Transitioning to a Servant Leadership Culture Through the Teachings of Jesus

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ABSTRACT

The study of servant leadership has been extensively defined with a list of applicable attributes; however, has limited guidance on implementation of a servant leadership culture within an existing leadership culture. The research gap was addressed through socio-rhetorical analysis using social and cultural texture of the Matthew 20:20-28 pericope. The exegetical analysis revealed five emerging themes applicable to Jesus' methods of servant leadership implementation. These transitioning themes included: organizational order of change, everyone matters, new identity and values, implementation without compromise, and speak more about the new than the old.

Keywords: Leadership Development, Leadership Transition, Organizational Development, Servant Leadership

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I. INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership increases organizational commitment and follower satisfaction, improving organizational success (Allen *et al*., 2018; Charles, 2015). While the concept of service in leadership has roots in Christian Scriptures (English Standard Version, 2001/2016, John 13:1-20), the notion of servant leadership gained momentum with Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s (Bass *et al*., 2008; Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf's (1977) premise was "the servant-leader is servant first" (p. 27). The emergence of the servant leadership theory has expanded beyond 100 characteristics (Clark, 2018; Focht & Ponton, 2015), has been researched across cultures (Trompenaars & Voerman, 2010), and leadership levels (Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017). While servant leadership affects positive and healthy organizational change, more focus is on definition and attributes than organizational implementation. The problem is how do organizations implement a servant leadership culture throughout the organization.

A literature review was conducted using empirical research and historical data regarding the servant leadership theory. The data review can be categorized into five primary categories: origin, characteristics, benefits, change management, and future research. The research outlined the need for consistency in characteristics to strengthen messaging of the theory (Clark, 2018; Focht & Ponton, 2015). Key attributes of a servant leader include modesty, integrity, humility, altruism, empathy and healing, personal growth, fairness, and justice (Charles, 2015; Kumar, 2018; Savel & Munro, 2017). Benefits disclosed in the research consisted of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, empowerment, collaboration, and trust (Allen *et al*., 2018; Charles, 2015; Focht & Ponton, 2015). Trompenaars and Voerman (2010) revealed that different world regions are more adaptive to servant leadership, such as Asia and, more specifically, Japan. Servant leadership did not appear to be affected by the leadership level within an organization (Kumar, 2018). However, those benefits were only viewed from a follower perspective and not from the leader's perspective (Russell, 2016). Vision was viewed as a concern for Avolio and Yammarino (2008); however, a later study by Tompenaars and Voerman (2010) revealed that servant leaders could consider things in the long term. Marceus (2018) concluded that future research using a broader sample size would benefit servant leadership behaviors amongst mayors and governors. The review also revealed a deficiency in how organizations would implement a servant leadership culture. The research gap should be viewed from a biblical perspective because the Scriptures (ESV, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1-2, 2 Timothy 3:16-17) were designed to function in secular settings (Henson *et al*., 2020). Jesus' earthly ministry modeled servant leadership implementation across all cultural dynamics, demonstrating that change is possible.

The significance of this study is beneficial to the emergence of servant leadership and for changing an existing organizational leadership style to a servant leadership culture from a Judeo-Christian perspective. A focused approach to implementation can accelerate organizational commitment, health, and results (Moran & Brightman, 2001). Research reveals servant leadership is valuable to the organization. Scripture reveals that we will be successful and blessed when we do things God's way (ESV, 2001/2016, Matthew

19:26; John 10:10; John 15:7; James 2:20; Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

The purpose of this exegetical analysis is to explore how Jesus implemented a servant leadership culture from the passage of Scripture in Matthew 20:20-28. There was an existing hierarchical leadership structure in place; however, part of Jesus' mission was to institute His kingdom, which consisted of a servant leadership culture (ESV, 2001/2016, John 18:36). Since everything originated with God (ESV, 2001, John 1:3), there is significance in how He implemented a servant leadership culture. Many of the challenges that were present in that time are common challenges to any organizational change.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research framework consists of a historical data review of literature obtained from topic searches of peer-reviewed articles, books, and dissertations to enlarge the understanding of organizational servant leadership. The historical study includes the origin and expansion of the servant leadership theory. The review further proceeds with an exploration of servant leadership characteristics and benefits. This section concludes with a review of change management and a future research opportunity.

