

Research Article

Role of Servant Leadership Style on Leadership Effectiveness: Moderating Role of Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

Servant leadership falls in transformational leadership style. In this style leaders' main purpose is to serve his people, customers, employees, societies and communities first. A good leader must be visionary, listen to problems of others and help them to solve it. Aim of the study is to investigate the moderating role of spirituality on relationship between servant leadership style and leadership effectiveness. In order to enhance leaders' effectiveness servant leadership along with spirituality i.e. ethics are taken as predictors. This study is quantitative in nature. Survey approach is used. Self-administered questionnaire is used to collect the data from respondents in universities. Primary cross-sectional data is collected from the respondents from public and private sector universities. Primary data is called first hand data which is collected for the first time. Cross-sectional means data collected at point of time. Non probability snow ball sampling technique is used for collecting the sample size. SPSS is used for reliability, validity, and testing of hypotheses. Reliability is checked through Cronbach alpha. Findings revealed that scales used in the study are reliable and valid. Correlations are found significant but moderating effect is not significant. It is recommended that religious practices can enhance the effectiveness of leadership if teachers present their selves as role model to students Academicians, managers can take benefit from the findings of the study. Practitioners must raise awareness about spirituality and servant leadership style in conferences, seminars, workshops and training sessions. The originality of the study lies in investigating the moderating role of spirituality on the relationship between servant leadership and leadership effectiveness,

KEYWORDS

Servant leadership Style, Spirituality, Leadership Effectiveness, SPSS, Authentic Self

1 | INTRODUCTION

Individual who considered their selves a servant of societies, communities and customers are called servant leadership. A servant leader takes care of their employees and supports them and tries to fulfill their needs to obtain better outcomes. This concept of servant leadership was first coined by Robert K Green Leaf in 1977 he introduced a book named “The Servant as Leader”. Managing individuals at workplace by one person such as a leader to get predetermined goals is called leadership effectiveness. Leaders’ effectiveness can be measured by the control of manager over his or her employees and number of achievements. In this process ethics and spirituality plays important role. Spirituality is the religious belief of a leader. Each religion teaches human being to do justice, keep equity among all, and practice ethics at workplace. Practicing religious things like prayers, reading religious books and faith in GOD describes workplace spirituality (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2004). In addition spirituality at workplace can be measured through organizational values, feelings of joy and kindness, empathy. Every leader must have a visionary personality. Leadership effectiveness can be measured in numerous ways such as by followers, subordinates, peer, colleagues or seniors while through achievements of goals, performance, profits etc. moreover, impact of a leader on followers also determined the effectiveness of a leader. Since early eighties many higher education institutions are implementing servant leadership style sin their organizations to successfully bring educational reforms in their HEIs. The traditional concept of one person leadership is not anymore considered as effective as it is now replaced by shared leadership and servant leadership styles. Educational reform can only be effective if teachers play their effective role in classrooms. Teachers should be allowed to participate in decision making process. This decision is not limited to classrooms but curriculum development, staff development, discipline etc. (Baig et al., 2021). Enhancing teachers’ leadership style not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also it brings reforms in education. According to leader-member exchange theory (LMX) encouraging universities teachers, instructors and spirituality and implement ethical and responsible practices could help higher educational institutions to bring educational reforms and enhance teachers’ effectiveness (Zhang, Wu, Liu, Ren & Lin, 2022). Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership, followership but to the best of researcher’s knowledge limited empirical evidence is available on effect of spirituality on servant leadership to enhance leadership effectiveness (Busari, 2011; Sendjaya, Sarros & Santora, 2008). The current study is going to fill this gap by offering novel contribution towards body of knowledge of servant leadership, spirituality and leadership effectiveness (Burbuto & Wheeler, 2004; Wong & Page, 2003). Furthermore moderating effect of spirituality is suggested by Freeman (2011). On the other hand well documented, reliable and valid instrument is crucial for the authenticity of the study so this study had also validated the instrument mentioned in methods sections to fill the methodological gaps. Future scholars, researchers and practitioners might get benefits from findings, policy makers’ managers, academicians may also obtain guidance. On basis of above discussion following research questions needs to be answered:

RQ₁: Does spirituality useful to enhance relationship between servant leadership and leadership effectiveness?

