Servant Leadership in the Light of the Positive Organizational Scholarship Trend

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this article is to analyse servant leadership in the context of the Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) stream. The article seeks to examine how servant leadership influences the development of the organization and the well-being of its members, as well as how these two elements mutually permeate and support each other. The article highlights the assumptions of the Positive Organizational Theory stream, which offers a focus on the resources inherent in employees' strengths, bringing results for both employees and the organization.

Design/methodology/approach: The main research problem is: How can servant leadership, as a management practice, be effectively integrated with the principles of POS to improve organizational performance and employee well-being? It is also important to identify which specific aspects of servant leadership have the greatest impact on positive outcomes within an organization. In line with the stated research problem, a research hypothesis has been formulated, suggesting that organizations that implement servant leadership principles in accordance with Positive Organizational Scholarship achieve higher levels of employee engagement, better organizational results, and greater well-being among team members compared to organizations that do not. For the purposes of the study, research methods such as literature analysis were used, based on which an attempt was made to characterize servant leadership as a management style that supports a positive organization in its holistic approach to human development and its pursuit of balance between the transactional and social dimensions of operation. Additionally, the method of synthesis and deduction was applied, which allowed for a logical construction of conclusions that may serve as a foundation for further empirical or theoretical research.

Findings: Adopting the analysis of organizations through the lens of POS and servant leadership enables an understanding of the benefits of viewing employees and the outcomes of their work through the perspective of positivity. Positivity allows for the appreciation of employees' strengths while simultaneously fostering an organization based on values that build partnerships between the parties in a business relationship.

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Practical implications: *The conducted study aims not only to confirm the proposed hypothesis but also to provide practical guidelines for organizations that wish to implement servant leadership in accordance with POS principles. The study results may serve as a basis for developing management strategies focused on building a positive organizational culture, where the development of individuals and teams goes hand in hand with achieving exceptional results.*

Originality / Value: *The aim of the article is to introduce the topic of servant leadership and its connection to the Positive Organizational Scholarship stream. Presenting these concepts will help to understand how servant leadership can be viewed and analysed within the framework of POS, as well as how it can contribute to creating a work environment that fosters both organizational efficiency and the well-being of its members.*

Keywords: *Psychological capital, intellectual capital, leader, manager, Positive Organizational Scholarship, positivity, servant leadership, wellbeing.*

JEL codes: *M12, O34.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

1. Introduction

Servant leadership is a management concept that prioritizes the well-being and development of team members, organizations, and communities. Servant leaders focus on supporting others, showing empathy, ethics, and fostering the personal and professional growth of their colleagues, while also creating a positive organizational culture. Instead of dominating or imposing their will, such leaders inspire and motivate by serving as role models.

Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) is a scientific approach to management that explores how organizations can perform at their best by promoting well-being, personal and social development, and achieving outstanding results. POS emphasizes the positive aspects of organizational life, such as trust, optimism, hope, resilience, and other virtues that can lead to success both at the individual and group levels.

Servant leadership and POS share many common principles and values, such as the pursuit of creating a positive organizational culture, the emphasis on the development of individuals and teams, and the promotion of psychological and emotional well-being in the workplace.

Servant leadership can be seen as the practical application of POS principles in the daily operations of an organization. In the context of POS, servant leadership not only contributes to the personal development of team members but also helps build more sustainable, ethical, and effective organizations.

The aim of the article is to introduce the topic of servant leadership and its connection to the Positive Organizational Scholarship stream. Presenting these concepts will help to understand how servant leadership can be viewed and analysed within the framework of POS, as well as how it can contribute to creating a work environment that fosters both organizational efficiency and the well-being of its members.

2. Leadership Challenges in the Contemporary Economy

The issue of leadership is gaining importance with the changes taking place in the modern economy and organizations. Trends that affect the external environment of enterprises, as well as elements of their internal systems, influence the evaluation and updating of management processes.

The fundamental phenomenon of the post-industrial era is the use of knowledge. A knowledge-based economy treats knowledge as the main source of growth. Through the generation, distribution, and application of information and knowledge, organizations shape their key competitive advantages (Skrzypek, 2011).