A. Origin and Expansion of Servant Leadership

The servant leadership theory was formed and publicly introduced by Robert Greenleaf over 40 years ago (Bass *et al*., 2008; Greenleaf *et al*., 1998; Wren, 2013). Although the study of leadership dates to the early 1900s, the need or opportunity for servant leadership was not recognized until the 1960s (Bass *et al*., 2008). Greenleaf identified a culture of severe hopelessness during a troubled era while working as a retired business executive with colleges and universities (Greenleaf *et al*., 1998). From this crisis, Greenleaf compiled three essays which were later published together in the book Servant Leader (Greenleaf *et al*., 1998). Greenleaf's leadership concept was simple but profound, "the servant-leader is servant first" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27). By focusing on others, the hopelessness of self would transition to a position of hope for others which would be reciprocal (Charles, 2015; Kumar, 2018; Searle & Barbuto, 2011). According to Spears (1995), servant leadership is the answer to an organizational crisis.

Since its initial publication, servant leadership has evolved considerably due to a significant increase in popularity, especially of late (Kiker *et al*., 2019; Gocen & Sen, 2021; Wilson, 2016). The progressive journey can be outlined in three phases; 1) conceptual development, 2) measurement phase, and 3) model development which is currently in process to understand the dynamics beyond superficial relationship outcomes (Eva *et al*., 2019; Mcquade *et al*., 2020). Other researchers such as Larry Spears have produced over two hundred articles about servant leadership (Dittmar, 2006). Spears (2020) said that servant leadership "continues to create a quiet revolution around the world" (p. 4). While some complement the vast expansion of servant leadership, others warn that secular servant leadership deviates from Christology and is a fragmented non-Christian model that is even infiltrating the Christian community (Niewold, 2007).

B. Characteristics and Benefits of Servant Leadership

Greenleaf believed that all could be servant leaders, whether born or taught (Dittmar, 2006). According to Davis' (2018) Myers-Briggs study, all personality types can be servant leaders. The study of servant leadership has identified over 100 characteristics, leading to some confusion (Focht & Ponton, 2015; Clark, 2018). However, through a Delphi study, Focht and Ponton (2015) identified 12 primary characteristics: valuing people, humility, listening, trust, caring, integrity, service, empowering, serving other's needs before their own, collaboration, love, unconditional love, and learning. The most predominant of these characteristics shared across the research was humility (Bass, *et al*., 2008; Greenleaf, 1977; Zorlu, 2019, Savel & Munro, 2017; Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017; Poon, 2006). A servant leader demonstrates leadership without needing the spotlight (Savel & Munro, 2017; Akuchie, 1993; Wilson, 2016). The characteristic of humility confronts the ego-driven leader and other leadership approaches that focus on personal ambitions and organizational goals at the expense of people (Bass *et al*, 2008; Briere, 2021).

Building from the foundation of service and humility, ethical behavior and moral development were consistently discussed across research as foundational characteristics of servant leadership. According to Bass *et al*. (2008), servant leaders encourage moral growth in followers. To promote this development, servant leaders must lead by example if they are going to influence and delegate successfully (West, 2014). Practicing the right ethical behaviors are critical to organizational success, as history shows that many leaders fall into moral and ethical failures due to issues going on in the heart (Serrano, 2014; Franco & Antunes, 2020). Servant leadership engages followers through ethical positions, which strengthens the moral climate of an organization (Eva *et al*., 2019).

Another primary characteristic of servant leadership is the growth and development of followers. Like transformational leadership, servant leadership seeks to help develop gifts, talents, and abilities (Wilson, 2016). A key goal of servant leadership is to grow people rather than organizations (Wilson, 2016). According to Russell (2016), outstanding leadership starts with a desire to serve others. To keep followers

on a growth and development path, servant leaders need to keep casting vision and speaking to purpose; otherwise, followers will lose focus and turn inward, forfeiting service (Maxwell, 2018; Bell *et al.*, 2011). Short and long-term visions are essential to the growth and development process. Avolio and Yammarino (2008) believe there is an opportunity to improve the characteristic of vision within servant leadership; however, Trompenaars and Voerman (2010) outline that servant leaders view the long-term and short-term decision process as vital to results. Wilson (2016) highlights critics of servant leadership struggle with the element of vision because it's hard to serve and lead at the same time, and there are times when a leader needs to pull away. Wilson (2016) also points to similar concerns around authority.

