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The Examination of Servant Leadership Style on Employee Empowerment and Employee Resistance

Michael J. Ojeda
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Michael J. Ojeda

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

The Examination of Servant Leadership Style on Employee Empowerment and Employee
Resistance

by

Michael J. Ojeda

MBA, Bethel University, 2009

BS, Bethel College, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

September 2022

Abstract

There is little known about the impact of servant leadership style on organizations and limited research examining social exchange theory related to employees' perceptions. The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance within small businesses. The general management problem is employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance that these perceptions could decrease employee engagement in small businesses. Because influencing employees' perceptions could lead to positive work outcomes and attitudes, this study addressed the relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance. The Employee Empowerment Scale, Resistance to Change Scale, and Servant Leadership Scale were used to collect data from 176 respondents. The data analysis technique involved linear regression using ANOVA. A significant relationship existed among the variables and a positive relationship existed between servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of empowerment. Servant leadership style increased employee resistance which could have a negative impact on the organization. A recommendation is to survey managers in addition to frontline employees. The positive social change impact of the study could influence leaders to empower employees to become more engaged, positively impacting organizational goals and profitability.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to God without whom I could not have done this. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my sons Archie and Michael for always helping me out while I spent my time working this. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my two best friends Dr. Dorothy Black and Dr. Rose Bailey for always encouraging me to move forward and not quit, and for all their advice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There is little known about the impact that different leadership styles by managers have on organizations (Fiaz et al., 2017). Generally, there is little known concerning employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in the private sector such as dance studios, martial arts studios, insurance agencies, consulting firms, barbershops, mechanical shops, and lawn services. In this research study, the definition of small businesses is organizations with less than 50 employees. Thacker et al. (2019) established that upper management attempts to equip leaders with leadership skills that primarily have an emphasis on employees (Thacker et al., 2019). For example, servant leaders focus on employees and executive leadership before their own needs. Servant leaders want their employees to mature into healthier and more autonomous employees (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019). But generally, there is little known concerning employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance in the private sector such as dance studios, martial arts studios, insurance agencies, consulting firms, barbershops, mechanical shops, and lawn services. The employee empowerment process could positively impact different leadership styles (Murari & Kripa, 2012).

Martin (2014) stated employee empowerment and servant leadership style have been researched and linked to have positive effects on the overall organization. Murari and Kripa (2012) believed that the employee empowerment process could positively impact different leadership styles. This positive impact can potentially create

competitiveness between the employees in the organization. Montgomery and Arensdorf (2012) noted that ineffective leadership within an organization could cause problems and discontinuity of operations.

Chapter 1 of this research study includes a thorough background of the research study, the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, and nature of the study. This chapter also includes the definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations. Chapter 1 also includes a discussion of the significance of the study.

Background of the Study

An organization is more successful when employees have work engagement and organizational commitment. For organizations to be successful, employees must be empowered (Baird et al., 2018; Chinomona et al., 2017). Ineffective leadership within an organization could cause problems and impede operations (Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). Thus, organizational leaders must learn to support their employees to remain competitive (Lysova et al., 2015). Employee empowerment can create a positive influence between management and employees.

Different leadership styles can impact the employee empowerment process and potentially create competitiveness among the employees within the organization (Murari & Kripa, 2012). For example, servant leadership style includes changing the follower, meaning that personal values, self-concepts, the elevation of their needs, and personal aspirations are considered by the leader (Hu et al., 2013). The servant leader builds positive relationships with employees by offering engagement, trust, and employee

involvement in the decision-making process (Bekirogullari, 2019). Servant leadership designs high-performing organizations by creating ethical, relational, and simplified employee procedures (Coetzer et al., 2017). Servant leadership style is a factor that pertains to employee job roles (Panaccio et al., 2015). Further, a key concept of servant leadership is employee empowerment (Russell & Stone, 2002). Servant leadership and employee empowerment have been linked by researchers who believe empowerment can positively affect the organization (Martin, 2014). Murari and Kripa (2012) offered that different leadership styles can impact the employee empowerment process and potentially create competitiveness among the employees within the organization. Montgomery and Arensdorf (2012) noted that ineffective leadership within an organization could cause problems and impede operations.

Organizational leaders must also adapt and create successful change initiatives to remain competitive (Chopra & Chopra, 2012). However, sometimes these initiatives fail because employees tend to resist these change initiatives (Aslam et al., 2016; Fuchs & Prouska, 2014). Possible causes of employee resistance include the organization's immaturity, traditions, ideologies, weak leadership, lack of perceived benefits, lack of technical skill, lack of communication, and fear of losing power. This resistance can have a negative impact on the organization such as loss of profit (Kulkarni, 2016). Leaders and managers must reevaluate employee resistance to organizational change to support employees and organizational goals (Mathews & Linski, 2016; see also Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

Organizational leaders must understand that having the correct leader is a critical factor for a successful employee empowerment program. Leaders should embrace the employee empowerment process and discard the belief that employee empowerment is nothing more than a theory. Positive employee engagement can potentially create a motivated employee, thus achieving the organization's overall goals (Gupta & Kumar, 2013). Some leaders do not apply the employee empowerment process in organizations, providing a rationale for the workforce does not need to participate in an employee empowerment program to be successful (Kulakowska et al., 2010). But previous research has not examined how leaders influence followers and how servant leadership style affects that relationship (Newman et al., 2017). This gap in this literature is addressed by the current study. This research study incorporated social exchange theory and the impact it had on employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee.

Problem Statement

Employee resistance can negatively impact small businesses, resulting in the loss of profit (Kulkarni, 2016). One significant threat to small businesses is disengaged employees (Kelleher, 2011). Approximately 71% of employees in small businesses within North America are disengaged (Kerns, 2014; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2015), which affects small businesses' profitability (Hultman, 2020; Vitt, 2014). According to Tennessee smart start small business guide, (n.d.), small businesses make up the majority of all the companies in the state of Tennessee and are the backbone of the

economy. The general management problem is employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance could decrease employee engagement in small businesses in the United States (Kulkarni, 2016; Newman et al., 2017). The specific management problem is that if there is a negative employee perception of servant leadership style, this could negatively impact employees' perception of employee empowerment and create employee resistance to leadership, causing a negative effect on organizational performance within small businesses in Tennessee. Three survey instruments were used in this quantitative correlational study to determine if a relationship existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. This research study incorporated social exchange theory and the impact it had on employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, and its impact on employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. The independent variable was employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, and the dependent variables were employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The study determined whether there was a relationship between

these variables. The participants for this research were employees from small businesses in Tennessee. In this research study, the definition of small businesses is organizations with fewer than 50 employees. The independent variable is defined as employees' perceptions of servant leadership style. The dependent variables are defined as employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Question 1: What relationship exists between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment?

H₀₁: There is not a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment.

H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment.

Question 2: What relationship exists between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance?

H₀₂: There is not a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

H₁₂: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Theoretical Foundation

The primary theory for this research study was social exchange theory. First developed by Homans in 1958 (Frieder, 2018) and expanded on by Blau (1964), social

exchange theory is the basis for understanding the role that managers and organizations play in creating employees' perceptions and obligations that can lead to positive work outcomes and work attitudes. Social exchange theory is based on the foundation that individuals tend to value putting others' needs above their own needs. As a result, individuals will more likely invest their time building and restoring relationships without instant personal gain. Social exchange theory includes a set of social and economic exchanges within the organization between leaders and employees. These exchanges can be long-or short-term exchanges between leaders and employees. Social exchange theory is the foundation for the obligation of employees to reciprocate with positive work attitudes (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). As a result, employees tend to do what benefits them at a given point and time, weighing the cost versus benefits (Harden et al., 2018). Transactions are a sequence of interdependent resource exchanges and affect the development of exchange relationships, which affect future transactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Liao et al., 2019). Social exchange theory was used to examine why and under what conditions employees' perceptions of servant leadership style were related to employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in a small business with fewer than 50 employees.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. Quantitative research is

appropriate when attempting to examine relationships between two variables, in which a hypothesis will be tested (Patton, 2015). To investigate the variable employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, the Servant Leadership Scale was used to measure emotional healing, value for the employee, employee growth and success, and putting employees first. To investigate the variable employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, the Employee Empowerment Scale was used to measure job satisfaction, opportunities for professional growth, and job training. To investigate the variable employees' perceptions of employee resistance, the Resistance to Change Scale was used to measure routine-seeking, emotional-reaction, short-term-focus, and cognitive-rigidity. The survey instruments for this study came from Walden University's Psyc TESTS database. The survey instruments did not require written permission from the instrument authors as long as they were used for educational purposes.

The participants for this study were members of SurveyMonkey. Utilizing a simple linear regression statistical test, I used IBM SPSS software to analyze the data. The results from this study could create the new groundwork for future quantitative researchers to continue to investigate employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Definitions

This section includes the definition of terms related to this research study.

Employee empowerment: Employee empowerment is a process of enhancing employees' feelings of self-efficacy and the removal of powerlessness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Employee perceptions: Defined as the employees' interpretation of management control (Moilanen & Ikäheimo, 2019).

Employee resistance: Defined as an opposing force. This opposing force works together with competing effects of various strengths to reach the consolidation of new balance after any disruption in the system (Lewin, 1947).

Servant leadership style: Servant leadership proposes that an effective leader will choose to lead by serving their followers rather than exercising power over their followers (Greenleaf, 1977).

Social exchange theory: A social exchange relationship that is an ongoing relationship until it is no longer beneficial to one or both of the parties involved (Blau, 1964).

Assumptions

The first assumption was that social exchange theory could have an impact on servant leadership style in small businesses in Tennessee. The second assumption was that the understanding of servant leadership style could help to positively improve an employees' perceptions of servant leadership style within small businesses in Tennessee. The third assumption was that the knowledge of servant leadership style could help to reduce the negative implications of employees' perceptions of employee resistance in small businesses in Tennessee. The fourth assumption was that not all the survey

participants might be honest when answering the survey questions. The fifth assumption was that the participants would have the level of education required to understand the survey questions. The final assumption was organizations that apply social exchange theory in combination with employees' perceptions of servant leadership style could have a potential positive or negative impact on employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and could have a potential positive or negative impact on employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The assumptions in this study were adopted because, in previous research, social exchange theory had not been researched in combination with the following variables: employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Previous research has been conducted on the individual variables but not together and not in combination with social exchange theory, employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Al-Dmour et al. (2019), used social exchange theory as their theoretical framework; however, their study focused on the impact of work empowerment and employee performance. According to Nawaz et al. (2014), social exchange theory can create a social exchange relationship that can positively increase organizational performance; however, they only considered training, empowerment and did not include employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study covered employees employed in small businesses in Tennessee. The three scales utilized in this study were the Employee Empowerment Scale, the Resistance to Change Scale, and the Servant Leadership Scale. The theoretical framework that guided this study was based on social exchange theory. Social exchange theory is the basis for understanding the role that managers and organizations play in creating employee perceptions and obligations that can possibly lead to positive work outcomes and work attitudes (Blau, 1964).

The first delimitation is that this study did not include managers. The managers were excluded from the research because the focus of this research study was to gain insight from the employees' perceptions. By garnering this information from frontline employees, the results could help managers of small businesses to make better organizational decisions, increase the communication process between managers and employees, and create new strategies that improve employee empowerment. An additional result may be increased employee performance, which could increase organizational productivity, performance, and profitability.

Social exchange theory is based on the foundation that individuals tend to value putting others' needs above their own needs (Greenleaf, 1977). As a result, individuals are likely to invest time in building and restoring relationships without instant personal gain. Greenleaf (1977) defined the principles of servant leadership, which are listening and understanding, acceptance and empathy, serving and healing, awareness and

perception, persuasion, community and stewardship, foresight, and conceptualizing that result in effective organizational leadership.

The rationale for utilizing social exchange theory over servant leadership theory is that employees tend to mimic their leaders. Under servant leadership theory, leaders inspire their employees. Social exchange theory is an exchange between managers and employees; these exchanges can include loyalty, communication, and trust.

Limitations

The fees to SurveyMonkey could be a potential barrier to the data collection process. There is a possibility that some races may perceive the evaluation of leadership style as a form of disrespect towards management. Another possible limitation may be the limited perspective of employees within the millennial category due to their limited employment experiences. Another limitation is that participants may be unemployed due to the Covid-19 virus and may be disgruntled due to layoffs. Some participants may also have a bias against certain types of leadership. Participants may lack the educational background to answer some or all the survey questions. Certain participants may not provide true responses to the survey questions. Many of these participants may be near the retirement age and have no vested interest in the survey results. Additionally, some participants may disagree with the social exchange theory and the servant leadership theory. There could be participants that may lean to the side of employee resistance and disagree with employee empowerment. An additional limitation is this study was being limited to the state of Tennessee.

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. The rationale for utilizing a quantitative study is that this methodology allowed for the understanding of the possible relationships between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. According to Patton (2015), quantitative research is appropriate when attempting to examine relationships between two variables, in which a hypothesis will be tested. The research method should provide a numeric description of trends or approaches for this research.

Therefore, a qualitative study will not provide the parameters in which employees' perceptions could be measured. Utilizing a qualitative research approach would not answer the research questions. However, the findings from this study could determine if there is a relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Therefore, the results of this research may inspire other researchers to conduct future research on employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in small businesses in other geographical areas. The results from this study could create the new groundwork for future quantitative researchers to continue to

investigate employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Significance of the Study

This research could inform business leaders about the implications of employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in the field of business within Tennessee. Leaders should be open to innovative ideas that can enhance their organizational performance (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014). In today's global arena, it is important that organizational leaders create a competitive advantage, such as employee empowerment programs within their organizations, to remain competitive (Krog & Govender, 2015). Leadership can provide intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that can produce positive psychological outcomes that can create job satisfaction and job efficiency in the workplace (Pei-Chen et al., 2017).

Significance to Theory

Social exchange theory was developed by Homans in 1958 (Frieder, 2018) and expanded on by Blau (1964). Social exchange theory involves understanding the role that managers within organizations play in creating employee perceptions and obligations. Social exchange theory is based on the foundation that individuals tend to value putting others' needs above their own needs. As a result, individuals will more likely invest their time in building and restoring relationships without instant personal gain. Organizational leaders must consider employee resistance and attempt to find ways to combat resistance.

Employee resistance can have a negative impact on small businesses resulting in the loss of profit (Kulkarni, 2016). One significant threat to small business closings is disengaged employees (Kelleher, 2011). Approximately 70% of employees within North America are disengaged (Kerns, 2014; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2015), which affects small business profitability can be negatively impacted by the perception of disengaged employees (Vitt, 2014). The general management problem is that there is little known about employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in small businesses in the U.S. (Achtenhagen et al., 2017; Coetzer, Kock & Wallo, 2017; Kulkarni, 2016; Newman et al., 2017). The specific management problem is that if there is a negative employee perception of servant leadership style, this could negatively impact employees' perception of employee empowerment and create employee resistance to leadership, causing a negative effect on organizational performance within small businesses in Tennessee. According to Tennessee smart start small business guide, (n.d.), small businesses make up the majority of all the companies in the state of Tennessee and are the backbone of the economy.