The development of knowledge enables the creation of innovations. According to the Central Statistical Office, innovation refers to the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, organizational method, or new marketing method in economic activities (GUS, 2012). In a broader sense, innovation is not only a breakthrough solution but practically any improvement that leads to progress compared to the previous state (Ulijn and Brown, 2004).

As Glińska-Neweś emphasizes, every employee of an organization, regardless of their function and position in the hierarchy, is a co-author of new solutions and plays an important role in building them (Glińska-Neweś, 2017). In times of great specialization and technological development, it is not possible for innovative concepts to be the result of the efforts of individual employees.

A satisfactory final result will only be achieved through good cooperation characterized by a pro-innovation organizational climate. Its elements include, among others: openness in communication, acceptance of diverse approaches, the possibility of taking risks, a sense of security, and trust (Isaksen and Ekvall, 2010).

Internal knowledge transfer and sharing is the result of relational capital, the quality of which depends on the culture of collaboration, positive interactions between people, mutual trust, and the open communication of opinions.

Changes in the modern organizational environment, the professional environment of enterprises, and the nature of work are immense. The challenges include (Wong and Davey, 2007):

- the accelerating pace of social change, including the growing generational diversity of employees, which results in changing attitudes and expectations towards employers,
- the rapid development of technology, altering the nature of work and creating demand for new skills,
- organizational problems that weaken employees' trust in employers,
- a specific leadership crisis, expressed in unsatisfactory soft skills among leaders and a focus on "putting out fires,"
- the increasing financial and human costs of poor leadership.

The image of a modern organization is changing significantly in response to challenges. It is becoming a system of interconnected, virtual pathways that, thanks to technology, enable communication between employees in different locations in a convenient, cost-effective, and fast way. Organizations and their parts are forming into network and project structures to ensure easier access to information, facilitate faster knowledge diffusion, and improve collaboration (Pietruszka-Ortyl, 2007).

The rapid advancement of communication technology means that working on tasks and delivering results is becoming increasingly efficient. Instead of traveling to the office, virtual meetings are organized, eliminating the effort required for commuting and optimizing the use of the critical resource, which is time.

However, this increasingly important way of organizing comes at a cost, already noticed during the pandemic. The challenge lies in building a sense of belonging and team integration, relationships between employees, and their feeling of being part of the group.

Managing in the post-pandemic period, carried out in remote and hybrid work environments, is becoming increasingly demanding due to the overall high volatility of the environment. As a result of many turbulences and the constant need to adapt to new conditions, the psychophysical state of employees and leaders has deteriorated.

According to the results of a nationwide survey conducted as part of the "Closer to Each Other" campaign in 2024, with a group of 1,300 people, 47% of employees and 50% of leaders admit that they feel tired of the constant changes. It turns out that 52% of employees and 51% of leaders feel emotionally overwhelmed as a result, which is an increase of 10 percentage points among employees and 20 percentage points among leaders compared to the previous edition in 2022 (Closer to Each Other 2024 Campaign Report).

Employees, aware of the need for continuous adaptation, point out in the Polish study that essential competencies for this include: psychological resilience (32% of responses), quick learning (29%), teamwork (26%), and coping with stress (Closer to Each Other 2024 Campaign Report).

These are competencies often referred to as "human" skills, which relate to the ability to express and control emotions, a sense of security within the group, and respect for others. Providing the right conditions that foster the use of employees' potential is a critical responsibility for leaders. They must understand the needs of their subordinates and the business context, but above all, they must demonstrate competencies that allow them to fulfil their role in line with the expectations of both internal and external stakeholders.

The leader's focus must emphasize respect for the employees' autonomy, their growing independence in the knowledge management paradigm, and sensitivity to their pursuit of well-being. Well-being is understood as the balance between an individual's resources (psychological, social, and physical) and the challenges they face (psychological, social, and physical) (Kulig-Moskwa, 2018).

The role of a leader is becoming increasingly difficult to perform. They are expected to exhibit many traits simultaneously: flexibility, authenticity, transparent communication with knowledge workers, charisma, and the ability to remain calm in crisis situations.