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW THEORETICAL BACKGROUND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

As discussed above servant leadership idea was first coined in 1970s but its dimensions are given by Sendjaya Sarros and Santora (2008). The following dimensions of servant leadership i.e. voluntary subordination, authentic self and covenantal relationship. In voluntary subordination servant leaders have unique and different characteristics like committed to serve the people, fulfill their responsibilities, duties and have sold position and strong influence on people. It is written in Bible “one who serves I am among those”. An individual is a servant leader who is a servant first (Greenleaf, 1977). It means that first duty of an individual is service rather than leading (Farling et al., 1999). As per Foster (1989) one who serves people purposefully is called voluntary subordination. Another facet of servant leadership is authentic self. It means to be “one’s true self”. What we really are portray ourselves (Autry, 2011). Accountability, credibility, integrity, shows authenticity of a leader. Collins (2001) conducted a study named good to great companies argued that those companies who become good to great are found to have humble leadership. This idea was taken from Bible verse “Jesus himself washed feet of his followers”. This is not considered as

weakness but a sense of humbleness and security (Ford, 1991). As per De Pree (1992) salary, wages, compensation, remuneration, working conditions perks and benefits all are contractual relationships they do not help any organization to attract talented employees. on the contrary covenantal relationships help peers to understand each other, share knowledge, expertise, commitment to goals, ideas and values. Having covenantal relationships insist workers to work independently and voluntarily. This type of leadership style adopted by leaders help them to nurture interactions which have roots in acceptance by employees (Argyris, 1998). As per Gandolfi and Stone (2018) extensive literature is available about leadership but still leadership especially servant leadership is misunderstood phenomenon. First one have to understand what leadership is then will be able to understand servant leadership. Later on study by Gandolfi, Stone and Deno (2017) emphasized the importance of servant leadership and argued that vast amount of literature is available on transformational, transactional leadership styles but very little is known about servant leadership. It was also explained that servant leadership (SL) was considered as Christian paradigm which is false and it is influenced by many religions and cultures globally. According to Gandolfi and Stone (2018) due to misunderstanding of the role between leader and servant there is confusion among scholars and researchers. Leader is people who with traits have to lead people with power and authority while servant is a person who sacrifices his own interest for the sake of his or her people society or community. Servant is weak and ineffective individual in a society. This paradigm gives rise to new style of leadership which is servant leadership. SL is not weak not ineffective. Servant leader does have enthusiasm. A servant leader is proactive and effective like any other leadership style. A servant leaders' first focus is their followers which makes them different from other traditional leadership styles (Mughal & Kamal, 2018). Another feature which makes servant leader different from other leadership is it first focuses on ability of followers then mission of the organization to achieve the objectives while other leadership styles primary focus is mission followed by followers. Servant leader believes in power sharing, giving opportunities to followers to grow and then follower help their leader to obtain organizational objectives and mission (Khattak, Abbas, & Kaleem, 2019; Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017).

2.1 | Leadership Effectiveness

Impact of an individual over employees to get the desired work done and achievements of goals and predetermined objectives with coordinated efforts and inputs (Northouse, 2001). A joint effort of a team to do task efficiently and effectively for attainment of goals is called leaders effectiveness (Yukl, 2002). Monitoring controlling and leading functions of management played by a leader to mold behavior of employees at workplace is called leadership effectiveness (Nelson & Quick, 2006). An individual who assess the leader is called leadership effectiveness (Nahavandi, 2005). According to Burn (1978) leadership effectiveness lies in the ability of a leader because leader has the authority to have direct influence. An effective leader can obtain what is expected from him or her. There is no specific method to measure the effectiveness of a leader. Every individual who become a leader has variation in principles and thinks and act differently. Due to this variety scholars have the opportunity to understand leaders and leadership effectiveness in depth. Different organizations have different hierarchical levels and their leaders apply different leadership styles. It depends on objectives and goals of an organization as well. Leadership is a process and leader is an individual who along with his followers, goals contribute individually and collectively. The existing study used aims, followers and groups as three attributes to measure leadership effectiveness. Spontaneous effects of leaders, followers' observations and attainment of long term goals all have significant impact on leadership effectiveness but limited evidence is available in literature. Followers play very important role in leadership process they are overlooked in the studies (Yukl, 2002). Aims relates to productivity, performance, commitment, goal effectiveness profits, and successful execution of duties (Locke, 1984; Likert, 1961; Yukl, 2002). Followers deals with active engagement independent critical thinking quality of work life, (Chen, Liu & Tjosvold, 2005; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Winter & Sarross, 2002). The contribution of an effective leader towards groups' quality its procedure for welfare of group, involving group in decision making process enhance its effectiveness (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 2002). It is essential to understand two main principles of leadership effectiveness. One is everyone has some capability to create some leadership relationships second leaders are made not born (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Further it was argued that some people are born with inborn characteristics and qualities. Some got their skills

cultivated by management to attain some organizational objectives.