This research could help small business leaders create employee empowerment programs to increase employees' perceptions of their manager's leadership style. The research could help small business leaders improve employees' perceptions of employee resistance, which could reduce employee turnover. The research study could yield positive feedback that leaders could use to save small businesses time and money.

Significance to Practice

This research can support practical application by small business leaders that incorporate servant leadership style to improve employees' perceptions of their leaders. The research could offer small business leaders' ways to identify employees that are disengaged to the point of resisting employee empowerment opportunities. The study could help leaders identify employees who want to be engaged and be a part of employee empowerment opportunities.

Significance to Social Change

Small businesses, such as micro-firms, are the backbone of worldwide economies (Nolan & Garavan, 2016). Small businesses are important to the economy in that they lead to job creation and the sustainment of economic welfare (Nolan & Garavan, 2016). But there is a lack of attention in understanding business development activities that relate to small businesses (Achtenhagen et al., 2017). The research could help leaders decrease employee turnover. The positive social change impact of the study could influence management leaders to empower employees to become more engaged, thus positively impacting organizational goals and profitability.

Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 is an introduction to a research study that describes social exchange theory, employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The research questions, theoretical framework, and research methodology have been outlined.

The definitions of terms, assumptions, scope of the study, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study have been discussed.

In Chapter 2, the literature review provides further background research supporting this research study. Social exchange theory is the theoretical framework that guided this quantitative correlational research study. A comprehensive literature review, analysis, and synthesis for the theoretical framework are included.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Employee resistance can have a negative impact on small businesses resulting in the loss of profit (Kelleher, 2011; Kulkarni, 2016; Vitt, 2014). One significant threat to small business closings is disengaged employees (Kelleher, 2011). According to Kerns (2014) and the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (2015), approximately 71% of employees in small businesses within North America are disengaged. Small business profitability can be negatively impacted by the perception of disengaged employees (Vitt, 2014). The general management problem is that there was little known about employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in small businesses in the United States (Achtenhagen et al., 2017; Coetzer et al., 2017; Kulkarni, 2016; Newman et al., 2017). The specific management problem is that if there are negative employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, this could negatively impact employees' perception of employee empowerment and create employee resistance to leadership, causing a negative effect on organizational performance within small businesses in Tennessee.

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it relates to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. The study determined that there was a relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of

employee resistance. The participants for this research were employees from small businesses in Tennessee. In this study, small businesses are defined as a business with less than 50 employees. The independent variable was defined as employees' perceptions of servant leadership style. The dependent variables were defined as employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The servant leadership scale was used to assess the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style. The employee empowerment scale was used to assess the employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. The employee resistance scale was used to assess the employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The sections in Chapter 2 address social exchange theory, employee perception, servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance. Social exchange theory is based on a set of interactions between individuals (Blau, 1964; Huang et al., 2016). These social interactions include exchanges where there might be a potential benefit. Interactions include elements of trust and shared values between individuals. Employees' perceptions are perceptions formed by employees about their organization and the leaders within those organizations. Past research has found that an organization can create a positive employee perception if employee training and employee participation are a part of the organizational culture (Conway & Monks, 2008; Kuvaas, 2008), which empowers employees (Lincoln et al., 2003). Greenleaf (1977) servant leadership style encompasses understanding, leadership, empathy, acceptance, healing, serving, perception, awareness, persuasion, stewardship, and community foresight. Employee empowerment consists of leaders that empower their employees with

employee empowerment programs such as employee participation and decision-making (Lincoln et al., 2003). Employee resistance occurs when leaders fail to communicate the need for change to employees within the organization (Canning & Found, 2015).

Literature Search Strategy

The key search terms for this research include *employee empowerment, employee participation, employee resistance to change, empowerment, empowerment theory, employee training, employee satisfaction, employee production, employee well-being, employee resistance to organizational change, resistance to change, resistance to employee empowerment, employee resistance theory, employee resistance to training, servant leadership style, leadership theory, social exchange theory, employee engagement, employee retention, employee turnover, employee burnout, and employee perception*. I searched for articles from 1920 to 2020. The databases used for this research included Proquest Central, Ebsco Host, Eric, Sage Journal, and Google Scholar. The Sage Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology was used for the terminology (Vogt & Johnson, 2016). These sources were acquired and reviewed in digital format as well as by reviewing scholarly and peer-reviewed journals.

Theoretical Foundation

The theory utilized for this research study was social exchange theory. First developed by Homans in 1958 and expanded on by Blau in 1964, the social exchange theory is the basis for understanding the role that managers and organizations play in creating employee perceptions and obligations that can lead to positive work outcomes and work attitudes (Frieder, 2018). Social exchange theory is based on the foundation

that individuals tend to value putting others' needs above their own needs and will invest their time in building relationships without instant personal gain. Social exchange theory is a set of social and economic exchanges within the organization between leaders and employees. These exchanges are short-term and long-term exchanges between leaders and employees. Social exchange theory is the foundation for the obligations of employees to reciprocate with possible positive work attitudes (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). Social exchange uses social capital based on structural elements as connections between social interaction, elements of rational relationships such as trust, and cognitive elements such as the shared values of individuals (Oparaocha, 2016). Individuals such as employees interact similarly in social environments when they engage in social exchanges (Gouldner, 1960). Employees tend to do what benefits them at a given point and time, weighing the cost versus benefits (Harden et al., 2018). According to Liao et al. (2019), they noted that Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) completed a comprehensive review of social exchange theory and identified the differences between transactions and relationships. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) explained that transactions are a sequence of interdependent resource exchanges and affect the development of exchange relationships which affect future transactions. Social exchange can empower and create an elevated status between business and employees (Cook et al., 2013). Social exchange theory was used to examine why and under what conditions servant leadership style could be related to employee empowerment and employee resistance in small businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

Social exchange theory was the theoretical foundation for this research study. The rationale to include social exchange theory comes from documented peer-reviewed literature. Social exchange uses social capital based on structural elements as connections between social interaction, elements of rational relationships such as trust, and cognitive elements such as the shared values of individuals (Oparaocha, 2016). According to Gouldner (1960), individuals such as employees interact similarly in social environments when they engage in social exchanges. The seminal work of Blau (1964) on exchanges is used by many researchers to explain the relationship between groups and individuals (Shiau & Luo, 2012).

Researchers have used social exchange theory to explain how groups and individuals interact through exchanges. To summarize, individuals tend to seek out social exchanges with other groups and individuals where there is a potential benefit. According to Blau (1964) and Huang et al. (2016), social exchange relationships are ongoing relationships until it is no longer beneficial to one or both of the parties involved. Social exchange theory is defined as an interaction between two parties involved that both control and consume information. According to Shiau and Luo (2012), social exchange theory provides support as a theoretical foundation for many researchers investigating groups and individual interactions. Trust is a major component of social exchange theory, increasing between groups and individuals in a social exchange environment as the relationship developed over time (Blau, 1964).

Tyrie and Ferguson (2013) extended Blau's social exchange theory by confirming that building relationships with trust, individuals can create relationships with

organizations and can benefit in a significant way. Adding to the research of Blau (1964), Cook et al. (2013) applied the social exchange theory to relationships between individuals and groups by arguing that social exchange can create, influence employees, empower and create an elevated status between business and employees.

Previous research has also indicated that the success of social exchange is when both parties find participation beneficial (Tyrie & Ferguson, 2013). Weiss and Stevens (1993) believed that for a successful social exchange to take place, there is a need for both parties in the exchange to establish a success criterion. Social exchange theory is governed by the influence of participant interactions that affect individuals and groups (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Social exchanges within organizations that are not economically motivated will not benefit the employee (Slack et al., 2015). Social ideals and motivation could successfully cause individuals to take affirmative action in a business setting. Further, organizational commitment includes the influence of employees expected organizational rewards and benefits (Lin, 2007). Employee motivation is a factor in organizational commitment, which includes beliefs and attitudes (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Kolekofski & Heminger, 2003).

Recent studies have incorporated social exchange theory to examine factors that influence the knowledge-sharing behaviors of employees. Knowledge sharing focuses on explaining the relationship from a social exchange perspective (Lin et al., 2014; Tsai & Cheng, 2012). Trust and interpersonal relationships are influenced by leadership and have been claimed as a primary factor in enabling knowledge sharing between leadership and employees through social exchange (McAllister, 1995). Previous research about

knowledge sharing focused on explaining the relationship from a social exchange perspective (Lin et al., 2014; Tsai & Cheng, 2012). Blau (1964) offered the idea of intrinsic rewards to understand workplace behaviors. Recent studies have incorporated social exchange theory to examine factors that influence the knowledge-sharing behaviors of employees. Kim and Ko (2014) applied the social exchange theory by Blau (1964) to analyze the impact of human resource practices and leader behaviors on knowledge sharing between employees. Employee perceptions of the organization's procedures, compensation, reward policies, performance appraisal methods, training, and development strategies are predictors of knowledge sharing behaviors of 266,000 full-time employees of varied agencies in the United States federal government (Kim & Ko, 2014). Lee et al. (2015) utilized social exchange theory by Blau (1964) and conducted a quantitative analysis survey and collected data from 183 employees and supervisors. Intrinsic motivation positively influences employees' perceptions of exchange and learning (Lee et al., 2015). The research conducted by Wei-Li and Yi-Chih (2020) analyzed the influences of employees' personal resources such as work engagement, intrinsic motivation, external resources, and transformational leadership on knowledge sharing. Wei-Li and Yi-Chih (2020) used social exchange theory to conduct a survey and explore the correlation among transformational leadership, work engagement, intrinsic motivation, and knowledge-sharing. The research sample included 33 health care groups. The findings of their research indicated that employees' personal and external resources were positive and benefit knowledge-sharing. Work engagement has a positive impact on knowledge-sharing and increasing intrinsic motivation (Wei-Li & Yi-Chih, 2020).

Literature Review

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. Since a study of the entire United States was not feasible for this study, the study was limited to Tennessee. Since Tennessee is where the researcher resided, Tennessee was used to start the conversation on the topic. According to the Tennessee smart start small business guide (n.d.), small businesses are the backbone of the state and make up the majority of all the companies that sustain the state's economy. Small business managers, leaders, and owners need additional support when it comes to managing employees. The study determined there was a relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. The study could provide valuable information that could be useful to small business owners regarding employee empowerment and reducing employee resistance.

Employees' Perceptions

There are several key elements that impact the perceptions that employees form about organizational leaders and organizations, which leaders should consider so they can create a positive employee perception. Training, performance appraisal, employee participation, and employee rewards can improve an employees' shared perceptions of an organization that motivates employee citizenship behavior (Conway & Monks, 2008;

Kuvaas, 2008). But efforts such as involving employees in the decision-making can be perceived differently between management and employees. Some managers believe they tried to include and encourage greater employee involvement and participation within the organization (Scott-Ladd et al., 2006). But in some cases, employees choose not to be involved in the decision-making process (Mikkelsen et al., 2017). Regardless, organizations that include employees in the decision-making process create a positive employee perception (Mikkelsen et al., 2017). The decision-making process includes company policies, procedures, strategies, and objectives as opposed to the basic decisions about the way in which the employees perform their work (Mikkelsen et al., 2017). Employee involvement is crucial to an organization (Gupta, 2015). Employee involvement initiatives could include educational opportunities and open communication between leaders and employees.

Employee engagement or disengagement can be strongly influenced by the idea of buy-in, meaning the company's priorities (Sull & Spinosa, 2007). It is important to understand that leaders should set the company's priorities which is highly important to reach this level of employee engagement. A company's priorities should include involving employees. If employees can set their own priorities with little input or influence from employers, the degree of employee engagement should increase.

Employees are more likely to adhere to the commitments they have agreed upon when employee commitments have been made voluntarily (Sull & Spinosa, 2007). There are many different approaches to employee involvement and the decision-making process in the workplace. Managers still make most of the important decisions within the

organization such as time off, company policies, and compensation (Delbridge & Whitfield, 2001). But some employees lack the education and experience necessary to identify certain problems or issues that require an immediate decision. Employee empowerment programs are meant to encourage employee participation for the desired outcomes of the organization (Eylon & Bamberger, 2000). The organizational goal can improve employee communication, employee commitment, and employee efficiency (Delbridge & Whitfield, 2001).

Mikkelsen et al. (2017) discussed how employers tend to seek more employee involvement, but in some cases, employees choose not to be involved in the decision-making process. Previous studies support the efforts to involve employees in the decision-making process. These studies have shown a focus on the production level of the decision-making process that shows little impact on increasing an employee's influence within the organization.

It has been documented in business articles and scholarly research that a common thread with regards to the ways in which employees perceive their managers and organizations, meaning the degree of employee involvement, has not been considered thoroughly by organizational leaders. Organizations that include employees in the decision-making process create a positive employee perception (Mikkelsen et al., 2017). Employee negative perceptions about organizational leaders can affect how employees perform their job tasks. Consideration should be given to the degree employees can participate in the decision-making process. According to Mikkelsen et al. (2017), the decision-making process includes company policies, procedures, strategies, and

objectives as opposed to the basic decisions about the way in which the employees perform their work.

The enforcement actions of organizational leaders can positively influence an employees' perception of the external intervention by organizational leaders. With the intervention from organizational leaders, the potential negative crowding-out effect might be averted. There is an expected relationship between employee perception and organizational leaders and the enforcement actions of these leaders. The expectation is to create a higher intrinsic motivation between employees and leaders. The objective for leaders is to be supportive of their employees as the employees strive for self-determination (Mikkelsen et al., 2017). Employees need the perceived notion of autonomy to be more productive.

Human resources practices also play a critical role during organizational change (Cherif, 2020; Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015). The function of human resources has been to influence employee behavior by conditioning the employee to support organizational change. Previous literature suggests behavior by employees can be significantly influenced by their perceptions of human resources practices during organizational change.

Maheshwari and Vohra (2015) conducted research on organizational change at the macro level in an attempt to identify the key organizational members during organizational change. A case was made for the importance of the human resource function. Maheshwari and Vohra (2015) reviewed the literature on the effectiveness of human resource practices that were adopted by other human resource professionals

during organizational change. The literature on commitment to organizational change and employee perception was examined to find out the possible connections to human resource practices while undergoing organizational change.

Human resource action conducted in the areas of leadership, cross-functional integration, training, technology, culture, and communication, if implemented correctly, can positively influence employee perception (Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015).

Additionally, a reduction of employee resistance and a potential increase in employee commitment to organizational change is possible. These findings could possibly enable human resource professionals to implement positive organizational change.

According to Gupta (2015), employee involvement is crucial to an organization. Employee involvement initiatives could include educational opportunities and open communication between leaders and employees. Education and communication are vital tools for employee perception. In Gupta's study, many of the respondents had the perception that there were fewer educational opportunities which made it difficult for the employees to engage with organizational leaders.