The challenge is to lead people in a way that allows them to flourish despite external challenges, to calm their fears about the future, and to provide support in the face of constant uncertainty. The ultimate goal is the growth of the company, but also the well-being of employees. The combination of both sides' interests seems possible through the implementation of Positive Organizational Leadership principles.

3. The Assumptions and Origins of the Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) Approach

The idea of the Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) approach—a positive concept of organizations—originated at the University of Michigan in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century, as a result of research by K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, and R.E. Quinn, who are considered the founders of this concept.

The publication of their book, "Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline", in 2003, popularized the proposed approach. The textbook, with its idea of recognizing the positive concept of organizations as a new scientific discipline, received considerable interest, but also initial criticism from some researchers who accused this approach of wishful thinking, naivety, bias, excessive optimism, and even detachment from the real business world (Zbierowski, 2012; Glińska-Neweś, 2010).

With the increasing number of studies cited in respected scientific journals and presenting appropriate methodological rigor (Zbierowski, 2012), the criticisms faded, and the POS idea gradually expanded its influence on management theorists and practitioners.

The goal of the positive organizational concept is to study the positive outcomes, processes, and characteristics of organizations and their members (Cameron *et al.,* 2003). The founders treated their mission as a complement to the science of organization and management, as well as a change in perspective, concerning (Zbierowski, 2012):

- The omission in traditional approaches of phenomena such as forgiveness, compassion, the impact of integrity and virtues on organizational activities, creative dynamics, or positive deviations (understood as positive deviations from the established norm).
- Traditionally, dealing with these phenomena did not meet the criteria of scientific rigor, focusing instead on difficulties and deficits, and ways to solve problems (e.g., resistance to change and overcoming it, conflict resolution, communication barriers and their elimination). Traditionalists assumed that eliminating or preventing problems would automatically lead to the revelation of positive phenomena. However, such an approach does not always work—focusing on problems can frustrate and block action rather than motivate it. Utilizing employees' strengths and appreciating their efforts unleashes their energy and potential (Roberts *et al.,* 2005).
- The search for a broader view of effectiveness in traditional organizational science, which relates it only to financial indicators and hard data. This way, the human nature of employees and their pursuit of fulfilment, happiness, and satisfaction are overlooked. According to positive organizational theory, effectiveness measures should also include: well-being and thriving.
- The underestimation of the role of trust, solidarity, and empathy in crisis situations, where mutual support and understanding are sought. Limiting oneself to plans, strategies, and goal calculations reduces the possibilities of overcoming crises and learning desirable attitudes.

The POS approach characterizes its focus on the positive orientation of organizational phenomena and processes. Zbierowski and Bratnicki (2014) proposed the concept of a positive orientation for high-efficiency organizations. According to this concept, he presented five dimensions of positivity along with their specific manifestations.

These dimensions include positive leadership, positive organizational culture, positive organizational strategy, positive organizational structure, and positive human capital (Zbierowski and Bratnicki, 2014). Each dimension is described by its characteristic manifestations of positivity in Table 1.

The mentioned manifestations of positivity and inspirations for the concept of Positive Organizational Scholarship should primarily be sought in the field of positive psychology, represented by M.E.P. Seligman.

Table 1. *Dimensions and manifestations of a positive organization*

Dimensions of a positive organization	Manifestations of positivity
Positive leadership	- Trust in employees - Fair treatment of employees - Entrepreneurial alertness – focusing on market opportunities and utilizing them - Clear rules and principles of cooperation - Looking to the future with hope and optimism
Positive culture in the organization	- Open culture, free from communication barriers - Sharing knowledge and experience - Social integration of employees - Courtesy and sense of humour in relationships - Innovation, creativity - Ability to work under pressure - Acceptance of risk - Pursuit of self-improvement
Positive strategy of the organization	- A distinguishing vision is a consensus among managers and employees at various levels - Strategic goals stemming from the vision, are clearly defined, ambitious, and realistic - The strategy is rooted in key values, which are clear and shared by employees - Good relationships with stakeholders consider their needs and create value for them
Positive structural organization	- Decentralized - Based on autonomy - Providing employees with a sense of significance - Ensuring cooperation among different departments and functions
Positive human capital	- Employees are engaged in their work - They identify with the organization - They have a high sense of the purpose of their work - They work diligently and are not discouraged by failures - They demonstrate internal motivation and a prosocial attitude. They achieve satisfaction from their work and creating value for stakeholders - They seek to improve their own effectiveness in performing tasks

Source: *Own work based on Zbierowski and Bratnicki, 2014.*

It is believed that "positive psychology is a field of scientific research and psychological practice that focuses on the abilities and skills through which people are able to meet challenges, achieve a high quality of life, develop their own potential, and better cope with life's difficulties" (The Polish Society of Positive Psychology). At the core of positive psychology is the assumption that humans strive to achieve a happy life and seek ways to attain it.

