just and equitable society. On the other hand, authoritative leaders tend to perpetuate the idea of helplessness, imposing solutions without considering the unique needs and perspectives of those they lead. This approach can hurt the self-esteem and confidence of individuals and families, making it harder for them to overcome poverty.

3. Please keep in mind the following statement: "Servant leadership creates lasting change; authoritative leadership creates short-term solutions." In his 1970 essay "The Servant as Leader," Robert K. Greenleaf first proposed the idea of "servant leadership." In contrast to authoritative leadership, which tends to offer quick fixes, servant leadership is better equipped to bring about sustainable change. According to Arain 2019), servant leaders take a holistic approach to addressing poverty, working with individuals and families to develop long-term strategies that address the underlying causes of poverty. On the other hand, authoritative leaders often focus on short-term relief without tackling the root issues, which can exacerbate the problem. Research indicates that servant leadership, characterized by kindness, empathy, and a focus on the needs of those being led, is more effective in reducing poverty compared to authoritative leadership, which relies on asserting control. Studies have shown that servant leaders can empower individuals, families, and communities to overcome poverty and reach their full potential, while authoritative leadership may lead to resentment and rebellion among those being led. Greenleaf's work demonstrates that servant leadership can be particularly effective in reducing poverty by prioritizing the needs of followers, leading to improved outcomes, enhanced self-esteem, and motivation.

**Personal Servant Leadership Experiences**

Grace Sufficient Organization is a Non-Governmental Organization in Kenya (NGO) in 2012, we support people Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs), Special needs kids, orphans, and people differently abled, we first provide, love, spiritual nourishment, encouragement, and hope, then food clothing sanitary towels, hygiene kits, and school supplies. As the founder and director of the said (GSO), I have found that even with the best of intentions, there will always be people who will oppose your ideas, no matter how clear and convincing your arguments are. Reflecting on my experiences as the founder and director of the GSO, It is a fundamental truth about leadership and advocacy. Despite our best efforts and intentions, there will always be dissent. This opposition often emerges, not from a place of disagreement with the ideas themselves, but rather from a variety of complex factors—fear of change, differing priorities, or a simple lack of understanding.

It's a humbling experience to present what you believe to be a well-founded argument, only to encounter resistance. This has taught me the importance of empathy in communication. Instead of viewing opposition as a personal attack, I strive to see it as an opportunity for dialogue and growth. Engaging with critics can reveal blind spots in our approach and can even strengthen our resolve. Moreover, this experience has reinforced the need for resilience. Recognizing that change takes time can help in managing expectations and maintaining motivation in the face of challenges. I’ve learned that while passion drives initial efforts, sustained progress relies on patience and adaptability.

Through critical reflection, I understand that leading an organization like GSO is not solely about promoting ideas. It’s about fostering an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued. This journey has shaped my approach, encouraging a more collaborative path forward, even amidst disagreement. Sometimes, people's opinions are so entrenched that no amount of persuasive communication will sway them. Moreover, in some cases, modifying the message to fit the audience's unique requirements and preferences might not be practical. For instance, if the message goes against the core beliefs of the audience, then it is unlikely that they will be persuaded, no matter how well the message is presented. At this point of dilemma, servant leadership is applicable, and it wins when the servant leader becomes just like them.

When trying to lead the community for a social change in a church, family, or community, for example, the support groups of the most vulnerable segments groups that I mentioned earlier on how to start small businesses, or apply the change to their lifestyle to a healthy benefitting style of living for the better future sometimes, numerous opinions are so entrenched that no amount of persuasive communication will sway them. Moreover, in some cases, modifying the message to fit the audience's unique requirements and preferences might not be practical. For instance, if the message goes against the core beliefs of the audience, then it is unlikely that they will be persuaded, no matter how well the message is presented. At this point of dilemma, servant leadership is applicable, and it wins when the servant leader becomes just like them. 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 NIV…20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I am not under the law), to win those under the law. 21To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), to win those not having the law. 22To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

I believe that Canavesi A. and Minelli E. (2022) make a compelling argument for the effectiveness of servant leadership in reducing poverty. They reference several studies, such as the work by Hu and Liden (2011), which found that servant leadership is associated with increased job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior, both of which can contribute to improved outcomes in poverty reduction efforts. Additionally, Sendjaya et al. (2016) found that servant leadership is linked to increased trust and commitment among followers, further supporting the positive impact of this leadership style on Servant vs authoritative leadership and the impact on poverty reduction efforts.