Gupta's (2015) research study consisted of primary data based on a questionnaire (2015). Primary data was collected by interviewing the employees of three companies. The companies included Exide, Ador Fontech, and Tata Motors. The sample size was 50 with a population of 500. The sampling method was a convenience sample. The results of Gupta's study indicated a need for a system that positively affects the perceptions of the employees. A positive perception by the employee can increase the willingness of the employee to invest effort in the organization; a positive perception can create a positive

employee experience as well as a strong emotional connection to leaders and the organization. According to Gupta (2015), a positive perception of the employee can benefit the leaders and the organization. Cherif (2020) conducted a similar study and confirmed the research of Gupta (2015) and Maheshwari and Vohra (2015) regarding organizational commitment. Cherif (2020) found that human resource management positively correlated with employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

When employees are neglected, there are organizational costs involved (Kurtessis et al., 2017). These costs can include a lack of personal commitment to the job task. Further organizational costs can include employee absenteeism and employee turnover. The cost of employee absenteeism and employee turnover negatively impacts the financial bottom line. Managers of organizations should consider employees' perceptions of leadership a necessary tool to create a positive employee perception (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020).

Servant Leadership

Ineffective leadership within an organization can cause problems and discontinuity of operations for the organization that constructs barriers for creating new policies, procedures, and training (Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). Greenleaf (1977) developed servant leadership in the 1970s. Since the conception of servant leadership and while it has been misunderstood, Greenleaf defined it as a philosophical belief system that is less like leadership theory (Greenleaf et al., 1996; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Greenleaf (1977) argued that there are eight core principles that apply to servant leadership, and they are listening and understanding, acceptance and empathy, serving

and healing, awareness and perception, persuasion, community and stewardship, foresight, and conceptualizing that result in effective organizational leadership.

Servant and leadership are concepts that might oppose each other. Servant leadership theory proposed that an effective leader will choose to lead by serving their followers rather than exercising power over their followers. The perception of a servant leader is that the needs of their followers come before their own needs. According to Greenleaf (1977), the servant leader does not dominate their followers with their authority; instead, the servant leader will encourage their followers to trust their guidance.

Parris and Peachey (2013) provided a more direct definition of servant leadership by writing a systematic literature review. In their analysis of servant leadership, Parris and Peachey identified the author Spears as the preeminent seminal theorist on servant leadership. Parris and Peachey found that Larry Spears (1998) was employed at the Greenleaf Center, where he identified the ten characteristics of servant leadership. The characteristics identified by Spears (1998) were listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Spears (1998) defined servant leadership as a macro-level interpersonal development process. To clarify, the macro-level interpersonal development process included leading by example, mentoring, and positive social change. Beck (2014) confirmed Spears (1998) by stating emotional intelligence and altruistic focus of servant leadership by the key findings in his study. Beck (2014) identified servant leadership as leading by example, community service, mentoring

others, and the outlook of serving others. Huang (2016) noted that emotional intelligence plays a key role in job satisfaction and employee job performance.

A servant leader can be an effective leader. The reason is that servant leaders provide constant communication that maintains the quality of the relationship with their followers. Servant leaders provide empowerment to their followers and the organization (Beck, 2014; Spears, 2010). According to Reed et al. (2011) and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), and Spears (2010), servant leaders believe that the relationship with their followers is an investment. This investment can help the followers to be more productive, thus sustaining the future of the organization. Joseph and Winston (2005) discovered a connection between employee perceptions of servant leadership tendencies. These tendencies, which are promoted and practiced, correlated positively with employee trust in their supervisor and organization. Servant leadership in the workplace and employee trust both have been researched in the business world. Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) linked employees' perceptions of servant leadership style directly to supervisory trust. Joseph and Winston (2005) and Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) found employees tend to trust their leader and organization if servant leadership is practiced.

Research by Joseph and Winston (2005) and Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) supports Greenleaf's assertion that servant leadership can help to foster trust between the follower and leader (Greenleaf, 1977). Research conducted by Murari and Kripa (2012) and Rivkin et al. (2014) found that servant leadership has the potential of impacting an employees' emotional health and feelings of employee empowerment. Murari and Kripa (2012) noted employees have their own sense of servant leadership qualities, and when

leaders portray these qualities, employees can feel a sense of empowerment. Servant leadership has been linked to positive employee empowerment in the workplace, thus reducing emotional exhaustion in employees and increasing employees' feelings of employee empowerment (Murari & Kripa, 2012; Rivkin et al., 2014). Servant leadership has the potential to provide a positive impact on employees. Servant leadership has influenced employees to work together. The research on servant leadership has shown a positive impact on employee commitment to their leader and organization (Sokoll, 2014). Research conducted by Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014) and Zhao et al. (2016) found that servant leaders chose to encourage employees to become more involved with their leaders and organization.

Previous research has suggested that servant leadership style, when used by leaders, could foster high-quality professional relationships between leaders and the employees they serve (Liden et al., 2008). Servant leadership style is a style of leadership that is follower-based. The leader helps their followers to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010; Zhang et al., 2012); the focus of the servant leader is on improving the follower and the organization while encouraging the followers to engage in altruism, which can meet the overall needs of the organization. Greenleaf (1977) proposed that leaders can be more effective. Leaders can create a positive impact on their followers and organization while practicing the principles of listening and understanding, acceptance and empathy, serving and healing, awareness and perception, persuasion, community and stewardship, foresight, and conceptualizing.

Previous researchers believe that servant leadership qualities relate to knowledge, skills, and abilities that help to reduce interpersonal conflict (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010; Liden et al., 2008; Murari & Kripa, 2012; Orlan & ve DiNatale-Svetnicka, 2013). Murari and Kripa (2012) suggested that servant leadership focuses on employee attitude in an organization. Servant leaders tend to transfer more power and decision-making opportunities to employees, which enables employees to become more productive.

Orlan and ve DiNatale-Svetnicka (2013) and Lu et al. (2018) agreed that conflict is inevitable between employees and leaders in any organization. The practice of servant leadership can improve working with colleagues to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The principles and practices of servant leadership could inspire employees and actively reduce interpersonal conflict (Jit et al., 2017; Murari & Kripa, 2012; Orlan & ve DiNatale-Svetnicka, 2013). Research conducted by Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2019) suggested that servant leadership can play a very important role between the leader and the employee, based on proper communication and trust.

The research of Kiker et al. (2019) sought to explore servant leadership more in-depth by studying the main effects of servant leadership and the important outcomes of job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, commitment, and trust. This research was to evaluate the possible different moderator variables that could possibly impact the nature and strength of the main effects. The development measure used was the organizational leadership assessment with six key dimensions that included values people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership.

The methodology for the study consisted of a meta-analytic review about the relationship between servant leadership and organizational outcomes that included job performance, organizational behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust. The idea behind this research explored the effects of the outcomes of the research. Kiker et al. (2019) wanted to provide an empirical summary of servant leadership and the associated effects that it might have on the variables, which were culture and gender.

While building upon Greenleaf's early work, Kiker et al. (2019) noted that servant leadership was defined as antecedents, for example, someone that aspires to lead and the consequences of servant leadership upon the employee. This means how the employee reacts; such as employee health education and autonomy, employees might choose to strive to become a servant leader. Servant leadership has the potential to improve the employees' organizational outcomes.

Although weakness in the research was fundamental, defining and attempting to measure the constructs were never standardized. The strength of the research indicated servant leadership was positively related to employee job performance. The research found that servant leadership was strongly related to individual performance and team performance. Researchers concluded that there was a positive impact of servant leadership on employee performance. This was due to the servant leader creating a wider range of cultural services, which helped to inspire and motivate the employee. Kiker et al. (2019) suggested that future research on servant leadership should incorporate more multi-method research. The reason is that most of the research conducted is on the effect

of servant leadership on employee outcomes which came from the same source and at the same time.

Employee Empowerment

According to Eylon and Bamberger (2000) and Boje and Rosile (2001), the idea of employee empowerment has been a part of the human relations movement since the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was Taylor (1911) that fostered the ideas of scientific management, but Mayo and others started the human relations movement. The idea behind the human relations movement was that employees could be self-motivated and able to perform their duties with little supervision. Follett (1924) discussed the appropriate way in which leaders share their power and authority with employees (Boje & Rosile, 2001; Eylon & Bamberger, 2000). Adding to the human relations movement, businesses began to experiment with employee empowerment initiatives taking place in the second half of the twentieth century. There were several movements in the 1960s through the 1980s. Those movements included the job enrichment movement in the U.S in the 1960s and the industrial democracy movement in Europe in the 1970s. According to Bartunek and Spreitzer (2006) and Lincoln et al. (2003), included in these movements were the quality circles and quality of working life in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Empowerment in the business world first appeared in the late 1960s within the discipline of religious studies. Conger and Kanungo's (1988) characterization of empowerment is a process of enhancing employees' feelings of self-efficacy and the removal of powerlessness. Empowerment was used to refer to the sharing of power with or providing power to those who are powerless (Lincoln et al., 2003). Since the inception

of empowerment, it has been used in a variety of disciplines that include psychology, sociology, education, social work, and management (Bartunek & Spreitzer, 2006). The most general idea of empowerment is defined as a process where groups and individuals master empowerment (Rappaport, 1985, 1987). Although there is a multitude of definitions for the term empowerment, empowerment in organizational settings confirms that empowerment has evolved and has three major components, which include sharing real power, fostering employee welfare, and fostering productivity or motivation (Bartunek & Spreitzer, 2006). According to Bartunek and Spreitzer (2006), the evolution of empowerment methods by leaders was to create employee motivation and employee productivity in an organization.

In today's organizations, empowerment is considered a process that is outcome-based. Organizational researchers view empowerment as a process of leaders that share power and authority throughout the organization. Leach et al. (2010) provided a definition of employee empowerment, which is a systematic change that involves a provision of authority for employees to take decisions and actions into their own hands. Organizations have become more decentralized over the past few decades. Since this decentralization, the result is a less structured environment for the employees which allows for employee empowerment. The attention to employee empowerment in organizational research is different from previous research studies (Boje & Rosile, 2001; Eylon & Bamberger, 2000). Previous research studies and initiatives centered on protecting and ensuring the rights of the employees in the workplace while increasing employee influence in the decision-making process. To be specific, these efforts were

configured to increase employee empowerment during the decision-making processes in an organization. According to Lincoln et al. (2003), employee empowerment initiatives were created to reduce employee absenteeism and turnover.

Employee empowerment initiatives focus on improving employee motivation and productivity (Bartunek & Spreitzer, 2006; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer et al., 1997). Private and public organizations are striving to create various employee empowerment initiatives designed to motivate employees to go above and beyond their official job requirements. The overall goal of employee empowerment is for the employee to engage in citizenship behaviors that could improve the overall performance of the organization.

According to Lee et al. (2015), in today's business environment, employee empowerment permits employees to participate in the decision-making process within an organization. Employee empowerment gives the employee the authority to make decisions while allowing employees to perform their day-to-day work duties efficiently. Employee empowerment is a control that is provided by leaders to employees and allows employees to determine how their jobs are accomplished. Employees today have a need to feel appreciated and empowered and allows the employee to feel a sense of ownership in their work (Lee et al., 2015). Empowering employees can serve as a useful tool to motivate employees.

Researchers have concluded that employee empowerment programs are designed to help an organization's workforce become more successful. Employees become more productive and self-sufficient through autonomy provided by leadership (Verhulst &

Boks, 2014). The literature suggests that employee empowerment programs are designed to facilitate the inclusion of an organization's workforce for the overall good of the organization (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014). Gupta and Kumar (2015) suggested that the critical point is that employee empowerment programs can be used to attract and retain employees.

Employee empowerment can benefit an organization (Shuck, 2011). Employees can feel a sense of recognition and pride in their work. According to Yazdani et al. (2011), the factors that contribute to increasing employee motivation are 1) fair pay and incentives, 2) leadership and encouragement, 3) trust and respect, 4) joint decision-making and quality of leadership, 5) healthy working relationships between the employee and management, employee recognition and appreciation, 6) employee growth and loyalty within the employees' organization, 7) employee identification and fulfillment of one's personal needs, and 8) transparency and communication from management.

Trust is another key concept that can foster productive teamwork in an organization. Organizations can improve and become more effective when trust is provided by leaders to employees. Organizational leaders can create trust and thus improve employee motivation. Manzoor (2012) discussed the efficient productivity of an organization relies on motivation and effective employees and leaders that are properly trained in inspiring employees.

Empowerment is a widely used term to describe many different approaches to providing employees with varying levels of autonomy in different areas of their work experience. At the same time, most researchers and practitioners agree that empowerment

is generally a good thing and will create a better work experience for employees (Moye & Henkin, 2006). Research such as Delbridge and Whitfield (2001) suggested that empowerment, as generally practiced, does not facilitate employee participation in decision-making at levels that truly influence the strategy, priorities, and objectives of companies.

Arefin et al. (2019) utilized social exchange theory for their research on employee engagement which pertains to the empowerment process. The research study adds to previous research studies on employee engagement by examining the mediating role of psychological empowerment and the relationship between high-performance work systems and employee job engagement. The methodology in the study was a large pharmaceutical firm where data was collected from 287 employees. The study included statistical analyses using SPSS 17.0, which measured the employees' perception of high-performance work systems and employee job engagement. Previous research suggests that the demographic variables, which include age, gender, and employee education level, could be important predictors of employee engagement and psychological empowerment.

The results of the research study indicated perceived high-performance work systems and psychological employee empowerment positively influenced employee engagement. The results showed psychological empowerment mediated the influence of the high-performance work system on engagement. The research indicated that human resource systems directly impact job engagement through psychological empowerment. Further results of the research indicated that the mediating role of psychological empowerment has a positive relationship between perceived high-performance work

system and psychological employee empowerment positively influenced employee engagement. Arefin et al. (2019) suggested future research that might include employee behaviors, for example, in-role and extra-role, meaning current job duties and extra job duties, to identify the consequences of job engagement.

According to Al-Dmour et al. (2019), social exchange theory was used as their theoretical framework relating to the impact of workplace empowerment and employee performance. The research incorporated a quantitative approach and a simple random sampling to obtain results. A questionnaire from 200 employees working in sales and marketing for 21 five-star hotels was evaluated. The response rate of the study was 80%. The study used a linear regression analysis that examined the fourth hypothesis, which was the role of work engagement as a mediating variable in the influence of employee empowerment. The findings of the study concluded structural and psychological empowerment; both together showed a significant positive influence on the sales workforce performance along with work engagement. Work engagement was a partial mediator that influenced the employee empowerment dimensions of employee performance. The research found employee empowerment to have a positive and significant effect on enhancing job satisfaction. Al-Dmour et al. (2019) suggested future research should focus on other service-type settings. This study only incorporated five-star hotels, which limited the research. The study incorporated a cross-sectional survey which restricted the study for that time.