They possess psychological capital (Psychological Capital, PsyCap), which constitutes internal psychological resources that bring benefits and can be developed (Zbierowski, 2012). Psychological capital is an individual positive "state" of development characterized by (Luthans *et al.,* 2007 and Peterson *et al.,* 2011):

1. Hope – the ability to set pathways towards desired goals and the belief in one's ability to take actions that lead to achieving those goals (Snyder, 2002). It is a positive motivational state that consists of willpower and belief in the ability to act effectively, leading to expected positive outcomes from one's own efforts (Lipińska-Grobelny, Pawlak 2018). People with a higher level of hope cope better with stress, establish relationships more easily, and adapt more quickly to change (Lipińska-Grobelny, Pawlak 2018).
2. Self-efficacy – the belief in one's effectiveness in dealing with obstacles and difficult situations (Lipińska-Grobelny, Pawlak 2018). This belief influences the increase in motivation to act.
3. Psychological resilience (resilience) – the ability to overcome difficult life situations and return to psychological equilibrium. People with high resilience adapt more easily to changing conditions, cope better with adversity and stress, recover more quickly, and exhibit better overall functioning in life (Fredrickson, 2001).
4. Optimism – an individual's expectation for more frequent positive than negative life events. Optimism fosters good psycho-physical well-being, success, and greater resistance to stress (Lipińska-Grobelny, Pawlak 2018).

Psychological capital fosters the development of human capital (knowledge, experience, abilities, skills) as well as social capital (building relationships and networks), and, through feedback, has its source in them (Zbierowski, 2012).

The positive psychology approach to the individual is expressed by searching for sources of "happiness, health, strength, and virtues" (Czapiński, 2004), developing psychological capital, kindness, interpersonal skills, courage as a source of health, and flourishing (Seligman in: Czapiński, 2004). The goal is to improve the well-being and quality of life for every individual.

This is an alternative approach to the disease model, in which traditional psychology analyses the causes of poorer conditions, focusing on dysfunctions, diseases, and their symptoms (Moćkałło, 2016). However, this does not mean that positive psychology negates the traditional approach; rather, it complements it with a perspective that becomes a form of prevention for conditions that lower satisfactory levels of emotional and psychological functioning.

Although positive psychology is the primary reference for the assumptions of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), it should be noted that POS also has roots in economic sciences and concepts developed within the framework of the organization and management theory (Czekaj and Ziębicki, 2013).

According to Cameron *et al.* (2003), the dynamic development of the positive concept of organization is complementary to the direction of the evolution of management theory and concepts, reflecting significant changes in its areas (Czekaj and Ziębicki, 2013). While the weakness of scientific management and the administrative approach was the insufficient attention paid to employee needs and sources of their effectiveness, the theory of interpersonal relations and the behavioural school emphasized reinforcing psychosocial conditions of work.

Proponents of this direction (especially E. Mayo in his experiment) highlighted the importance of employees' social needs and the creation of a respectful, good work atmosphere. The result of effort in such a professional environment is high efficiency and achieving exceptional results. Interest in employees expressed by management, care, and appreciation are the building blocks of trust, a positive attitude, satisfaction, and engagement (Lachiewicz and Matejun, 2020). Meeting social needs within the group increases its morale, gives the individual a sense of purpose, and builds good relations among its members (Czekaj and Ziębicki, 2013).