According to Williams *et al.* (2017), servant leaders engage their followers and are committed to their growth. "Organizations that offer people an opportunity to fully commit work tirelessly to train their people" (Sinek, 2014, p. 92). When followers get it wrong or fail, servant leaders keep hope alive in the transformation process. A hopeful development environment improves persistence and embraces success over failure (Searle & Barbuto, 2011). While focused on follower development, servant leaders cannot lose sight of the development of other leaders. Authentic servant leadership is not a one-sided sacrifice on the part of the servant leader; all should benefit and grow in an encouraging environment (Russell, 2016). Although servant leaders are committed to follower growth and development, they must recognize that some do not embrace servant leaders (Lacroix *et al.*, 2017). However, resistance should be met with humility while keeping hope alive and indirectly influencing the opposition from afar.

Servant leadership introduces several benefits to an organization. According to Song and Ferch (2020), meeting the needs of others and bringing them to a place of wholeness is one of the core tenets of servant leadership. When followers are loved, there are higher satisfaction, collaboration, and teamwork (Buck, 2019). Follower satisfaction influences organizational commitment, determining organizational success (Charles, 2015; Allen *et al.*, 2018). Other benefits of servant leadership include collaborative environments of trust and innovation, countering traditional siloed cultures that hinder change (Savel & Munro, 2017; Kim, 2020; Sloan *et al.*, 2020). The fearless organization is more innovative, takes more significant risks, reduces catastrophic failures, and instills a culture of active listening and speaking (Edmondson, 2018). Servant leaders remove crippling fear from the organization by demonstrating their care and concern for the individual and the organization.

C. Change Management

Leaders champion change at the individual and organizational levels to achieve visions, missions, strategies, and goals. Organizational change and transformation are a journey that can be ruined overnight, leaving people hurt and broken if the change management approach does not properly listen to and value the people (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012). According to Carollo (2011), active listening can impact people individually and collectively while reaching beyond organizations, regions, and cultures because it brings caring and compassion to the follower. Open dialogue helps leaders and followers get to the root of issues that provide trusted and proper corrective actions (Gilbert *et al.*, 2019; Wilson, 2011). Joint ownership of the actions leads to shared ownership of the vision and ultimately healthier and lasting change across the organization. Lack of buy-in is typically the reason for failed change (Belasco, 2012). The need for changing cultures is not going away, so leaders must carefully navigate change to avoid devasting impacts on families, businesses, and communities (Kotter, 2012).

D. Future Research

A review of historical data presented the need for more extensive sampling when exploring servant leadership in a top-down environment (Mareus, 2018). Additionally, one study called for more excellent dialogue about the cycle of benefit from actual leaders (Russell, 2016). The historical data review also revealed a research gap on implementing a servant leadership culture within an established culture. To contribute to the field of servant leadership, the following question will be researched to help close the literature gap: What methods of servant leadership implementation can be discovered from Jesus in Matthew 20:20-28?

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The socio-rhetorical analysis conducted to explore methods of servant leadership implementation by Jesus Christ in this pericope used social and cultural texture. This texture addresses the background of cultural and societal in the text and the front of the text in how it speaks to the reader (Henson *et al.*, 2020). Texts are not one-dimensional and should be explored for a complete examination (Henson *et al.*, 2020). The historical-cultural and contextual analysis study brings degrees of certainty to the interpretation of text (Henson *et al.*, 2020). However, while socio-rhetorical analysis challenges biases, it's equally important to come to grips with the idea that no complete interpretation of a text is humanly possible (Robbins, 1996). According to Henson *et al.* (2020), this texture consists of specific social topics, common social and cultural topics, and final cultural categories.

Although there are three aspects to this texture, it still consists of many elements within each. For instance, the specific social topics aspect is comprised of seven different classifications; conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, gnostic-manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian (Henson *et al.*, 2020). While consisting of seven, this pericope primarily includes the utopian classification with shades of a reformist classification. The utopian classification focuses on changing world systems as the systems are the force of evil more so than the people (Henson *et al.*, 2020). The common social and cultural topics aspect consists of six elements (a) honor, guilt, and rights cultures, (b) dyadic agreements, (c) challenge-response (riposte), (d) economic exchange systems, (e) purity codes, and (f) Old Testament law (Henson *et al.*, 2020). Although six elements, only three are identified for this pericope: honor, guilt, and rights cultures, dyadic agreements, challenge-response (riposte), and economic exchange. The final of the three aspects, final cultural categories, includes five elements that speak to different cultural locations; dominant culture rhetoric, subculture rhetoric, counterculture rhetoric, contra cultural rhetoric, and liminal rhetoric (Henson *et al.*, 2020). Each of the five elements are included within the pericope of Matthew 20:20-28.