2.2 | Spirituality

Spirituality comes from ethics and responsible. Spirituality in leadership gives rise to ethical and responsible leadership styles. Spirituality shed light on need for visionary leader; action of a leader speaks louder than words, empathy and respect given to others and level of ethics established. In spirituality two dimensions of human life are very important one is our actions has certain meanings and other is we have to accept our destiny (Fry, 2003). The most important worth cannot be measured in term of monetary benefit or joy. If as human being we acknowledge these values like faith in GOD, love affection and vision, spirituality also have values like trust, kindness, forgiveness, honesty, being thankful, etc. (Krieger & Hanson, 1999). In addition ethical influence honest while communicating, integrity are the dimensions given by Reave (2005). Likewise attitude and behavior of showing respect, fairly treatment in relationships at workplace, caring and sharing for & with others, listening to problems of others responsively, appreciating and acknowledging others, involving you in spiritual practices.

2.3 | Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

LMX provides better insights to investigate the relationship between servant leadership styles and leadership effectiveness with moderating effect of spirituality through lens of LMX. LMX offers dynamic exchange of relationship among followers and leaders which will have influence on other work related behaviors such as ethics, spirituality and effectiveness attitude and behavior. LMX falls under social exchange theory (SET). Interpersonal relationship is the main themes in both theories (Hong, Huang and Zhang, 2022).

2.4 | Hypotheses Development

Studies found significant relationship between servant leadership styles and leadership effectiveness. Serving societies and communities makes good image of an individual in eyes of those who have been served. It increases the acceptability of a person as a leader who solves the problems of students, colleagues, at HEIs as well as employees, societies, customers or communities (Bellibas et al., 2020). Servant leadership falls in transformational leadership who influences people especially followers through idealized influence of his or her behavior or attitude, motivate followers, inspire them through actions, individually listen to their issues and help them to solve. Counseling support, institutional support and welfare of employees also enhances the leadership effectiveness (Chandoli & Anastasiou, 2022). Relationship between servant leadership and effectiveness of leadership is reported in many studies (Gandolfi, & Stone, 2017). Further studies on servant leadership and leadership effectiveness conducted by Khattak, Abbas and Kaleem (2019) also found significant relationship among SL and leadership effectiveness. It was further claimed that servant leader empowers their followers help them to grow instead of focusing on mission it help followers to make progress and enhance their skills which in turn help their manager to achieve mission and goals (Mughal & Kamal, 2018). Many organizations are facing challenges in shape of losing their employees' spirituality. Some organizations considered their employees as assets so they invest on them like Google. Google believes that investing in them enhances spirituality which in return improves leadership effectiveness. Fortune Magazine published a report that one hundred top companies in west had applied servant leadership style. The reason why they apply servant leadership is that we are living in information era, employees have diverse skills and abilities, it is not good to lead employees with power and authoritative style. In addition spirituality increase motivation, performance, effectiveness, commitment, thus SL is a valuable technique to enhance spirituality at workplace and make the workplace more meaningful (Khan, Khan & Chaudhry, 2015).

H₁: Servant Leadership Style has significant relationship with leadership effectiveness

H₂: Servant Leadership Style has significant relationship with spirituality.

H₃: Spirituality has significant relationship with leadership effectiveness.

H₄: Spirituality moderates relationship between servant leadership and leadership effectiveness.