In the field of humanizing management and work, represented by D. McGregor, references to positivity can also be observed (Zbierowski, 2012). This author points out two stereotypical approaches of management to perceiving a subordinates' engagement (Theory X and Y) (Lachiewicz and Matejun, 2020). Theory X assumes that employees are inherently lazy, have low aspirations, and should be subject to extensive control and supervision. Theory Y, having a positive dimension, states that people are engaged, like to work, and want to take responsibility. The attitude of management is crucial in creating conditions for employees to demonstrate these traits.

According to the resource-based view of management, an organization should utilize its internal resources, as they are the building blocks of strengths that translate into key competencies, making the organization competitive and capable of seizing market opportunities (Moczydłowska and Kowalewski, 2014).

The importance of employee strengths dynamically grows along the evolution of management theory and concepts towards knowledge management and learning organizations. However, what is also crucial is the self-awareness of leaders and employees. As P. Drucker states, "In a knowledge-based economy, success belongs to those who know themselves well, their strengths, values, and methods and style of work" (Drucker, 2003).

This concept, called "self-management," requires the development of emotional intelligence. Thanks to G. Goleman's work, emotional intelligence is considered one of the most important factors for individual success in modern management, and, as a competency, it can determine the exceptional performance of both employees and leaders (Glińska-Neweś, 2010).

According to G. Goleman, effective emotion management helps in establishing relationships with others, properly interpreting and understanding their behaviour, increasing emotional integrity, which enhances the chance for collaboration (Goleman, 2012).

In the discussion about sources of positivity in management sciences, it is also important to mention the positive dimension of organizational behaviour, particularly the concept of citizenship behaviour, prosocial and proactive behaviour, which positively result in increased organizational effectiveness and improved outcomes (Szostek, 2019).

The concept of a positive organization also has points of intersection with considerations of social capital, whose essence lies in recognizing positive values inherent in social interactions, especially in trust, norms, and integration, and whose utilization serves to shape group and organizational effectiveness (Glińska-Neweś, 2010).

4. The Manager and Leader

As indicated, managing a 21st-century organization is becoming an increasingly significant challenge due to the growing complexity of both the external and internal environment. The search for sources of competitiveness requires focusing on the company's intangible resources and creating a competitive advantage through human capital, owned by employees. Therefore, it should be assumed that the quality of people management will determine the final outcome, i.e., organizational effectiveness in shaping competitive advantage.

The external environment is subjected to many changes that companies must address by implementing adaptive actions within the organization. As shown by Polish research from the 2024 "Closer to Yourself" campaign, 38% of employees admit that they do not like changes. The main reasons are perceived stress, indicated by 42% of respondents, as well as the disruption of the daily routine (39%) and a sense of instability (35%) (Report of the "Closer to Yourself 2024" Campaign).

Considering today's weakened condition of employees, manifesting as burnout symptoms reported by 48% of respondents and mental exhaustion (47%), the role of the leader is crucial for enhancing engagement by reducing stress and uncertainty (Report of the "Closer to Yourself 2024" Campaign). As J.A.S. Stoner points out, to manage employees effectively, their supervisor must fulfil two basic roles (Stoner *et al.,* 2001):

- task-related, focusing on achieving goals,
- social, maintaining group cohesion and effective relationships with other team members, especially subordinates.

According to Armstrong a manager performs the following functions (Armstrong, 2007):

- interpersonal – motivating and providing support,
- informational – managing information,
- managerial – managing resources, assigning tasks, delegating,
- facilitating – removing obstacles and disruptions, preventing undesirable situations.

The literature extensively discusses the differentiation between the roles of manager and leader. A. Zaleznik began a broad discussion in his article "Managers and Leaders," clearly distinguishing between the two functions. According to him, a manager emphasizes rationality and control, and their actions are primarily based on realism, persistence, hard work, an impersonal approach to goals, and controlling processes.

Managers strive for stability. Leaders have a much more long-term perspective, expanding the range of possible solutions, even if it may cause temporary chaos in the team. Leaders establish connections in a more intuitive way, while managers focus primarily on tasks, engaging in relationships based on the roles employees play during task execution (Zaleznik, 2005).

Kotter argues that leadership complements management, rather than substituting it (Kotter, 2005). In the modern economy, both systems of action are necessary and require combining strong leadership with effective management and skilfully balancing them.