According to Nawaz et al. (2014), social exchange theory is based on the idea that the organization will take care of employees. Within social exchange theory, there are

social exchange relationships that help increase organizational performance. Employees that are trained and empowered will tend to dedicate their emotional, physical, and cognitive abilities to better perform their jobs. The authors collected data from 400 respondents and 110 organizations. These organizations consisted of mainly textile firms that included cement, petroleum, fertilizer, pesticides, chemicals, electronics, pharmaceutical, and various other sectors for research. The research utilized SPSS 17 to analyze the data that was collected. The study included a factor analysis principal component analysis and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the reliability and validity of their questionnaire. This method has been used in previous research. The correlation analysis was used to locate the relationship between the variables.

According to the analysis and results, the research found a significant correlation between the variables. A regression analysis was conducted using SPSS 17 to investigate the two different areas of human resource practices which were employee empowerment and training on employee engagement and employees' creativity. The findings conclude with employee engagement partially mediating the relationship between human resource practices and the employees' creativity. This means that empowerment provided increased organizational performance. The research was a cross-sectional study, and the data collected was restricted to that certain time frame. The study was limited in that it only pertained to the manufacturing industry. The researchers only addressed human resource practices pertaining to training and empowerment.

According to Aujla and Mclarney (2020), when employees are not involved in organizational change, employees tend to feel resistant to the change effort. Employees

that lack effective communication from management will tend to be resistant to the organizational change effort. When organizations prepare to make a change, there is a possibility of both positive and negative effects on employees. During times of change within an organization, negative effects can be felt by employees (Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015). The quality of the employees' lives can be negatively impacted by organizational change. These impacts are associated with health issues and include physical activity, physical health, mental health, energy, emotional well-being, social well-being, absence of pain, weight gain or loss, and general health status. These are some of the reasons that cause employees to resist proposed changes. Employees could resist because of lost personal flexibility. Additionally, when organizational change occurs, some employees may have to work longer hours to complete new training; thus, employees become more resistant to the change effort. Ki et al. (2020) and Witasari and Gustomo (2020) suggested if organizations wish to succeed, it is important that the leaders attempt to understand why employees resist and implement new strategies to reduce employee resistance.

Employee Resistance

The seminal work of Lewin (1947) defined resistance to change as an opposing force. This opposing force works together with competing effects of various strengths to reach the consolidation of new balance after any disruption in the system. Lewin goes on to discuss that resistance to change exists when no agreement is reached between employees and leadership.

Organizational barriers are often associated with the change process. Kotter (1996) noted that the change process included obstacles that block the vision of organizational leadership. A very significant obstacle to planned organizational change efforts includes employees' resistance to change. Additional barriers that lead employees to resist the change process include organizational culture and the capacity to change. According to Akan et al. (2016), the failure of business leaders to communicate and facilitate the need for change is another barrier to ineffective organizational change.

Business leaders with ideas to increase efficiency and productivity tend to fail due to a lack of communication of the leadership's vision for change. The lack of effective communication about the leaders' change initiatives for the organization could cause employees to lose faith in the leadership and administration of the organization. Kotter (1996) discussed the lack of confidence could create fear of the unknown within the employee, causing the employee to resist the change initiatives of the organization.

One of the primary reasons that employees resist change is the fear of the unknown. According to Canning and Found (2015), employees tend to resist organizational change initiatives because they cannot see their future with the organization, meaning fear of the unknown. These fears include job security, an employee's habit, and the possibility that the employee may have to step out of their comfort zone.

Typically, the change actions in an organization will begin without the knowledge of the employees. When an employee has not been notified of a change initiative from the organization, the result could create a resistant employee. Employees that resist the

organization's change effort can negatively affect other employees that can become resistant to the change effort (Kotter, 1996). Canning and Found (2015) noted that organizational leaders should attempt to understand what is causing this resistance to solve the problem of resistance to the proposed change effort.

Organizational culture is shared beliefs and values within an occupational group of an organization (Giorgi et al., 2015; Willis et al., 2016). The culture of an organization can be negatively impacted by poor change implementations if the change process is not aligned with the culture of the organization. According to Frahm (2016), stories of gainful employment within an organization are likely to exhibit resistance to the change initiatives, old routines and fail to understand the need for these change initiatives. The change process could create a negative impact on employees, meaning that some of these employees may have to forget about the old ways of doing things and learn new ways to achieve these new change initiatives. This could create employee resistance and negatively impact the organizational culture.

Resistance to employee empowerment programs can threaten organizational goals that negatively impact workforce participation and organizational change while creating hostility between subordinates and leaders (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Bateh et al., 2013; Linjuan & Stacks, 2013). Organizational leaders understand that workforce resistance to empowerment programs can have an adverse effect on other members of the workforce.

The information obtained from the research results could provide substantive data analysis to determine the level of empowerment and contributing factors that influence an organization's workforce to resist employee empowerment programs that have not been

clearly documented from limited examination (McGuinness & Cronin, 2016). Factors that affect change in an organization's objectives have become a challenge for business leaders. According to Coetzer, Kock, and Wallo (2017), there are very few research studies that have examined factors in the workplace that influence employees learning within small businesses, positive influence by leaders can potentially create a functional working environment. Resistance to change has slowed employees from embracing organizations' change initiatives. Goodridge et al. (2015) argued that many organizations' change efforts fail because of employee resistance to change. One employee's resistance can obstruct project progress. For example, an employee without the right leadership could be resistant to the empowerment process (Goodridge et al., 2015). Organizational leaders can experience employee resistance to change when there is no agreement regarding organizational goals. Employees that resist change can cause discontinuity and negatively impact the organization's change process (Nilsen et al., 2016). Resistance to change within an organization is expected and can cause organizational leaders to modify the change process.

Kotter (1996) indicated that employees could create obstacles that can block a new change initiative instituted by the leaders of the organization. Nilsen et al. (2016) contended that resistance to change is a significant barrier that can complicate the planned change of an organization. Resistance to change is inevitable in any organization and is natural for employees to resist the change (Johannsdottir et al., 2015; Nilsen et al., 2016). To reduce the resistance to change, organizational leaders should identify the barriers responsible for employees' resistance to change. Akan et al. (2016) identified

barriers that cause employees to resist change, which included culture, change capacity of an organization, and readiness for change. Business leaders must communicate and facilitate the need for change in an organization effectively. In addition, it was noted that resistance is a source of information and should be used as a learning tool for the success of an organization.

Venus et al. (2019) noted that social identity perspective is an important reason why followers resist change, and this change can pose a threat to their subjective sense of continuity of organizational identity. Venus et al. (2019) conducted a study on leader communication, organizational vision, and employee resistance to change. Drawing on the recently developed theory of social identity, employees sometimes attempt to remain motivated in times of uncertainty to minimize their feelings of uncertainty by relying on their social identities, which include organizational identity. The participants for this study included a total of 208, of which 199 participants were chosen as a sample. The age range was between 17 and 27 years of age.

The study included two hypotheses, with the first being communicating a vision of change that emphasizes collective continuity that resulted in more follower support for change, which is stronger in the context of higher follower uncertainty. The second hypothesis was perceived as collective continuity. Perceived collective continuity mediated the effect of the vision of change that emphasizes collective continuity on follower support for change, moderated by follower work uncertainty. This was an indirect effect of communicating a vision of change that emphasized collective continuity

on support for change, mediated by perceived collective continuity, which is stronger with higher follower work uncertainty.

The study utilized a one-way ANOVA to investigate the relationship between variables. The independent variable was employee work uncertainty. The dependent variables were perceived vision of continuity, perceived collective continuity, and support for change. All the constructs were measured using a Likert scale consisting of 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The results of the study concluded that the four-factor model was an appropriate fit for the data. A limitation of the study is how the leaders might frame the questions about organizational change to the employees. A second limitation is the participants self-reporting in the study. It is suggested that future research extends the current finding by adding other change outcomes such as employee turnover, employee trust in management, and, of course, employee satisfaction. It is important that leaders that communicate visions of change can address this resistance by assuring followers that the essence of the organizational identity will remain unchanged, making their vision of change a vision of continuity. Scholars such as Bass and Riggio (2006), Conger and Kanungo (1988), and Stam et al. (2014) have agreed that outstanding leadership is characterized by vision and communication and is reflected in effective change.

Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) developed the concept of employee engagement. Kahn (1990) was the first researcher to develop the concept of engagement as it relates to the work environment. Kahn was concerned about the employees' perceptions (positive or

negative) about their leader, organizational working conditions, availability, meaningfulness, and safety. Kahn (1990) elaborated on availability, meaning the emotional, cognitive, and physical resources an employee possesses and needs to perform in the workplace.

Previous researchers built upon Kahn's research to further develop the concept of employee engagement. Maslach et al. (2001) identified barriers to employee engagement. These barriers include job burnout, pessimism, ineffectiveness, lack of achievement, exhaustion, and feelings of detachment. Continuing to research the concept of employee engagement, practitioners and researchers are finding useful information about how to both motivate and engage employees to improve employee performance and organizational objectives. Anitha (2014) noted that engaged employees could increase employee awareness, excel beyond their expectations, understand employee responsibilities, and motivate their peers to exhibit similar behaviors. Employee engagement has demonstrated a positive relationship with employee satisfaction, employee behavior, employee efficiency, and employee retention (Taneja et al., 2015). For the above reasons, Kang and Sung (2017); suggested organizational leaders are paying more attention to how to engage employees and create more productive and efficient employees.

O'Connor and Crowley-Henry (2017) and Roof (2015) conducted a study utilizing social exchange theory to investigate the possible relationship between talent management, employee perceptions, and employee engagement. Employee engagement is a critical key factor in an organization's success. More specifically, there has been

more interest in the field of human resource development, thus requiring more research. The study takes into consideration the perspectives of employees that are not included in the talent management pools. The study explores how these exclusive talent management practices could lead to negative employee engagement, which could negatively affect employee outcomes. These negative outcomes could create negative employee engagement between management and employees. The perceived fairness and ethics of talent management practices could potentially marginalize employees and cause employee disengagement.

Ethical questions arise when the dehumanizing effect from leaders is exclusive to certain employees. Exclusive talent management is regarded as some employees not being talented enough to participate in the talent management practice. The employee then feels a sense of denial and can be labeled an inferior employee. The process of selective talent management creates negative implications for employees. The negative implications could include diversity and marginalization, which sometimes neglect most employees. Those employees that are excluded are then harmed by the actions of negative organizational performance (Sheehan & Anderson, 2015). The contribution of the study allows for organizational justice and how employees' perceptions of fairness of selective talent management processes impact employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Summary and Conclusions

To summarize the major themes in the literature, this research study included a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed journals and academic texts of previous research studies in the areas of (a) social exchange theory, (b) employee perception, (c) servant leadership, (d) employee empowerment, (e) employee resistance, and (f) employee engagement was thoroughly investigated. Social exchange theory has been explained in detail. Social exchange theory has been linked to the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style in previous research. Social exchange theory has been linked to employee empowerment, employee resistance, and employee engagement in previous research.

What is known about social exchange theory is that it consists of social and economic exchanges between leaders and employees within organizations. These exchanges could improve employee perceptions of their leaders within the organization. Social exchange theory, in combination with servant leadership style, could improve employee communication because servant leaders try to listen to their employees. Social exchange theory and servant leadership style could improve employee empowerment, and reduce employee resistance, thus potentially improving the outcomes of an organization.

What is not known is the impact social exchange theory and different leadership styles may have on employees and organizations; further, how social exchange theory and the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style could impact the employees' perceptions of employee empowerment in the private sector. Additionally, it is not known

how social exchange theory and the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style will impact the employees' perceptions of employee resistance in the private sector.

According to Blau (1964), Huang et al. (2016), Oparaocha (2016), and Shiau and Luo (2012), there have been various studies that have been conducted using social exchange theory. These previous studies included individual constructs such as servant leadership style, employee empowerment, employee engagement, and employee resistance. However, there are no research studies that included the combination of all these constructs together. This study could fill the gap in the literature by combining social exchange theory with the constructs of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance.

This research study extends knowledge in the discipline by combining social exchange theory with the constructs of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance. This research study could provide information as to how small business managers could deal with employees regarding employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The research study could help managers in small businesses understand the potential importance of servant leadership style and the possibilities of reducing employee resistance and increasing employee empowerment.

An outlined overview of the foundation for this research study has been provided. The background of the problem has been discussed. The problem statement and purpose statement have been discussed, along with the importance of the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and

employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The study filled the gap in the literature by combining social exchange theory with the constructs of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance. The independent variable employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and the dependent variables employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance has been addressed.

A comprehensive literature review on social exchange theory and the independent variable employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and the dependent variables employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance have been addressed. Supporting research has been included to document social exchange theory, employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The definition for each of these constructs was identified and explained.

In Chapter 3, I addressed the research methodology, research design, population, sample, and the research instruments used in this study. I used a quantitative, correlational research method for this study. I conducted a thorough analysis of the research data and reported the findings. Chapter 3 included ethical procedures for conducting research. Additionally, I discuss threats to validity and social change. More specifically, I addressed the gap in the literature in Chapter 3, which is the lack of research on social exchange theory and employees' perceptions of servant leadership

style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. I determined through this study a relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The participants for this research were employees from small businesses in Tennessee. In this study, small businesses were defined as a business with fewer than 50 employees. The independent variable was employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, and the dependent variables were employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The Servant Leadership Scale was used to assess the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, the Employee Empowerment Scale was used to assess the employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and the Employee Resistance Scale was used to assess the employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

In Chapter 3, the research design and rationale are summarized. The research methodology is also discussed, which includes descriptions of the population, sample size, recruitment procedures, research participants, data collection process, instrumentation, and operationalization of constructs were addressed. The data analysis plan is also summarized. Finally, the threats to validity and ethical procedures are discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

The reason for choosing a quantitative methodology over a qualitative methodology is based on the fact that qualitative research incorporates interviews, observations, and case studies in which information is collected (Leavy, 2017). A qualitative research study includes inductive logic in which a determination of explanations will provide insight from different types of sources. These sources can include recordings, interview transcripts, case studies, observations, and documents.

SurveyMonkey.com is an online survey tool where surveys are created and can be used to invite survey participants to participate in research. The data collection process included a link to SurveyMonkey. Inferences were made from the surveys to describe what relationships existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Descriptive data provided additional demographic information across participant parameters for broader analysis and breakdown.

In contrast, a correlational research design is used to search for relationships between variables that can be numerically measured (Curtis et al., 2016). A correlational research design allows the researcher to evaluate the relationships between the variables (Whitley et al., 2013) about a specific phenomenon. The information is collected from individuals or groups of people that have identified as participants who meet all requirements of the research study. I used this design to determine if the independent variable employees' perceptions of servant leadership style would impact the dependent

variables employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Methodology

Quantitative research methodology is used in research that answers the questions pertaining to who, what, and how (Leavy, 2017). The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. The research questions and hypotheses were constructed to determine if a relationship exists between the variables. The independent variable is employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, and the dependent variables are employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. This research study included the underlying philosophy of positivism, which follows the belief that observation and measurement are two critical factors to determine credible information. The role of the researcher is to minimize bias and collect observable and quantifiable data (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008).