IV. RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of socio-rhetorical analysis aims to understand, interpret, and analyze Scripture (*Henson et al.*, 2020). In this pericope, socio-rhetorical analysis through social and cultural texture draws out relevant information concerning Jesus' leadership and how He implemented a new change to an established culture. This section focuses on the pertinent details found in the three aspects (Specific Social Topics, Common Social and Cultural Topics, Final Cultural Topics) of social and cultural texture. A summary of the analysis will conclude with emerging themes from the research.

A. Specific Social Topics

There are two accounts of utopian specific social topics in this pericope. The first account is recorded in Matthew 20:25, where the author records Jesus speaking of the Gentile world system of leading by authority. The second account is found in Matthew 20:26-28 when the writer pens Jesus introducing a new leadership structure of leading by serving. Just as the fundamental message of salvation ties to the laying down of life (ESV, Matthew 20:28; Hebrews 10:1-14), this new leadership system called for the giving away of self to serve others (ESV, Matthew 20:26-27; John 15:13; Matthew 16:15; Galatians 6:2). Although not a primary topic, there are shades of the reformist classification of bringing social consciousness to the world without being life the world (Henson *et al.*, 2020). Matthew knew through the teachings of Jesus that His ways were contrary to the world system of the day and that He desired for His followers to be separate from it and witnesses of Him to the world. Although Jesus was teaching the ways of the kingdom, He was pulling forward the way of separation dating back to the Old Testament amongst God's people.

B. Common Social and Cultural Topics

Common social and cultural topics look to the people's overall environment in that day's world within the pericope (Henson *et al.*, 2020). Cultural honor is found in three verses of Matthew 20:20-28 (20, 21, and 23). The account in verse 20 refers to the two sons of Zebedee, verse 21 highlights honor being shown to Jesus as the one responsible for kingdom placement, and in verse 23, Jesus directs placement to His father. While there are accounts of cultural honor, this pericope opens in Matthew 20:20 with cultural guilt by not giving a name to the mother and the mother being the only one on her knees. Dishonor of the female was foundational to first-century culture (DeSilva, 2018). Although discredited by society, Jesus listened to her request.

The dyadic agreement presented in this pericope is that of Jesus explaining the reversal of man sitting in a place of control and authority to man kneeling and serving through humility (ESV, Matthew 20:25-28). Service would be their new identity, not hierarchical positional placement. This passage of Scripture opens with the quest for common cultural identity, but Jesus would introduce the new identity of His leaders. Perhaps the reason James and John were so bold to seek places of position and authority was because they were the worldliest or those most caught up with identity. The ten were not upset because James and John were not humble; they were upset because they beat them to Jesus. There had already been a prior argument over who would be the greatest in Matthew 18:1. Wilkins (2003) also suggests their disappointment was trying to leverage the family relationship to maneuver around them. However, cultural analysis indicates that at some point, they all would have asked for these positions.

As for the economic exchange system, this pericope supports the notation that the disciples could serve under this new kingdom construct and be economically stable. This aligns with the first-century cultural world of a limited goods agrarian system. According to Henson *et al.* (2020), "the system was set up for people to gain and lose honor not money" (p. 146). Wealth would not be the differentiator in this prideful, self-absorbed society; it would be positional placement before others. Perhaps this is why Jesus would later say, "They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes

long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues" (ESV, Matthew 23:5-6). Although the first century bestowed value to rule by power, Jesus introduced a new value structure of serving to lead.

C. Final Cultural Categories

The final results of the social and cultural texture consist of the five final cultural categories. The dominant culture rhetoric described in this pericope is the Gentile system. The subculture rhetoric consists of James and John adding Jesus' kingdom within the construct of the Gentile system; to sit on the right and left hand. Counterculture rhetoric consists of Jesus instructing of leading through serving instead of sitting to be served. The contra cultural rhetoric is represented when the ten disciples were angry toward the two brothers behaving in a dominant and subculture means. Jesus' new leadership construct would place the disciples in a liminal culture, those on the fringes of society, creating some fear and chaos regarding the transition because it was so different from the cultural norms.