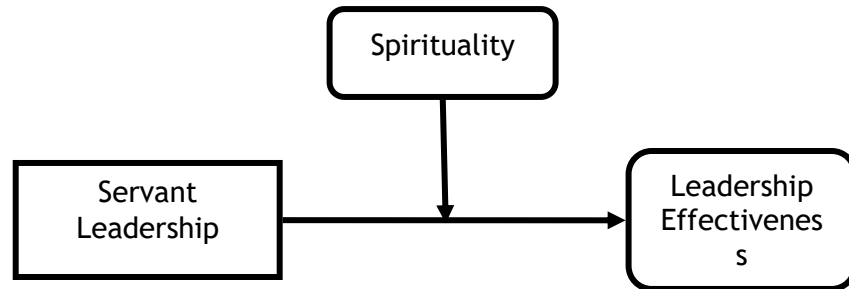


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

3 | RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 | Research Design

This study is quantitative in nature. Close ended questionnaire is used. Survey is conducted to collect primary data. Nature of data was cross-sectional. Primary data i.e. first hand data was collected. Population of the study was teaching staff from Higher Education institutions (HEIs) from southern district of KP state Pakistan. Total 200 teaching staff members was population of the study. Non probability snow ball technique is used to select the sample size using Krejcie and Morgan Table (1970). Out of 200; 135 completed questionnaires are received back and used in the analysis.

3.2 | Measures

Servant leadership questionnaire was adopted from Sendjaya et al., (2008). It is called SLB servant leadership behavior. Short form with 6 items is adopted for the current study. For spirituality questionnaire with 11 items is adopted from Page and Wong (2003) and leadership effectiveness questionnaire is developed and validated by Busari (2011) having twenty one items seven items for each construct.

3.3 | Data Analysis Techniques

SPSS is used to analyze the data. Reliability of scales is checked by using Cronbach Alpha while exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is run to test validity of scales. Moreover, mean standard deviations are also checked. For testing hypotheses correlation and hierarchical multiple regression is used. Range of Cronbach alpha is 0-1 and acceptable level is 0.7. Threshold for factor loadings is 0.4 and above those items having less than 0.4 loadings would be excluded from analysis.

4 | RESULTS

Data was collected from 135 respondents yielding the response rate of 67.5%. It was revealed from the results that most of the respondents belong to public sector i.e. 65.9% followed by private sector employees i.e. 34.1%. Respondents are also asked about gender Table 1 presents the findings that majority of respondents were male i.e. 77.77% while female respondents are 22.22%. Respondents are also asked about their designations. Most of informants are lecturers 40.7% followed by assistant professors 31.9%, 18.5% associate professors and 8.9% professors participated in the study. regarding the education of the respondents 54.8% respondents had higher education because in academics higher education is preferred for teaching staff followed by those who are holding doctoral degrees 25.2%, master degree holders are 15.6% and only 4.4% respondents had only graduate degree. For

length of service or experience respondents have recorded their views. It was revealed that majority of respondents have more than 20 years of experience i.e. 24.4%, followed by those having 6-10 years of experience (23.7%), than 1-5 years (19.3%) and then 16-20 years (17.8%) and 11-15 years (14.8%) respectively. For age it was noted down that 32.6% respondents belong to age group of 31-40 years, 26.7% belong to 41-50 years, 21.5% belong to 51-60 years and 16.3% belong to 21-30 years i.e. younger respondents only 3% employees have age more than 60 years normally private institutions keep employees more than age of 60 years. Table1.

Well documented reliable and valid scale is mandatory for the authenticity of the findings. The reliability and validity is checked through Cronbach Alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The acceptable level of Cronbach alpha is 0.7 while value of 0.6 indicates there is some issues with internal consistency of few items, value of 0.5 is poor and below that is not acceptable (Field, 2013). Table 2 presented the findings of reliability and validity analysis. According to Hair et al (2017) and Field (2013) factor loadings must be 0.4, those items having loadings less than 0.4 should be excluded from further analysis as these are considered as problematic items. All the items of servant leadership behavior scale (SLB) has met threshold i.e. >0.40, likewise items of spirituality also met the cut off level but two items of leadership effectiveness are excluded from analysis due to low factor loadings remaining all items of leadership effectiveness have loadings >0.40. Moreover, KMO value of SLB = 0.772, BTS=288.771 $p < 0.05$ level shows sampling adequacy, similarly spirituality KMO=0.871, BTS=491.873, $p < 0.05$ and for leadership effectiveness KMO=0.784, BTS=1011.821, $p < 0.05$. Moreover, Cronbach alpha of all variables >0.70 met the threshold it is assumed that scales presented in Table 2 are found reliable and valid.