Population

The population targeted privately owned small business service organizations via SurveyMonkey. Specifically, the survey targeted employees ages 18+ within the state of Tennessee. The education target level includes all educational levels. No races in the sample were excluded. The study included full- and part-time employees. The job level included frontline employees and excluded all management personnel. The reason for

excluding management-level employees was to gain information from subordinate employees and pass the information on to the organizational leaders in hopes of providing information to increase the performance of the organization from the perspective of the employees.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The participants for this research study were selected via SurveyMonkey. These participants resided within the state of Tennessee and were employed within a small business in Tennessee. Only frontline employees were included. Employees in the study were workers in a small business with fewer than 50 employees. A G-Power analysis was used to determine a sufficient sample size for this research study. The minimum number of participants that were produced from G-Power analysis was 82 participants. A G-Power was also used to estimate a target sample size suitable for simple linear regression (see Appendix D). Alpha level was set at the traditional 0.05 level, and power was set at 0.80. According to previous research, sample size estimates should be based on a power value of no less than 0.70 (Stevens, 2002).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection (Primary Data)

Upon Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the data collection process began (approval number 07-21-21-0996591). SurveyMonkey was used to provide links to the Employee Empowerment Scale, Resistance to Change Scale, and the Servant Leadership Scale, which are all reliable and valid tools for measuring employee empowerment, employee resistance to change, and servant leadership style,

respectively. The participants were emailed a link via SurveyMonkey that included these instruments. Information derived from these instruments was used to determine the relationships between variables.

The Employee Empowerment Scale consists of four items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with scale anchors ranging from one (*strongly disagree/not at all invested*) to five (*strongly agree/strongly invested*) (Park et al., 2014). The scale addresses the construct of human behavior and the questionnaire, which met the reliability and validity requirements. A factor analysis suggested focusing the Employee Empowerment Scale on eight items for which Cronbach's alpha had a reliability score of 0.85. These eight final items positively correlate to other organizational variables like job satisfaction and participation. The Employee Resistance Rating Scale is comprised of a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from one (*strongly disagree*) to six (*strongly agree*) (Oreg et al., 2008). The Servant Leadership Scale consists of seven items rated on 7-point Likert-type scales with scale anchors ranging from one (*strongly disagree/not at all invested*) to five (*strongly agree/strongly invested*) (Liden et al., 2008).

The employee empowerment scale was developed by Park et al. (2014). The employee empowerment scale addressed the construct of human behavior and the questionnaire, which met the reliability and validity requirements. A factor analysis suggested focusing the employee empowerment scale on eight items for which Cronbach's alpha had a reliability score of 0.85. These eight final items positively correlate to other organizational variables like job satisfaction and participation.

Observations were made with the survey ranking of items and items within the employee empowerment scale, resistance to change scale, and the servant leadership scale to determine consistency among the variables. Descriptive data provide additional demographic information across participant parameters for a broader analysis and breakdown. This research study included the underlying philosophy of positivism which follows the belief that observation and measurement are two critical factors. The two factors of observations and measurements are used to determine credible information within the research. The role of the researcher is to maintain a focus on data collection and interpretation. According to Crowther and Lancaster (2008), the researcher minimizes bias and collects observable and quantifiable data.

Once the participants chose to take this survey, a consent form was provided by SurveyMonkey. If participants clicked the “yes” category on the I consent form, they had access to the surveys. The participants had the option to opt out of the survey, thereby mitigating risks to the participants. Confidentiality was stated and adhered to, along with the option to opt out of the survey at any time. Sequential numbering was assigned based on the participant’s submission to maintain tracking and ensure confidentiality. The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees’ perceptions of servant leadership style, employees’ perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees’ perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee.

Park et al. (2014) used the employee empowerment scale to analyze motivating employees. The participants in the research study were recruited using a research

company that had access to over 2 million panelists. For structural equation modeling, a sample size of 300 or larger can provide sufficient statistical power (Hancock, 2006). The final sample size consisted of 528 full-time employees within organizations in the United States and had more than 300 employees. The research study used stratified random sampling, which consisted of a random sample of 1,500 participants selected from a narrowed pool. An email invitation was sent to them inviting them to participate in an online survey, 20 minutes long. The target number of 500 responses was reached on August 30, 2012. A total of 528 responses were collected, providing a response rate of 11.9%.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

In this study, all items used 5-point Likert-type scales with scale anchors ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree/not at all invested*) to 5 (*strongly agree/strongly invested*), except the items related to demographics (e.g., gender, age, education level) and organization (e.g., revenue range, perceived status in the industry). The Employee Empowerment Scale is from Park et al. (2014), who adopted a 16-question survey from Huang (2001) to measure trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. A 12-question survey was used to measure three relational antecedents. For the managerial receptiveness to innovative ideas, Huang created four items based on the studies on managerial encouragement. A Cronbach's alpha was conducted before developing the structural model to test the internal consistency of the hypotheses; the Cronbach's alphas reported as .85, .85, .88, and .86. To test the differences between the key dimensions of the structural model, Cronbach's alpha for five performance-related measures was

calculated and reported .89. Once this was done, the reliability measures were chosen and developed. To evaluate the structural equation model, Huang incorporated three major model evaluation indices—Comparative Fit Index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the value of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)—to test the structural parameter estimates, which are the dependent variables. The control variables were set as age, rank, gender for intrapreneurship and scouting. The research study included a *t* test for dichotomous (gender) or ordinal variables (e.g., rank). Categorical or non-continuous variables can be tested using a structural equation modeling approach through correlational analysis (Muthen, 1984).

A preliminary analysis of measurement for reliability was performed using SPSS 20 program. The dependent variables intrapreneurship and scouting were examined. Cronbach's alpha reported .98 for intrapreneurship and .96 for scouting. The three independent variables, managerial receptiveness of employees' innovative effort, employee empowerment, and communication symmetry, were examined. The Cronbach's alphas reported .88, .87, and .83 for these variables.

The mediating variable of quality of OER was to be examined. This consisted of four sub-variables: trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. The Cronbach's alphas reported .85, .85, .88, and .86. The measurements for the dependent, independent, and mediating variables produced strong alphas. To test the differences between the key dimensions of the structural model, Cronbach's alpha for five performance-related measures was calculated and reported .89.

Liden et al. (2008) utilized the Servant Leadership Scale developed in 2008. In their research, the variables included servant leadership, knowledge sharing climate, team performance, previous quarter sales, and the number of team members. This research was an attempt to explore the relationship between servant leadership and the variables. The validation of this study was conducted using confirmatory factor analysis to verify that servant leadership and knowledge-sharing climate were able to be differentiated from each other. The results indicated a satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2 = 185.08$, $df = 39$, $p < .001$; comparative fit index = .99, Tucker-Lewis's index = .98, root mean square error of approximation = .04). Furthermore, factor loading of all items included in each construct were appropriately loaded above .50 (minimum = .63, maximum = .90). Permission to use this instrument is allowed if used for academic research. The participants included 2,965 direct sales representatives within 77 sales teams within a cosmetics company in South Korea. The company was selected for research because it represents similar companies in South Korea. The researchers were provided with access to the sales team's financial performance data; 1,979 survey forms were returned from 70 direct selling sales teams. After matching these with sales team data, 95 survey forms from three teams were deleted because they could not be reliably matched. In the end, 1,884 survey forms from 67 sales teams remained for analysis.

The resistance to change scale was developed by Oreg (2003). The reliability and validity of the resistance to change (RTC) scale were initially established in seven research studies that included exploratory and confirmatory analyses (Oreg, 2003). Resistance to change and its measurement scale have been used in several studies in a

variety of contexts (e.g., Campbell, 2006; Naus et al., 2007; Nov & Ye, 2008; Oreg, 2006). Oreg's scale has been validated in samples of 17 countries (Oreg et al., 2008). The resistance to change scale's construct validity included moderate correlations with traits that included intolerance for ambiguity (Budner, 1962), risk aversion (Slovic, 1972), and sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1994; Zuckerman & Link, 1968), the correlation report was negative. Oreg's number seven research study provided empirical support for correlations between individuals' resistance to change scores with a .91 correlation.

The construct of the research study included individuals' reactions to different kinds of changes. The results showed the expected patterns of relationships with different personality traits. The research study consisted of 139 job applicants, with 41% of them being women (Oreg, 2003). The research study participants included applicants of a large variety of jobs, chemical plant operators, physicists, sales managers, and secretaries.

The survey instruments were located using Walden University's library. The Psych-tests database contains survey instruments used for research purposes. According to the survey developers, there is no need for permission to use these surveys if credit is given to the authors and used for academic research purposes only.

The resistance to change scale includes statements about employees' orientation toward change. The scale is a six-point Likert-type scale that ranges from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). The scale has been further validated in a variety of research studies and has consistently resulted in high-reliability coefficients and has confirmed construct and predictive validities (Nov & Ye, 2008; Oreg, 2003; Oreg et al., 2008). In Oreg's study, the scale's reliability coefficient alpha was .78. Alphas of the sub-

scales were .69, .79, .69, and .65 for routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity, respectively.

Scoring. The participants will be asked to rate the importance of the items on three different scales. The first scale is the employee empowerment scale which consists of four items on a five-point Likert scale, strongly disagree/not at all invested to strongly agree/strongly invested. The second is the resistance to change scale, consisting of 17 items on a six-point Likert scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree. The final scale is the servant leadership scale, which consists of seven items on a seven-point Likert scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree. The numeric responses for each scale will be summed to obtain a total score for each of the scales. Each scale will be divided by the number of items in each scale to create a mean score that reflects the original unit of measurement. According to Vogt and Johnson (2016), some scales include statements of a single measurement that are stated differently, in opposite directions. For the responses to be combined into a single meaningful total score, the items must be in the same direction for proper scoring. This can be accomplished by reversing the scoring. To accomplish this, scores for these items are high scores that become low scores, and the low scores become high scores. Items 4 and 14 on the resistance to change scale will be reverse scored. The last item on the employee empowerment scale will be reverse scored. The servant leadership scale does not contain items that need reverse scoring.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan for this research study incorporated IBM SPSS statistical software. IBM SPSS provides inferential and correlational statistics for research studies.

According to Hinton et al. (2014), IBM SPSS software has been used in previous research studies that included behavioral, social, and educational sciences.

The data results from the survey were cleaned and processed using Microsoft Excel. The process of cleaning data ensured that missing data and outliers were excluded. This provided a clean data set for the research. The research study participants that completed the surveys were included in the data analysis. Incomplete surveys were not included in this research study.

The research questions for this study are:

Question 1: What relationship exists between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment?

H₀1: There is not a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment.

H₁1: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment.

Question 2: What relationship exists between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance?

H₀2: There is not a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

H₁2: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

A simple linear regression analysis was incorporated to provide a description, control, and prediction for this study (Green & Salkind, 2013). The regression analysis uses a parametric test that follows certain assumptions that include normality, linearity, and homogeneity (Plonsky & Oswald, 2017). A correlational research design addresses hypothesized relationships between variables (Echambadi et al., 2006). This study desired to find a relationship among employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, its impact on employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

The validity of research is important because the research instruments must provide a meaningful measure of the survey instruments. The researchers must understand threats to internal and external validity (Slack & Draugalis, 2001). This research study provided several types of validity pertaining to this research study.

According to Steckler and McLeroy (2008), social sciences require measurements to be quantified in research. The quantification of constructs, abstracts, and intangibles are elements that are not visible and thus must be measured. External validity must be generalized and transferable to a population. The results of the research study must be consistent within the population. To address the threats to external validity, the sample of the population will include male and female employees and all educational levels of these participants. This will be done to reduce the external threat and allow for the generalization of the research results. The research study will utilize surveys that have

previously been tested and validated in past research studies. These survey instruments will effectively measure the constructs of this research study.

Internal Validity

Creswell (2014) stated that internal validity is the observed outcomes in a study. Internal validity is due to independent variables or experimental manipulations investigated in the research study. This excludes any other factor or set of factors. To determine if a research study has internal validity, a research question should be asked about changes in the outcomes of the research study. The researcher should ask if there is a possibility that can be attributed to an alternative explanation that the research study did not explore. This research study is not an experimental design and is not seeking a cause-and-effect relationship between variables.

Construct Validity

According to Farh et al. (2012), construct validity is established when inferences are drawn, and the scores of the tests are related to the concepts of the research study. Creswell (2014) noted that construct validity is the degree in which the variable, test, questionnaire, and instrument can measure a theoretical concept that a researcher is hoping to measure. To determine if a research study has construct validity, the researcher should determine if the research study has sufficiently measured the key concepts of the study.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received from the Walden University IRB. The IRB approval number is 07-21-21-0996591. The ethical considerations have been taken into consideration. The research participants for this study were selected via SurveyMonkey. When using ethical guidelines, the goal is to cause no harm to any survey participant. According to Wester (2011), the 2005 ACA Code of Ethics offers guidelines pertaining to ethical issues in research (ACA, 2005, Section G). The researcher's goal is to engage in responsible research. The use of the guidelines should ensure the validity and confirmability of the quantitative research. Lock and Steele (2015) reported some additional considerations should be taken into account. Examples of these considerations are how comfortable employees are with questions, decisions, and findings. In addition, would they believe that the researcher had their best interest in mind?

Members of SurveyMonkey sent a link by email to the participants for this research. The participants that chose to take this survey were provided a consent form. The participants were notified that their participation would be strictly confidential. The consent form included the purpose of the research study. The participants clicked the yes, I consent form, thus allowing the participants access to the research study. The participants had the option to opt out of the survey, thereby mitigating risks to the participants.

The initial e-mail consisted of the following information that stated participation in this study was completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will not be

any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time. By submitting this form, you are indicating that you have read the description of the study, are over the age of 18, and that you agree to the terms as described.

Upon conclusion of the research study, all research data will be stored on an external hard drive. The hard drive and all hard copies of the research data will be stored in an electronically locked safe. The researcher will be the only person with the combination to the safe. After seven years, the researcher will contact a private shredding company to destroy all hard copies of the research data from the research study. The research data on the external hard drive will be wiped clean of all research data, and the hard drive will be reformatted.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory as it related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. The study determined that there was a relationship between employee perception of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance. The participants for this research were employees from small businesses in Tennessee. In this study, a small business was defined as a business with fewer than 50 employees. The independent variable is employees' perceptions of servant leadership style. The dependent variables are

employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The survey instruments that used in this research study included the employee empowerment scale (Park et al., 2014), the resistance to change scale (Oreg et al., 2008), and the servant leadership scale (Liden et al., 2008). These survey instruments were used to determine that there was a relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employee resistance. In Chapter 4, I discuss the findings of the collected and analyzed data.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory and the relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee.