The authors rightly emphasize the importance of understanding the motivations and communication styles of team members. However, I disagree with their implication that leaders should not adapt their leadership approach to suit individual preferences. While it is essential to create a culture of open communication and collaboration, effective leaders should also be adaptable and responsive to the needs of their team members. I firmly support the notion that servant leadership is pivotal for the growth and success of any organization. This leadership style prioritizes the needs of team members, fosters a supportive environment, and promotes inclusivity and mutual respect. Therefore, I respectfully disagree with the authors' stance and assert that servant leadership is a valuable approach that every leader should strive to embody.

**Essential Elements of Servant Leadership**

Uddin Shahin, an Army commander and general staff member at College Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, explores the characteristics of servant leadership in his article, "Characteristics of Servant Leadership Can Supplement Army Leadership Requirements" (2019). Shahin's thesis, completed at North Georgia College and State University, Dahlonega, GA, emphasizes that a leader's role involves decision-making on strategy, providing guidance, setting the direction, or acting as a facilitator to support the group in achieving common objectives. Servant leaders are frequently described as individuals who prioritize the personal and professional development needs of their followers above other considerations. The concept of "servant leadership" revolves around how leaders interact with their subordinates and the resulting outcomes. It entails being truthful with followers and treating them fairly, as it is common to assume that leadership is primarily about wielding power and control over others. However, servant leadership presents an alternative viewpoint on the essence of being a leader. One of the distinguishing characteristics and capabilities of servant leaders is their capacity to listen to their followers and foster enduring relationships with them. Servant leadership is proposed as an essential quality that all leaders should possess. While some may argue that servant leadership contradicts the principles of a hierarchical, leader-centric organization, such as the military or a corporation, the reality is that even within the hierarchical framework, there is a need for leaders to serve their profession. This is because the success of an organization hinges on the well-being and welfare of its members. Uddin continues that by putting their followers' needs and concerns above their own, servant leaders can create a high-functioning team that is motivated, engaged, and productive. Robert K. Greenleaf, the father of the term "servant leadership," developed the concept during his forty years of employment at AT&T. According to Greenleaf, a leader has to put the welfare and well-being of their followers first. Servant leaders listen to their needs and concerns and prioritize their growth and development. By doing so, servant leaders can create a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration where everyone feels valued and heard. An article from Ministry Magazine discusses how preaching or speaking can be used to persuade others. According to the article, the ancient Greeks regarded public speaking as an art form and believed that there were three ways to persuade people. My opinion is that if you want to achieve effective communication, you must incorporate logos, pathos, and ethos, according to Carlos on Transforming Ethos.

In the context of social change, It is critical to remember that personal behavior plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of the message. When it comes to bringing about social change, we should keep in mind that our behavior can have a big impact on how students of social change perceive and act upon our message. As change agents, we need to be aware of our actions, as they can greatly influence the reception and implementation of our message by the audience.

**Servant Leadership and Culture Collaboration**

The *'Handbook of Religion and Communication'* by John Wiley & Sons emphasizes the importance of considering cultural backgrounds in communication for servant leaders to bridge the gap between cultures, tribes, races, and social classes. By actively listening and seeking to understand, leaders can help ensure that no one is left out. Ignoring cultural differences can perpetuate stereotypes and deepen societal divisions. It's crucial to strive for understanding and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds to foster greater unity and build stronger communities. Regardless of our backgrounds or beliefs, we all play a part in bridging the gap between different groups. Embracing our differences, working towards unity, and cultivating a culture of excellence can empower and motivate everyone to achieve their goals. Let's embrace servant leadership and become the kind of leaders our followers deserve.