Table 1
Demographic Information

Variables	N	Percentage
Public	89	65.9
Private	46	34.1
Male	105	77.77
Female	30	22.22
Lecturer	55	40.7
Assistant professor	43	31.9
Associate professor	25	18.5
Professor	12	8.9
Graduate	6	4.4
Master	21	15.6
M.S/MPhil	74	54.8
PHD	34	25.2
1-5 Years' Experience	26	19.3
6-10	32	23.7
11-15	20	14.8
16-20	24	17.8
20 Above	33	24.4
21-30 Years age	22	16.3
31-40	44	32.6
41-50	36	26.7
51-60	29	21.5
60 ABOVE	4	3.0

Table 2
Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variables	Items	Loadings	KMO	BTS	α
Servant Leadership Style	SLB1	0.988	0.772	288.771	0.825 (6 items)
	SLB2	0.990			
	SLB3	0.993			
	SLB4	0.991			
	SLB5	0.996			

	SLB6	0.998			
	SP1	0.762			
	SP2	0.697			
	SP3	0.696			
	SP4	0.671			
Spirituality	SP5	0.610	0.871	491.873	0.865
	SP6	0.785		P<0.05	(11Items)
	SP7	0.764			
	SP8	0.682			
	SP9	0.630			
	Aim1	0.743			
	Aim2	0.734			
	Aim3	0.705			
	Aim4	0.644			
	Aim5	0.602			
	Aim6	0.579			
	Aim7	0.578			
Leadership	Group1	0.526	0.784	1011.821	0.862
Effectiveness	Group2	0.442		P<0.05	(19Items)
	Group3	0.424			
	Group4	0.765			
	Group5	0.759			
	Group6	0.728			
	Group7	0.571			
	Follower1	0.802			
	Follower2	0.744			
	Follower3	0.589			
	Follower4	0.436			
	Follower5	0.418			

In order to test H₁₋₃ correlation analysis was run. It is found that servant leadership style and spirituality are significantly and positively related $r = 0.429, p < 0.05$ level. Increase in serving others could help spiritual behavior to increase more and individual become ethical and inclined towards religious beliefs. Moreover, servant leadership and leadership effectiveness also correlated $r = 0.468, p < 0.05$ and spirituality and leadership effectiveness also related with each other $r = 0.216, p < 0.05$ Table 3. The results indicated that increase in spirituality and servant leadership behavior could cause increase in effectiveness of a leader. Further analysis of results revealed that mean score of spirituality is higher among all other variables $M_{SP} = 3.99, S.D = 0.681$, followed by $M_{SLB} = 3.21, S.D = 0.855$, lowest mean score for $M_{LE} = 2.47, S.D = 0.616$ respectively. Highest mean score revealed that individuals have awareness about spirituality, its importance and significance, they are also aware about the religious beliefs and more inclined towards practicing religious things at workplace i.e. justice, equity, etc. lowest mean score indicates that through servant leadership and spirituality effectiveness of a leader could be improvised. Therefore, H₁₋₃ are accepted.

Table 3
Correlation Results

Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2	3
Servant Leader	3.21	0.855	1		
Spirituality	3.99	0.681	.429**	1	
Leader Effective	2.47	0.616	.468**	.216*	1

Hierarchical multiple regression is run to test the hypotheses H₄. Mean centering was used to control the co linearity diagnostic. For mean centering or standardizing of variables Aiken and West (1991) is used. Mean of the variables is deducted from predictor and moderator variables. There is no use to mean center the criterion variable and let it be in raw form because it bring no change in findings if criterion is mean centered. Therefore both variables are mean centered and after that product term also called interaction term is created to test final hypotheses. Predictor variable

servant leadership and spirituality are multiplied to create interaction term. Then variables are entered in regression equation as per theoretical consideration or importance.

$$\gamma = \beta_0 + \beta_1Xx + \beta_2X2 + \beta_3X1 * X2 + \epsilon$$

$$LE = \beta_0 + \beta_1SLB + \beta_2Spirituality + \beta_3SLB * SPirituality + \epsilon$$

Table 4
Moderation Analyses

D.V	I.V	R	R ²	ΔR ²	F	β	p
LE	Constant	0.4685	0.219	0.004	12.27		0.000
	SLB					0.334	0.000
	Spirituality					-0.0011	0.9919
	Interaction					-0.0229	0.7903

Moderation results in Table 4 shows that servant leadership has positive and significant impact on leadership effectiveness $\beta=0.334$, $p<0.05$ this implies that change in one percent in servant leadership style could bring 33.4% change in effectiveness of a leader. Moreover spirituality has insignificant and negative effect on leadership effectiveness $\beta= -0.0011$, $p>0.05$. Interaction term $\beta= -0.0229$ $p>0.05$. $R= 0.4685$, $R^2= 0.219$ shows variance upon leadership effectiveness 21.9%. Goodness of fit index $F=12.27$, $p<0.05$ also found significant change in $R^2=0.004$ indicates that only 0.4% chances that spirituality brings any change in leadership effectiveness. Though moderating effect is not significant but there is a possibility.