Two research questions guided this study. I used the first research question to examine the relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. Based on research question one, the null and alternative hypothesis were developed, and they are H₀: There is not a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. H₁: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. The second research question assessed whether there was a relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Based on research question 2, the null and alternative Hypotheses are H₀: There is not a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. H₁: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The results of hypothesis 2 indicated a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The hypotheses were evaluated using simple linear regression.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, the results of the data cleaning process are discussed, followed by demographic information of the sample and descriptive statistics of the study variables. Next, the results of the regression analysis, along with an examination of their assumptions, are discussed. Finally, a summary of the results is provided in the last section.

Data Collection

Data Cleaning

Data collection for this research study occurred over a 48-hour timeframe during August 2021. The recruitment process included the solicitation of survey participants via SurveyMonkey. As outlined in Chapter 3, the minimum number of participants for this research study was calculated by G-Power to be a total of 82 participants. However, SurveyMonkey returned a total of 176 survey participants. This discrepancy can occur when the qualification rate of a group of people who qualify for the survey submit responses in rapid succession post-launch (and before the system detects that the project has fulfilled the original order of responses).

As previously mentioned, G-Power calculated 82 survey participants were needed for this research study via SurveyMonkey. However, while conducting the survey, SurveyMonkey returned a total of 176 respondents for this research study. I used 176 participants, which would be a total of 214% of 82.

Prior to conducting statistical analysis, the data were screened for missing values and univariate and multivariate outliers. A screening of the data revealed no missing values in the data, as all the responses provided by the participants were complete; thus, no participants were removed from this research study. The values for the composite variables of servant leadership style, employee empowerment, and employee resistance were obtained by calculating the average of their corresponding items. In addition, the data for these variables were screened for univariate outliers using z scores. A z -score above 3.29 or below -3.29 would be identified as an outlier and removed from the analysis. Critical values for the z scores were determined based on the alpha level of 0.001. Following this procedure, no univariate outliers were detected as all of the values fell into the range of -3.29 to 3.29. After that, the data were assessed for multivariate outliers using the Mahalanobis distance measure. The critical value for this measure was determined at $\chi^2_{(0.001)}=16.27$, which was obtained based on the alpha level of 0.001 and the degree of freedom of 3, corresponding to the number of the variables being examined. However, after examining the data for multivariate outliers using this approach, it was revealed that no Mahalanobis distance values exceeded the critical value. Therefore, no multivariate outliers were detected. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 176 employees.

Although the study results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the variables, practical significance must be considered. Practical significance is concerned with the magnitude of the effect and where statistical significance relates to the effect that exists. In addition, the effect size could be small, medium, or large. A large

effect size means that research finding has practical significance and can be generalized to the population (Kirk, 1996). Small effect sizes indicate a limited practical application; however, no statistical test can tell if an effect is large enough to be important in a study; thus, I must use my knowledge in my field to determine if it is important enough to be generalized. The R-squared value of .25 indicated a large effect size, revealing that servant leadership style accounted for about 25% of the variation in employee empowerment. The R-squared value of .12 indicated a medium effect size, revealing that servant leadership style accounted for about 12% of the variation in employee resistance (Van den Berg, n.d.). Even though the effect size ranged from medium to large, it is still essential to generalize the finding of this research so that managers of organizations might note the importance of servant leadership style on employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

Demographic Information

The demographics for this study included employees aged 18+ working at privately owned small business service organizations via SurveyMonkey. The education target level included all educational levels. No races in the sample were excluded.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. This table shows that servant leadership style had a mean of 4.57 ($SD = 1.17$), employee empowerment had a mean of 3.29 ($SD = 0.64$), and employee resistance had a mean of 3.76 ($SD = 0.69$). The skewness values demonstrated that none of the distributions were highly

skewed as all of these values were between -1 and +1. The kurtosis values indicated that the distributions did not have heavy tails, as these values were between -1 and +1. The histograms of the study are displayed in Figures 1-3, outlining the variables along with a normal curve shown on the plots.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Employee Empowerment	1.75	5.00	3.2	.64	-.26	-.21
Servant Leadership Style	1.00	7.00	4.57	1.17	-.13	-.07
Employee Resistance	1.59	5.41	3.76	.69	.010	.40

Figure 1

Histogram of Employee Empowerment

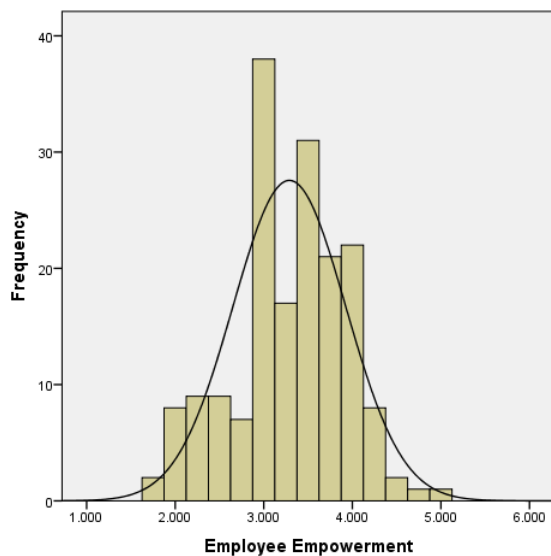
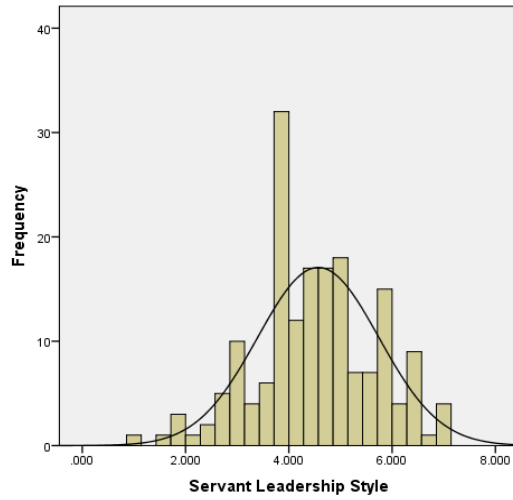
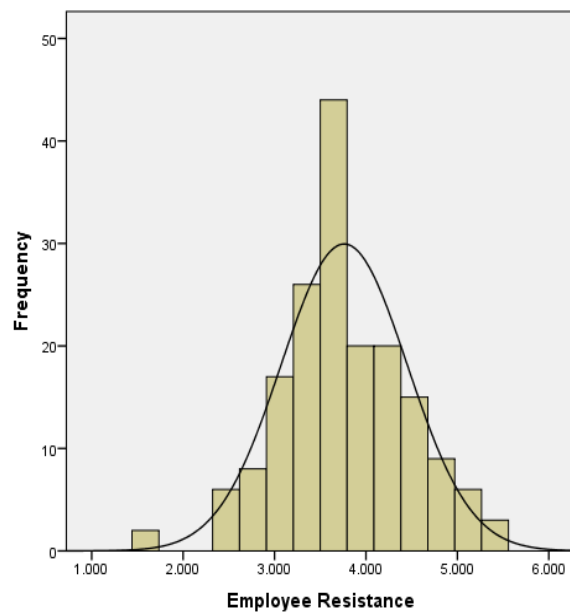


Figure 2*Histogram of Servant Leadership Style***Figure 3***Histogram of Employee Resistance*

Study Results

This section presents the results of testing these research hypotheses using simple linear regression. Two regression models were used with servant leadership style as the independent variable in both models, employee empowerment as the dependent variable in model 1 corresponding to Hypothesis 1, and employee resistance as the dependent variable in model 2 corresponding to Hypothesis 2. In order to ensure that the conclusions drawn based on these models were reliable, I checked the normality, linearity, and homogeneity assumptions of these regression models.

The linearity assumption states that the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable must be linear. I checked the assumption in each model; the scatter plot of the dependent variable against the independent variable was examined for a linear trend to support the linearity assumption. This plot would be examined for a linear trend to support the linearity assumption. Additionally, the normality assumption states that the residuals of the regression model approximately follow a normal distribution. Utilizing P-P plots of the residuals, I checked the normality assumptions. The observations, in general, should be near the normality line to support that this assumption is valid. Finally, the homoscedasticity assumption states that the variance of residuals is approximately equal across the values of the dependent variable. Examining the scatter plots of the residuals versus predicted values checked this assumption. To consider this assumption valid, no pattern should be observed in these plots, and the data points should be distributed approximately similarly across the values of the standardized predicted values.

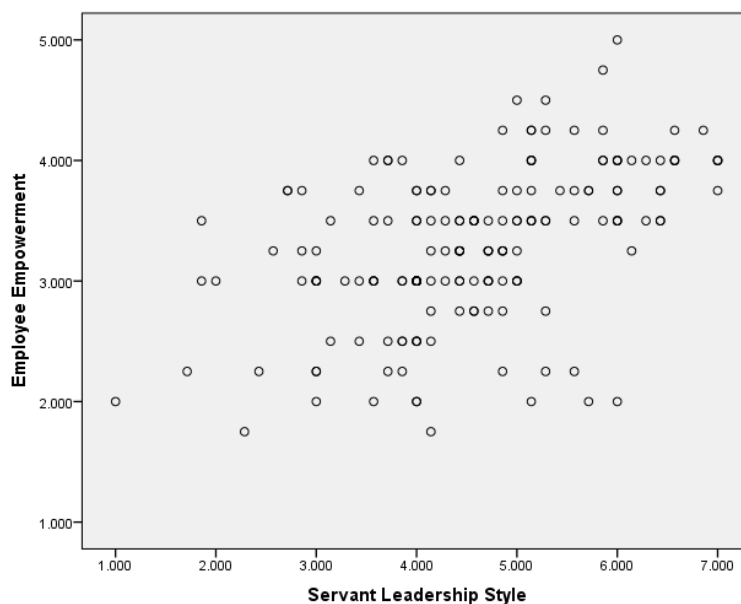
Hypothesis 1

A significant relationship exists between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. I tested the hypothesis using linear regression. Examining the assumptions prior to interpreting the regression model results ensured validity.

Utilizing the scatter plot of servant leadership style against employee empowerment (Figure 4), I checked the linearity assumption of the regression analysis. This plot showed that there appears to be an upward trend in the data indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee empowerment increases. Therefore, there did not seem to be any clear violation that the relationship between these variables was not linear.

Figure 4

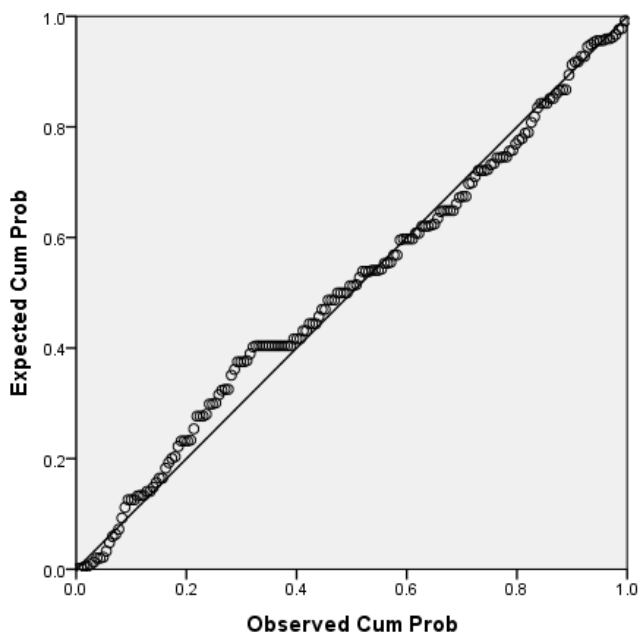
Scatter Plot of Servant Leadership Style Versus Employee Empowerment



I created the P-Plot of the residuals to examine the normality assumption of the residuals (Figure 5). Although the observations slightly deviated from the line, this plot did not indicate significant deviation from normality as most data points fell close to the line. Thus, the normality assumption of the residuals seemed to be met.

Figure 5

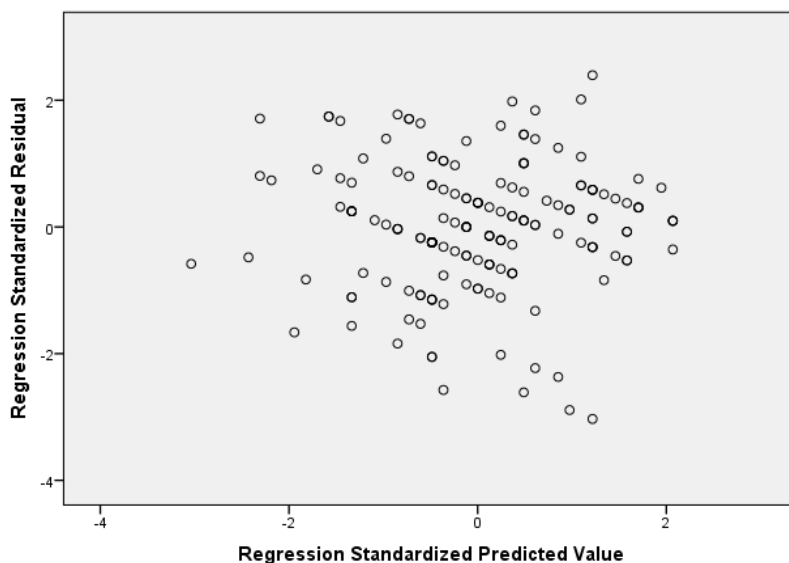
P-P Plot of the Standardized Residuals for Model 1



I examined the scatter plot of the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values (Figure 6), and I assessed the homoscedasticity assumption. The scatter plot found no violation of the homoscedasticity assumption. There did not appear to be a pattern in the observations. The data points were approximately similarly distributed to the left and right of zero on the x-axis and above and below zero on the y axis. Thus, it appeared that the homoscedasticity assumption was met.

Figure 6

Scatter Plot of the Standardized Residuals Versus the Standardized Predicted Values



Upon verifying the assumptions of the regression model, the results of this model and an interpretation of the results, and an evaluation of Hypothesis 1 are presented. The results of the regression model indicate a statistically significant, $R^2 = .25$, $F(1,174) = 57.95$, $p < .001$. The R-square value of .25 indicated that approximately 25% of the variation in employee empowerment could be explained by servant leadership style. Furthermore, servant leadership style was a significant predictor of employee empowerment, $B = 0.27$, $t = 7.613$, $p < .001$, indicating that a positive and significant relationship existed between the two. The results provided evidence to reject the null Hypothesis 1.