D. Summary of Emerging Themes

The summary of data analysis yielded five themes regarding Jesus' methods of implementing a new leadership era. The first emerging theme is that leaders of change should address the existing organizational behavioral model before presenting the new (ESV, Matthew 20:21, 26-27). A second theme is that Jesus listens to those who have been discredited; everyone has a voice (ESV, Matthew 20:21). The third theme is that a new organizational structure comes with a new identity and values, lording to serving (ESV, Matthew 20:25-26). The fourth emerging theme is that leaders must push for total organizational change as mixing the existing with the new will dimmish purpose and brand (ESV, Matthew 20:21-26). The fifth and final theme from the data analysis is that Jesus spent three times as much time talking about the new servant leadership model as he did the existing model (ESV, Matthew 20:25-28).

V. DISCUSSION

The discussion section corroborates the data collected in the socio-rhetorical analysis with the information discovered in the literature review. The discussion seeks to address the research question, what methods of servant leadership implementation can be discovered from Jesus in Matthew 20:20-28? With five emerging leadership themes from Jesus' teachings in this pericope, there appears to be insight to the field of servant leadership. While servant leadership originated with God (King James Bible, 1769/2008, Proverbs 16:4; Colossians 1:16), the theory gained significant recognition and adoption in the 1970s through the work of Robert Greenleaf (Bass *et al.*, 2008).

A. Servant Leadership – Organizational Order of Change

In this pericope, Jesus, the founding servant leader, presents a method for implementing servant leadership. He does not start with what He wants to do; instead, He lets the disciples come to Him with questions. Their questions are derived from the existing organizational mindset, to which He listens. After presenting their current system, Jesus introduces a transition to the new organizational leadership model (ESV, Matthew 20:25-28). So, the order is to listen to the existing culture from those you are trying to lead before introducing the new construct. Research would agree with this approach because followers feel more valued and gain a sense of control when they are first asked questions (Maxwell, 2020). This method also concurs with Greenleaf's (1977) position that the servant-leader seeks first to be a servant. By serving, if Jesus could connect with His disciples, He would increase organizational commitment, collaboration, trust, and empowerment (Allen *et al.*, 2018). Although this pericope projects a straightforward reception, research reveals that some cultures adopt a servant leadership culture more readily than others (Trompenaars & Voerman, 2010). While organizational change is difficult, one of the benefits of the servant leadership model is that its healthy during an organizational crisis (Spears, 1995).

B. Servant Leadership – Everyone Matters

Jesus demonstrates inclusiveness of the shammed in His approach to implementation of a servant leadership model (ESV, Matthew 20:20-21). He shows that everyone's voice is valuable, but also their presence. Although women were not included during the first century, Jesus made sure to sum this up when He said being a servant and slave to others was the mark of greatness (ESV, Matthew 20:26-27). Jesus' inclusiveness approach aligns with research that says servant leadership confronts the ego-driven leader and other leadership approaches that focus on personal ambitions and organizational goals at the expense of the people (Bass *et al.*, 2008; Briere, 2021). By focusing on others, a greater sense of hope would infuse the overall implementation of change which improves persistence and embraces success over failure (Charles, 2015; Seaarle & Barbuto, 2011). One of the most predominant characteristics of servant leadership is humility (Zorlu, 2019), and Jesus leads by example here in humbling Himself to do something

unacceptable in society by including the mother. When servant leadership engages followers through ethical positions, the moral climate of the organization is strengthened (Eva *et al.*, 2019). Jesus' method of inclusiveness modeled the wholeness of the person and the organization in implementing a servant leadership culture.