In order to have better understanding of the moderation analysis graph is plotted in SPSS. Spirituality is divided low moderate and high spirituality. Figure 2

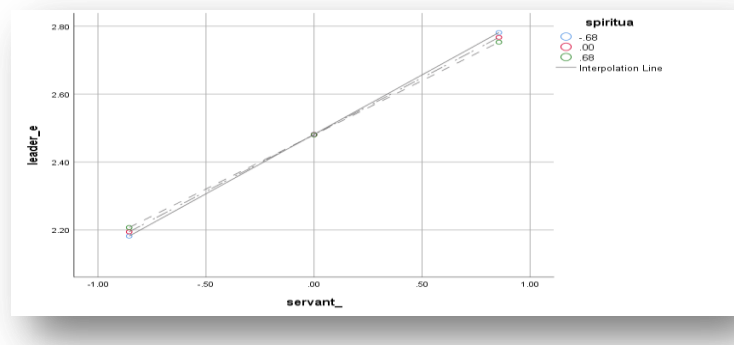


Figure 2 Moderation Graph

5 | DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to investigate the moderating role of spirituality on relationship between servant leadership style and leadership effectiveness. Basically leadership effectiveness is the main issue. In order to enhance effectiveness servant leadership and spirituality are used as strategy to boost effectiveness. Past studies (Busari Khan, Abdullah, Mughal, 2019) conducted on leadership pointed out different factors like trust, followership dimensions and organizational change to enhance effectiveness but spirituality is the new concept in leadership behavior which is related with ethics. Relationship between spirituality, servant leadership and leadership effectiveness are found to be positive, significant but weak. Though the strength of relationship is weak but it indicates that there is connection between these variables. The findings of these studies are in line with findings of Mughal & Kamal (2018). Thus $H_{1,3}$ is accepted. Further moderating role of spirituality is not found significant. This is not in line with findings of Khan et al., (2018). Thus H_4 is not substantiated. One of the valid reasons for not

substantiating the moderation hypotheses might be small sample size. As sample size was less it is recommended to use big sample size in future to have better understanding of subject matter. Past ideas that leaders are born are now rejected and stand false it has been replaced by new idea that leaders can be made by cultivating leadership skills in managers to obtain the organizational objectives. In past leaders used authoritative style, monarchs and tyrant. Their contribution was limited and used their power to dominate. Now in information age it is not good to dictate followers leaders have to change their style to servant leadership to become effective one. Servant leader and spirituality has a strong relation. Previously spirituality and religiosity were assumed to be a domestic concept now it is well established construct and variable and create meaning at workplace. Findings of this study are consistent with findings of Khan et al., (2015). Further the findings of this study also got support from Khattak et al., (2019) and in line with Mughal & Kamal (2018).

6 | CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that ethics, responsibility, spirituality can play its role to enhance leadership effectiveness. Employees can be motivated and stimulated through religious, ethical and spiritual practices. There must be equity and justice at workplace it shows the integrity and credibility of the leadership. Employees feels their selves a important member of the organizations. Moreover, followers are as important as leadership therefore the followers must be included in leadership studies. They can give true picture of the subject matter. Spirituality at HEIs should be encouraged and practiced to transfer ethical standards to future leaders i.e. students.

7 | PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Practitioners, managers, leaders can raise awareness about religious beliefs, in seminars, workshops and conferences. Academicians can motivate employees in classroom because they are the future leaders, religious beliefs could be practice by teachers so that they may motivate their students for future. Teachers should effective role as servant leader and participate in decision making, curriculum development, staff development to bring successful educational reform.

8 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Offering several contributions the current study has few limitations which need to be addressed. The sample size used is so small. It is recommended that big sample size can be used in future. The data collected is from single source which can create biasness. It is therefore recommended that qualitative or mix methods studies must be conducted in future. Other moderators like trust, and other leadership styles such as distributed leadership, dark side of leadership can be used by researchers in future. Mediators like organizational change and behavioral, affective and cognitive resistance could be used in future studies.

Conflict of Interest: Author declares there is no competing interest.

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