Table 2

Model Summary for Regression Model 1

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.50	.25	.25	0.55

Table 3*ANOVA Results for Regression Model 1*

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17.72	1	17.72	57.95	<.001
Residual	53.21	174	0.306		
Total	70.93	175			

Table 4*Coefficient Estimates for Regression Model 1*

Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.05	0.17		12.23	<.001
Servant leadership style	0.27	0.04	.500	7.61	<.001

Hypothesis 2

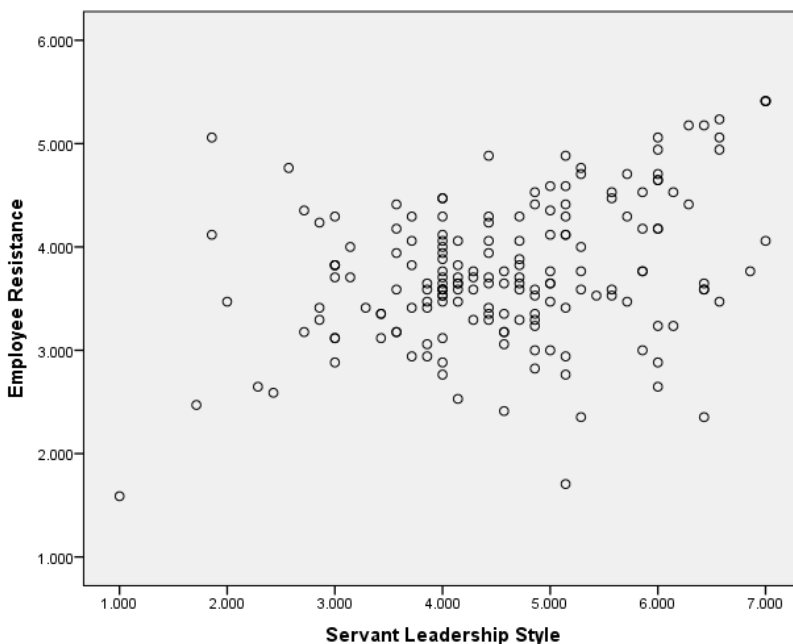
Hypothesis 2 is as follows; there is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. To test the hypothesis, I used simple linear regression with servant leadership style as the independent variable and employee resistance as the dependent variable.

Before interpreting the results, several assumptions of this model regression were examined as follows.

I checked the linearity assumption, using the scatter plot of servant leadership style against employee resistance (Figure 7). The plot did not indicate a violation of the linearity assumption. There appears to be a slightly upward trend in the data points, which indicates that employee resistance increases while servant leadership style increases. Therefore, it appeared that the linearity assumption was met.

Figure 7

Scatter Plot of Servant Leadership Style Versus Employee Resistance

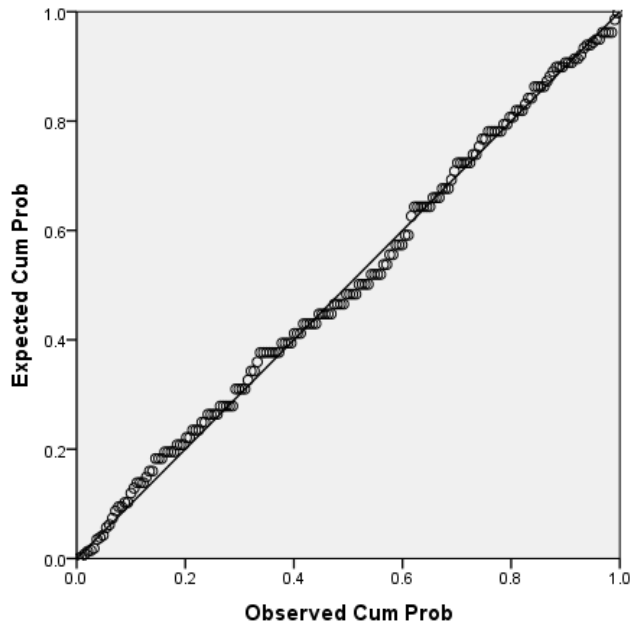


I used the residuals of the P-P plot to examine the normality assumption of these values (Figure 8). This plot did not indicate substantial deviation from the normality line as the data points fell close to the line. Thus, the residuals appeared to be approximately

normally distributed, indicating that the normality assumption of the residuals seemed to be met.

Figure 8

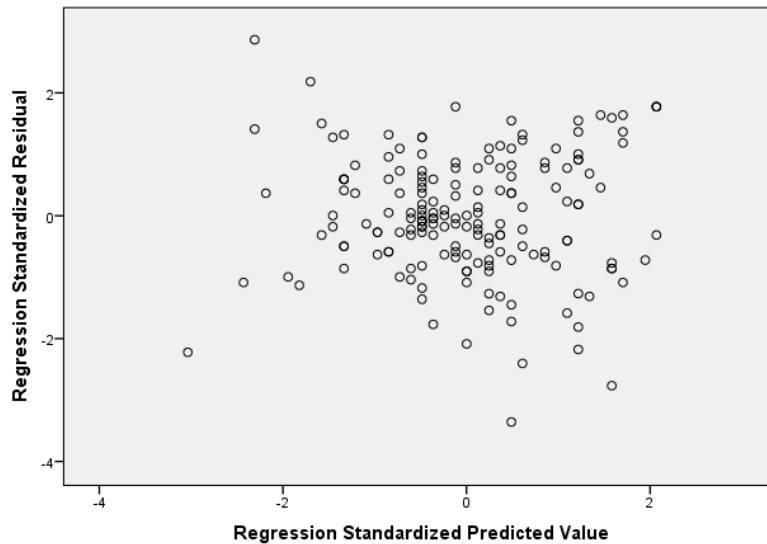
P-P Plot of the Standardized Residuals for Model 1



I utilized the scatter plot of the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values to assess the homoscedasticity assumption (Figure 9). There did not appear to be a pattern in the plot, and the data points were approximately similarly distributed to the left and the right of zero on the x-axis and above and below the zero on the y-axis. This plot provided support that the homoscedasticity assumption of the residuals was met.

Figure 9

Scatter Plot of the Standardized Residuals Versus the Standardized Predicted Values



The scatter plot above shows that the regression analysis assumptions seemed valid, providing evidence that the results obtained based on the simple regression analysis were reliable. Upon verifying the assumptions of the regression model, the results of this model and an interpretation of the results, and an evaluation of Hypothesis 2 are presented.

The results showed the regression model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .12$, $F(1,174) = 24.40$, $p < .001$. The R-square values of .12 indicated that servant leadership style explained about 12% of the variation in employee resistance. Additionally, servant leadership style was a significant predictor of employee resistance, $B = 0.21$, $t = 4.940$, $p < .001$, indicating a significant positive relationship between these variables. The results provided evidence to reject the null Hypothesis 2.

Table 5*Model Summary for the Regression Model 2*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.35	.12	.12	0.65

Table 6*ANOVA Results for Regression Model 2*

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	10.23	1	10.23	24.40	<.001
Residual	72.96	174	0.42		
Total	83.19	175			

Table 7*Coefficient Estimates for Regression Model 2*

Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.82	0.20		14.36	<.001
Servant leadership style	0.21	0.04	.35	4.94	<.001

Park et al. (2014) used the employee empowerment scale to analyze motivating employees, which included a research study that adopted a 16-question survey from Huang (2001) to measure trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. A preliminary analysis of measurement for reliability was performed using SPSS 20

program. The dependent variables intrapreneurship and scouting were examined. Cronbach's alpha reported .98 for intrapreneurship and .96 for scouting. The three independent variables, managerial receptiveness of employees' innovative effort, employee empowerment, and communication symmetry were examined. The Cronbach's alphas reported .88, .87, and .83 for these variables. Liden et al. (2008) utilized the servant leadership scale developed in 2008. The servant leadership scale is appropriate in quantitative correlational research. In their research, the variables included servant leadership, knowledge sharing climate, team performance, previous quarter sales, and the number of team members. This research was an attempt to explore the relationship between servant leadership and the variables. The validation of this study was conducted using confirmatory factor analysis to verify that servant leadership and knowledge-sharing climate were able to be differentiated from each other. The results indicated a satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2 = 185.08$, $df = 39$, $p < .001$; comparative fit index = .99, Tucker-Lewis's index = .98, root mean square error of approximation = .04). Furthermore, factor loading of all items included in each construct were appropriately loaded above 50 (minimum = .63, maximum = .90). Permission to use this instrument is allowed if used for academic research. The participants included 2,965 direct sales representatives within 77 sales teams within a cosmetics company in South Korea. The company was selected for research because it represents similar companies in South Korea. The researchers were provided with access to the sales team's financial performance data; 1,979 survey forms were returned from 70 direct selling sales teams. After matching these with sales team data, 95 survey forms from three teams were deleted because they could not be

reliably matched. In the end, 1,884 survey forms from 67 sales teams remained for analysis.

The resistance to change scale was developed by Oreg (2003). The scale has been further validated in a variety of research studies and has consistently resulted in high-reliability coefficients and has confirmed construct and predictive validities (Nov & Ye, 2008; Oreg, 2003; Oreg et al., 2008). In Oreg's study, the scale's reliability coefficient alpha was .78. Alphas of the sub-scales were .69, .79, .69, and .65 for routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity, respectively.

Table 8

Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	N of items
Employee Empowerment Scale	0.821	0.823	3
Servant Leadership Scale	0.857	0.857	6
Resistance to Change Scale	0.820	0.818	16

I utilized IBM SPSS to conduct a Cronbach's alphas to process a reliability report on the employee empowerment scale, servant leadership scale and the resistance to change scale. The Cronbach's alphas were similar in the previous research studies. It is generally known that Cronbach's Alpha ranges between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating that the survey or questionnaire is more reliable.

Summary

I used the statistical data analysis results for this study and utilized simple linear regression analyses to examine the research questions and their hypotheses. Before interpreting the results of the regression models, the linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity assumptions were confirmed. The results of these assumptions seemed valid for both models. The result of the regressions demonstrated that the data provided support for both research hypotheses 1 and 2. These results indicated that a significant relationship existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment (Hypothesis 1). The association was positive, indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee empowerment increases. In addition, a significant association existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance (Hypothesis 2). The association was also positive, indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee resistance increases. I will discuss the results, implications, and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory in relation to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. I applied social exchange theory to examine employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The study results indicated a relationship among employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance the study variables. Social exchange theory was essential in conducting my study because social exchange theory is based on relationships between individuals. In addition, social exchange theory influences an employee's goals toward organizational commitment.

The participants for this study were members of SurveyMonkey. Utilizing a simple linear regression statistical test, I used IBM SPSS software to analyze the data. The survey instruments for this study were from Walden University's Psyc TESTS database. The survey instruments did not require written permission from the instrument authors as long as they were used for educational purposes. The permission to use these survey instruments is located at the bottom of page one of each instrument. The survey instruments can be found in Appendix A, B, and C. Appendix A is the employee empowerment scale. Appendix B is the resistance to change scale. Appendix C is the servant leadership scale.

I utilized a non-experimental correlational research design with a quantitative methodology to determine if there was a relationship between the employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. I used the servant leadership scale to investigate the variable employees' perceptions of servant leadership style regarding measuring emotional healing, value for the employee, employee growth and success, and putting employees first. I used the empowerment scale to investigate the variable employees' perceptions of employee empowerment to assess job satisfaction, professional growth opportunities, and job training. Finally, to investigate the variable employees' perceptions of employee resistance, the resistance to change scale was used to measure routine-seeking, emotional-reaction, short-term-focus, and cognitive-rigidity.

In summary, I used the Servant Leadership Scale to investigate the variable employees' perceptions of servant leadership style regarding measuring emotional healing, value for the employee, employee growth and success, and putting employees first. I used the Empowerment Scale to investigate the variable employees' perceptions of employee empowerment to assess job satisfaction, professional growth opportunities, and job training. Finally, to investigate the variable employees' perceptions of employee resistance, the Resistance to Change Scale was used to measure routine-seeking, emotional-reaction, short-term-focus, and cognitive-rigidity.

Interpretation of Findings

I used two linear regression analyses to examine the two research questions and the associated hypotheses. Before interpreting the results of the regression models, the linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity assumptions were confirmed. The result of the regression analyses provided support for both research Hypotheses 1 and 2. These results indicated a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment (Hypothesis 1). The association was positive, indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee empowerment increases.

In addition, a significant association existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance (Hypothesis 2). The association was also positive, indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee resistance increases. An unexpected finding of this study was the positive association between servant leadership style and employee resistance. This unexpected finding means that leaders will not know how to deal with servant leadership style and employee resistance. Leaders need to investigate and determine which leadership style works best for their organization. Organizational leaders need to find a balance between employee empowerment and employee resistance.

The results of this study confirmed the previous research in the following areas: servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Several vital elements impact the perceptions that employees form about organizational leaders and organizations, such as

leadership style and trust. Therefore, leaders should consider the essential elements to create a positive employee perception of servant leadership style and employee empowerment.

The findings indicated a significant relationship existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment that confirms previous research by Murari and Kripa's (2012) and Rivkin et al.'s (2014) studies. Their research found that servant leadership can impact an employees' emotional health and feelings of employee empowerment. Murari and Kripa stated that employees have their own sense of servant leadership qualities, and when leaders portray these qualities, employees feel a sense of empowerment. In addition, servant leadership style has been linked to positive employee empowerment in the workplace, thus increasing employees' feelings of employee empowerment.

The results of this study also indicated a significant relationship existed between servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The association was positive, indicating that employee resistance increases as servant leadership style increases. Resistance to change has slowed employees from embracing organizations' change initiatives. Based on previous research, it is unknown what the root cause of employee resistance is in small businesses, and because of this unknown factor, further research should be conducted in order to identify the cause, thus, reducing employee resistance. Conducting further research on employee resistance will add to the body of knowledge based on the lack of research on employee resistance.

In the context of the theoretical framework, social exchange theory, this study examined why and under what conditions employees' perceptions of servant leadership style were related to employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in a small business with less than 50 employees. Utilizing social exchange theory resulted in the confirmation of a positive relationship between the variables. In the case of employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, the result was positive, meaning employee empowerment increased. In the case of employees' perceptions of employee resistance, the result was also positive, meaning employee resistance increased.

My study also confirmed that utilizing servant leadership style increased employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. Previous researchers like Conway and Monks (2008) and Kuvaas (2008) have concluded that training, performance appraisal, employee participation, and employee rewards can improve an employees' shared perceptions of an organization that supports and positively motivates employee citizenship behavior. Efforts to involve employees in the decision-making can be perceived differently between management and employees. Previous research supports the assumption that some employees are limited to participation and the decision-making process, which could increase employee resistance. On the other hand, according to Scott-Ladd et al. (2006), some managers believed they tried to include and encourage greater employee involvement and participation within the organization to decrease employee resistance. My study disconfirmed previous research regarding employees'

perceptions of employee resistance. Instead, the results of my research study showed that servant leadership style increased employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

This study also suggests that servant leadership style increased employees' perceptions of employee empowerment. Previous research has concluded that managers still make most of the critical decisions within the organization instead of the employees making the decisions. Employees are more likely to adhere to the commitments they have agreed upon when employee commitments have been made voluntarily by the employee (Sull & Spinosa, 2007). There are many different approaches to employee involvement and the decision-making process in the workplace. Examples such as time off, company policies, and compensation are daily decisions that these managers make. These decisions tend to be the more critical decisions that frontline employees will not be responsible for making (Delbridge & Whitfield, 2001). In addition, some employees lack the education and experience necessary to identify specific problems or issues that require an immediate decision. Employee empowerment programs encourage employee participation for the organization's desired outcomes (Eylon & Bamberger, 2000). The organizational goal is important and can improve employee communication, employee commitment, and employee efficiency (Delbridge & Whitfield, 2001).