**Attributes of a Servant Leader**

Ricardia S. Lewis from San Diego, California, stated in May 2023 that according to Crippen and Willows (2019), there are several attributes that servant leaders are said to possess. These attributes are based on Greenleaf's 1970 essay and are crucial for the growth and development of servant leaders.

* The first attribute is listening. A servant leader needs to listen to what is and is not said meticulously. The leader strives to pinpoint and assist in interpreting other individuals' wills. Therefore, listening in this context is not just a strategy but also a perspective on understanding. Besides, servant-leaders heed their innate voices through constant rumination (Crippen & Willows, 2019). Ricardia S. Lewis continues that the characteristics that involve servant leadership are foresight, commitment, awareness, and society-building. Quoting Greenleaf (1970), the essence of servant leadership is drawn primarily from the desire to serve. Ideally, a servant leader is concerned first with the need to serve rather than the need to lead.
* The second attribute is empathy. Servant leaders need to be empathetic when listening to others. In the process, they need to illustrate acceptance and acknowledgment. Such a leader also implies the good intentions of others. The leader also communicates to others that their worth does not depend on performance but rather on who they are as individuals with inherent worth. Ricardia continues to quote Chan and So (2017), saying
* The third attribute is healing. Servant-leaders are aware that individuals may come with hurt of all kinds, especially emotional ones. This being the case, the leader has to get ahold of such individuals and bring alleviation and reinstatement. The leader should foster a healing environment where followers can work together to navigate life's challenges and mend relationships. Humans inherently seek connection, and feeling accepted for who you genuinely are brings a profound sense of validation and self-worth. In times of struggle, knowing that others support you and stand by your side creates a deep sense of safety. Recognizing that you are needed and have a purpose not only uplifts your spirit but also reinforces the understanding that you are truly valued. This supportive atmosphere promotes healing, allowing individuals to grow and thrive.

**Conclusion**

Servant leadership prioritizes the needs and perspectives of those being led over the leader's authority and power. It is based on kindness, empathy, and servanthood, which are critical in addressing poverty and other social issues. Servant leadership empowers individuals, families, and communities to overcome poverty and achieve their full potential. It is better suited to achieve long-term and sustainable social change than authoritative leadership. Therefore, adopting servant leadership as a model for leadership in the church can bring about necessary social change in individual lives, families, and society. Along the way, they had much to overcome, beginning with themselves. The result was complete loyalty and service to the master all the way. Mark 1:16–20; Matthew 4:18–22; Luke 5:2-11, Peter was fishing with his brother Andrew. Jesus famously said, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,” and Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed him. Look at the pattern here of Jesus calling these families to follow Him so He could make them fishers of men. Paul was an individual who had no family mentioned when he came to follow Jesus. Back to the point that Jesus wants to change individuals and families to change society.

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**Appendix**

**Biblical Examples: Servant leadership**

1. **Matthew 20:26–28**: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.
2. **John 13:12–17**: Jesus washes the disciples’ feet, demonstrating that true leadership involves serving others.
3. **Mark 10:42–45**: Jesus contrasts worldly rulers who “lord it over” others with His call for leaders to be servants.

**Biblical Examples: Authoritative Leadership**

This model is mostly and commonly observed in the Gentiles' leaders, as Jesus referenced.

1. **Matthew 20:25**: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."
2. **Mark 10:42**: Like Matthew, Jesus notes that Gentile rulers exercise authority over their people.

**Key Differences**

1. **Focus**: Servant leadership prioritizes the needs and growth of others, while authoritative leadership focuses on maintaining power and control.
2. **Approach**: Servant leaders lead by example and service, whereas authoritative leaders often command and control.
3. **Biblical Endorsement**: The Bible elevates servant leadership as the ideal, with Jesus as the ultimate model.