C. Servant Leadership – New Identity and Values Servant Leadership – Implementation Without Compromise

When it comes to implementing a new leadership culture, Jesus introduced a new identity and set of values (ESV, Matthew 20:25-28). Within this newness, He gives them new titles along with His values. You will no longer be lords but servants and slaves (ESV, Matthew 20:25-27). You will not power over people, but you will serve them by laying down your life (ESV, Matthew 20:26-28). Jesus' example demonstrates that when servant leaders are ready to implement a servant leadership culture, they need to communicate what the new looks like and sounds like. Vision is vital to transformation and the continued path of growth and development (Maxwell, 2018). Although critics argue that servant leadership struggles with being visionary because they believe there is a conflict between casting vision and serving from the bottom (Avolio & Yammarino, 2008; Wilson, 2016), others strongly outline that servant leaders understand short- and long-term vision as vital to results (Trompenaars & Voerman, 2010). While vision provides the perspective of a new identity, the identity must be held together by a set of values. According to Russell (2001), values are the bedrock of servant leadership. Values define the organizational construct, which ultimately sets it apart to fulfill a specific purpose (Russell, 2001). Through Jesus' servant leadership actions of engaging His followers with active listening and speaking, He created a fearless opportunity within the organization to accept a new identity and values system (Williams *et al.*, 2017, Edmondson, 2018).

D. Servant Leadership – Implementation Without Compromise

Jesus' implementation of a servant leadership construct consisted of full implementation without mixing with the current leadership model (ESV, Matthew 20:25-26). Jesus reveals that servant leadership is not a blended leadership approach but one that stands unique and alone. His idea of a servant leadership culture did not consist of some servants, some slaves, and some lords; it held true to His construct of servant leadership. Niewold (2007) raised the concern of deviating from biblical servant leadership, as secular servant leadership has only adopted some of the characteristics. Unfortunately, the secular model has even migrated into Christian circles causing drift from a foundational biblical model (Niewold, 2007). The very thing that Jesus was implementing was counterculture, it could not be compromised, or it would lose its identity and ultimate change for people, totally diminishing the expression of servant leadership through Jesus Christ. His commitment to servant leadership would bring modesty, integrity, humility, altruism, empathy, healing, personal growth, fairness, and justice to followers (Charles, 2015; Kumar, 2018; Savel & Munro, 2017). Although collaboration is a characteristic of servant leadership (Focht & Ponton, 2015), Jesus shows that collaboration to the point of mixing cultures at the cost of ceding values is a non-starter for implementing a servant leadership organization effectively. Servant leaders are not afraid to counter traditional cultures that hinder change (Sloan *et al.*, 2020).

E. Servant Leadership – Speak More About the New than the Old

In implementing a servant leadership culture, Jesus speaks to the new organizational structure three times as much as He does the old (ESV, Matthew 20:25-28). Spending too much time talking about a negative, prideful, and controlled environment can begin to dimmish hope, energy, and excitement to make a change. Fearful organizations do not act even when they know it's the right thing to do (Edmondson, 2018). Jesus knew these disciples were committed to following Him (ESV, Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:2-11); therefore, He could quickly proceed to the transformation journey (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012). When leaders know that followers are bought in, they should promptly get to the change to avoid overthinking and doubt. The transformation journey can be dangerous for an organization if the leader/s does not know when and how to act (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012). Leaders should not abuse trust, but they most certainly should use it to move the organization in the right direction. If people spend too much time looking back, they will lose vision and revert to their old ways (ESV, Exodus 14:10-12, 16:3; Numbers 14:4). When people are bought in, failed change is negated (Belasco, 2012). Servant leaders communicate, and Jesus communicated about the new leadership structure three times as much as He did the old in implementing a servant leadership culture (Williams *et al.*, 2017).

VI. CONCLUSION

A study of the servant leadership theory revealed positive and healthy effects toward organizational change, with the extensive discovery of definition and attributes, but was limited in implementing a servant leadership culture within an organization. To help close the research gap, an exegetical analysis using social and cultural texture was applied to the pericope of Matthew 20:20-28. The significance of the study focused on the elements of changing an existing organizational leadership style to a servant leadership culture from a Judeo-Christian perspective. The socio-rhetorical analysis focused on identifying methods that Jesus used in implementing servant leadership within this pericope. Analysis revealed five emerging themes applicable to Jesus' methods of servant leadership implementation. These methods were then corroborated with information contained within the literature review to appreciate the overall alignment to the servant leadership theory. The five methods of servant leadership implementation discovered from Matthew 20:20-28 include: organizational order of change, everyone matters, new identity and values, implementation without compromise, and speak more about the new than the old. While these methods are beneficial to the implementation of a servant leadership culture, the study is limited in that it only addresses one pericope within Holy Script regarding the teachings of Jesus Christ. Future research of other Scripture passages could validate or identify additional methods through a mixed application approach.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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