It has been documented in business articles and scholarly research that a common thread regarding how employees perceive their managers and organizations, meaning the degree of employee involvement, which is also a part of the employee empowerment process, has not been considered thoroughly by organizational leaders. Organizations that include employees in the decision-making process create a positive employee perception

(Mikkelsen et al., 2017). In this case, positive employee perceptions refer to servant leadership style and employee empowerment. The results of my research suggest that employees can be empowered if leaders involve employees in the decision-making process, which in turn can promote employee empowerment. Conversely, employee negative perceptions about organizational leaders can affect how employees perform their job tasks. Human resource action conducted in leadership, cross-functional integration, training, technology, culture, and communication, if implemented correctly, can positively influence employee perception of organizational change (Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015). Positive employee perception of employee empowerment can benefit the leaders and the organization (Cherif, 2020; Gupta, 2015).

Limitations of the Study

In this study, limitations included the following: region of the country, age of the participants, sample size, business with 50 or fewer employees, and non-English speaking employees. This study was conducted in the southern region of the country, specifically Tennessee. In addition, the participants for this study included employees who were 18 and older. Another limitation was that managers did not participate in this research study.

I outlined in Chapter 1 the possible limitation of participants having limited knowledge concerning employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in the private sector. These limitations included limited perspectives of employees within the millennial category due to their limited employment experiences. Additionally, this includes unemployed participants. These participants may have had a

bias against certain types of leadership styles. Some participants may lack the educational background to answer some or all of the survey questions. As a result, participants may not have provided accurate responses to the survey questions. Some participants may be near the retirement age and have no vested interest in the survey results. In addition, some participants may disagree with social exchange theory and servant leadership theory. Because of this, participants may lean to the side of employee resistance and disagree with employee empowerment, and the possibility that some races may perceive the evaluation of leadership style as a type of disrespect towards management within their organizations. Covid 19 impacted the data collection. During this time, small businesses were closing and some of the contacts I had were no longer available. SurveyMonkey was used however it may not be an option for other researchers.

Recommendations

Due to the changing dynamics of business organizations, business environments, competitive advantage, and diverse workforce, leadership strategies should continue to progress to remain effective and competitive in the workplace. Deriving additional knowledge from future research in employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employees' resistance, which could help organizational leaders embrace changes within the business world. Further research can also help contribute to knowledge about servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The research study also has practical implications for small business leaders who incorporate servant leadership styles to improve employees' perceptions of their leaders. Leadership style could have a possible negative effect on an organization; therefore, the organization should attempt to keep the wrong type of leader from leadership positions. In addition, the research could provide small business leaders with ways to identify disengaged employees who resist employee empowerment opportunities.

I used quantitative analysis to explain employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employees' resistance. Future qualitative research might provide a deeper insight into why some employees are more empowered by servant leadership style. Also, an experimental or mixed methods research study could produce information from servant leaders and employees. In addition, this future research might also explain why some employees are more resistant to servant leadership style.

Further research recommendations could include adding managers in addition to frontline employees and the inclusion of companies with more than 50 employees. The reason to add managers is to gain their perspective on servant leadership style. Another recommendation would be to include larger companies that are not sole proprietor-type companies. Additionally, conducting a study that includes a broader range, such as adding more states, would improve the results' validity, reliability, and generalization.

This research study excluded employees under the age of 18. Another recommendation is taking into consideration the possibility of employees that are minors, 16-17-year-old employees. An additional recommendation is to include non-English

speaking employees. Another recommendation is to include managers with five years or more of management experience within an organization. Another recommendation would include managers who have completed managerial training, including employee empowerment and employee resistance training. A final recommendation would be to include the owner and owners of the company. In conclusion, the recommendations from this research study could add to the body of knowledge of servant leadership style, employee perceptions of employee empowerment, and employee perceptions of employee resistance. In addition, this research might also explain why some employees are more resistant to servant leadership style.

Implications

Small businesses, such as micro-firms, are the backbone of worldwide economies (Nolan & Garavan, 2016). Small businesses are essential and necessary to the economy in that they lead to job creation and the sustainment of economic welfare (Nolan & Garavan, 2016). However, Achtenhagen et al. (2017) noted a lack of attention in understanding business development activities related to small businesses. The results of this research could help leaders decrease employee turnover by increasing employee empowerment through servant leadership style. The results of this research could help leaders decrease employee turnover by increasing employee empowerment through servant leadership style. Servant leadership style incorporates leading by example and mentoring employees, thus positively impacting organizational goals and profitability. The social change implications include an opportunity for managers and leaders to empower employees to become more engaged.

The positive relationship between servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment could improve communication between leaders and employees. In addition, the positive relationship between servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment could help leaders improve the employees' perceptions of the empowerment process. Servant leadership style can empower employees by leading by example, communicating effectively with employees, and mentoring. Because of this positive relationship, leaders can use servant leadership style to help increase employee empowerment and decrease employee turnover. However, the research results also showed that servant leadership style increased employees' perceptions of employee resistance which can increase employee turnover. Additionally, the results of this study may help small businesses improve employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Therefore, organizational leaders could garner insight from this study to improve organizational performance.

The results of this study indicated that a significant relationship existed between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee empowerment (Hypothesis 1). The association was positive, indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee empowerment increases. In addition, the study revealed a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance (Hypothesis 2). The association was also positive, indicating that, in general, as servant leadership style increases, employee resistance increases. The relationship between servant

leadership style and employee resistance was an unexpected finding which could negatively impact the organization's performance.

This study confirms previous research on the practice of servant leadership style, which can improve working with colleagues to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The principles and practices of servant leadership style could inspire employees and actively reduce interpersonal conflict (Jit et al., 2017; Murari & Kripa, 2012; Orlan & ve DiNatale-Svetnicka, 2013). In addition, research conducted by Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2019) suggested that servant leadership style can play a significant role between the leader and the employee, based on proper communication and trust

Conclusions

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research study was to examine social exchange theory related to employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance within small businesses in Tennessee. I applied social exchange theory to examine employees' perceptions of servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. The results of the study indicated two relationships between the variables. First, there was a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The first finding found a positive relationship between servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of empowerment. However, the second finding regarding the relationship between servant leadership style and employees' perceptions of employee resistance was negative. This finding showed that increasing servant leadership style increased employee resistance, thereby having a negative impact on the organization. Previous research conducted by Appelbaum et al. (2015) and Akan et al. (2016) also discussed negative impacts on organizations.

According to Kiker et al. (2019), servant leadership was defined as antecedents, for example, someone who aspires to lead and the consequences of servant leadership upon the employee. Servant leadership has the potential to improve the employees' organizational outcomes. Researchers concluded a positive impact of servant leadership on employee performance. However, based on the results of my study, servant leadership style increased employees' perceptions of employee resistance.

The results of my study indicated a statistical significance between the variables, thus rejecting both null hypotheses. Practical significance is concerned with the magnitude of the effect size. In addition, the effect size could be small, medium, or large. According to Kirk (1996), a large effect size means that research finding has practical significance and can be generalized to the population. Small effect sizes indicate a limited practical application; however, no statistical test can tell if an effect is large enough to be important in a study; thus, I must use my knowledge in my field to determine if it is important enough to be generalized. The R-squared value of .25 indicated a large effect size, revealing that servant leadership style accounted for about 25 percent of the

variation in employee empowerment. The R-squared value of .12 indicated a medium effect size, revealing that servant leadership style accounted for about 12 percent of the variation in employee resistance (Van den Berg, n.d.). Reporting effect size is still essential to generalize the finding of this research so that managers of organizations might note the importance of servant leadership style on employees' perceptions of employee empowerment and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Social exchange theory is based on relationships between leaders and employees and was essential in my research study. In addition, social exchange theory influences an employee's goals toward organizational commitment.

This study was twofold. First, this study was conducted to address the gap in current literature associated with servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance in small businesses in Tennessee. Secondly, this research study was designed to provide information to business leaders to have a better understanding of the impact of their leadership style and how it can impact their employees.

According to Thacker et al. (2019), upper management attempts to equip leaders with leadership skills that positively impact employees. Servant leaders focus on employees and executive leadership before their own needs. Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019) noted that servant leaders would like employees to become more autonomous. A servant leader serves employees in hopes of leading employees.

Martin (2014) noted a connection between employee empowerment and servant leadership style on the overall organization. Murari and Kripa (2012) found that some

leadership styles impacted the employee empowerment process. This positive impact can potentially create competitiveness among the employees in the organization. On the other hand, Montgomery and Arensdorf (2012) noted that ineffective leadership within an organization could cause problems and discontinuity of operations.

Chopra and Chopra (2012) agreed that organizational leaders must adapt and create successful change initiatives to remain competitive. Several factors could contribute to employee resistance, such as the organization's immaturity, traditions, ideologies, weak leadership, lack of perceived benefits, lack of technical skill, lack of communication, and fear of losing power. Employee resistance can have a negative impact on the organization. Kulkarni (2016) proposed that the negative impact can cost the organization considerable time and result in the loss of profit. Aslam et al. (2016) and Fuchs and Prouska (2014) noted that some of these change initiatives are successful, and others fail due to employees resisting the organizational change effort. Mathews and Linski (2016) offered those leaders and managers must reevaluate employee resistance to organizational change to support employees and organizational goals.

Further research should be conducted on servant leadership style, employees' perceptions of employee empowerment, and employees' perceptions of employee resistance. Future research on the topics could provide valuable information for the sustainability of managers and employees. In addition, the continuation of this research could also provide employees with better communications and the creation of better policies and procedures.

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Appendix A: Employee Empowerment Scale

Employee Empowerment Scale Version Attached: Full TestPsycTESTS Citation: Park, S.

H., Kim, J.-N., & Krishna, A. (2014). Employee Empowerment Scale [Database record]. Retrieved from Psych TESTS. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t37812-](http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t37812-000)

000Instrument Type: Rating Scale Test Format:

The Employee Empowerment Scale consists of 4 items rated on 5-point Likert-type scales with scale anchors ranging from 1 (strongly disagree/not at all invested) to 5 (strongly agree/strongly invested). Source: Park, Soo Hyun, Kim, Jeong-Nam, & Krishna, Arunima. (2014). Bottom-up building of an innovative organization: Motivating employee intrapreneurship and scouting and their strategic value. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28(4), 531-560. doi: 10.1177/0893318914541667, © 2014 by SAGE Publications. Reproduced by Permission of SAGE Publications. Permissions: Test content may be reproduced and used for non-commercial research and educational purposes without seeking written permission. Distribution must be controlled, meaning only to the participants engaged in the research or enrolled in the educational activity. Any other type of reproduction or distribution of test content is not authorized without written permission from the author and publisher. Always include a credit line that contains the source citation and copyright owner when writing about or using any test.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t37812-000>Items

This organization designates formal idea (project or venture) champions.

This organization makes resources available for experimental projects.

This organization encourages employees' critical inputs to improve managers and business.

This organization does not care how I am doing.

The last item on the employee empowerment scale will be reverse scored.

Appendix B: Resistance to Change Scale

Resistance to Change Scale Version Attached: Full TestPsycTESTS Citation: Oreg, S. (2003). Resistance to Change Scale [Database record]. Retrieved from Psych TESTS. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t00513-000> Instrument Type: Rating Scale Test Format: Six-point Likert scales, which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Source: Oreg, Shaul, Bayazit, Mahmut, Vakola, Maria, Arciniega, Luis, Armenakis, Achilles, Barkauskiene, Rasa, Bozionelos, Nikos, Fujimoto, Yuka, González, Luis, Han, Jian, Hřebíčková, Martina, Jimmieson, Nerina, Kordačová, Jana, Mitsuhashi, Hitoshi, Mlačić, Boris, Ferić, Ivana, Topić, Marina Kotrla, Ohly, Sandra, Saksvik, Per Øystein, Hetland, Hilde, Saksvik, Ingvild, & van Dam, Karen (2008). Dispositional resistance to change: Measurement equivalence and the link to personal values across 17 nations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 93(4), 935-944. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.93.4.935 Permissions: Test content may be reproduced and used for non-commercial research and educational purposes without seeking written permission. Distribution must be controlled, meaning only to the participants engaged in the research or enrolled in the educational activity. Any other type of reproduction or distribution of test content is not authorized without written permission from the author and publisher. Always include a credit line that contains the source citation and copyright owner when writing about or using any test.

doi: 10.1037/t00513-000

Items Routine seeking

1. I generally consider changes to be a negative thing.
2. I'll take a routine day over a day full of unexpected events any time.
3. I like to do the same old things rather than try new and different ones.
4. Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it. a (Reverse Scored)
5. I'd rather be bored than surprised.

Emotional reaction

6. If I were to be informed that there's going to be a significant change regarding the way things are done at school, I would probably feel stressed. b (Job setting)
7. When I am informed of a change of plans, I tense up a bit.
8. When things don't go according to plans, it stresses me out.
9. If one of my professors changed the grading criteria, it would probably make me feel uncomfortable even if I thought I'd do just as well without having to do any extra work.

Short-term focus

10. Changing plans seems like a real hassle to me.
11. Often, I feel a bit uncomfortable even about changes that may potentially improve my life.
12. When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if I think the change may ultimately benefit me.
13. I sometimes find myself avoiding changes that I know will be good for me.

Cognitive rigidity

14. I often change my mind. a (Reverse Scored)
15. I don't change my mind easily.
16. Once I've come to a conclusion, I'm not likely to change my mind.
17. My views are very consistent over time.

Items a 4 and 14 is reverse coded. Item b when used in a job setting, these items are rephrased to fit the organizational context. Resistance to Change Scale

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Appendix C: Servant Leadership Scale

Servant Leadership Scale-7 Version Attached: Full Test PsycTESTS Citation: Liden, R.

C., Wayne, S. J., Meuser, J. D., Hu, J., Wu, J., & Liao, C. (2015). Servant

Leadership Scale-7 [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t41818-000> Instrument Type: Rating Scale Test Format:

Responses for the 7 items use a 7-point "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"

response scale. Source: Liden, Robert C., Wayne, Sandy J., Meuser, Jeremy D., Hu,

Jia, Wu, Junfeng, & Liao, Chenwei. (2015). Servant leadership: Validation of a short

form of the SL-28. *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol 26(2), 254-269.

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doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t41818-000>

Item Number

SL-28SL-791 My leader can tell if something work-related is going wrong.

17 2 My leader makes my career development a priority.

1 3 I would seek help from my leader if I had a personal problem.

5 4 My leader emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.

22 5 My leader puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.

15 6 My leader gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.

27 7 My leader would NOT compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.

Servant Leadership Scale-7 SL-7PsycTESTS™ is a database of the American Psychological Association

Appendix D: G*Power 3.1 Sample Size