According to this author, managers are tasked with reducing complexity, while leaders develop the ability to handle changing conditions. A leader initiates changes and defines their direction, while a manager organizes reality through efficient planning, budgeting, and control. A leader unites people, a manager organizes and fills positions. A leader motivates, a manager audits and solves problems. Kotter's observation that leadership has nothing to do with charisma is noteworthy (Kotter, 2005).

According to Ł. Sułkowski, the traits connecting the concepts of manager and leader are: "decision-making within a social group and organization and the relationship between the authority figure and those subject to its influence" (Sułkowski, 2001). On the other hand, he notes that the difference lies in the type of relationship between the manager and employee – informal and partnership in the case of a leader, more formal in the case of a manager.

Leadership, according to Ł. Sułkowski, is associated, contrary to J.P. Kotter, with exerting influence through the leader's charisma and greater engagement from both

sides of the relationship. Management results primarily from substantive and formal authority. A comparison of both approaches is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. *Differences between the roles of manager and leader*

Social role elements	Management	Leadership
Aim	Formal and informal; coordinating the actions of the employee group to achieve organizational goals	Influencing the social group by the leader to achieve shared goals; either of the leader of the group itself
Group	The organization must have a formalized structure	The social group within which a process of power distribution has occurred
Key tasks	Employee control, motivation, problem-solving, communication with employees and the environment	Creating a vision for change and development; motivating and inspiring people; communication with employees and the environment
The type of relations	Manager - employees	Leader - supporters
Involvement of employees (influence on employees)	Formal and informal professional life; emotional engagement of both sides at varying levels (from none to strong)	Private and professional life; strong emotional engagement of both sides

Source: *Ł. Sułkowski, 2001.*

In complex operational conditions, both the rational element of management and its psychological aspects are extremely important for employees. However, it seems that exerting a positive influence and the manager's engagement in aligning with the situation at an emotional level are the elements that require many personal competencies from the manager, and thus reflect the quality of their leadership.
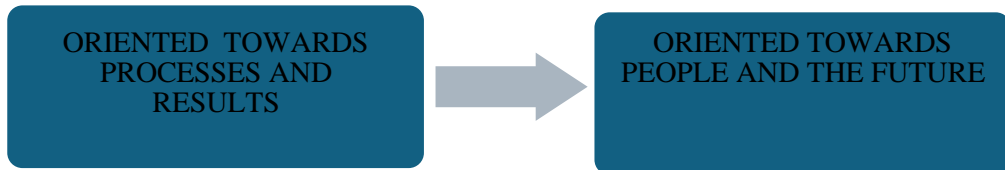
5. Servant Leadership

The challenges facing contemporary organizations necessitate the selection of a leadership style that addresses the following questions (Wong and Davey, 2007):

1. How to drive innovation development and shape the organization's positive approach to risk, thereby increasing its adaptability?
2. How to develop employees to unleash their creative potential?
3. How to create a positive workplace that attracts and retains talented employees?

Leaders are tasked with creating conditions that foster employee development and shape a positive work culture that will intensify pro-innovative behaviour and support employee autonomy.

According to P.T.P. Wong and D. Davey, the requirements for leadership signify a shift in focus from processes and outcomes to people and future potential (Wong and Davey, 2007) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *The proposed shift in leadership orientation in contemporary organizations*

ORIENTED TOWARDS PROCESSES AND RESULTS → ORIENTED TOWARDS PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE

Source: *Own elaboration based on Wong and Davey, 2007.*

According to researchers, the style of servant leadership offers solutions to challenges in leading people. This idea was introduced by R.K. Greenleaf in the 1970s, and today it is gaining particular interest in knowledge-based enterprises.

Servant leadership develops employees' strengths according to a humanistic vision, which maintains a balance between aggressive competition at all costs and respect for human dignity (Wong, 2010). At the same time, a servant leader focuses on the development of employees so they can realize their potential in areas such as: contribution to the community, task effectiveness, and developing skills necessary for future leadership (Liden *et al.,* 2008). The characteristics of a servant leader (Wong, 2010) include:

1. The leader exhibits humility and selflessly serves others.
2. The leader aims to achieve organizational goals by stimulating creativity and potential in employees.
3. The leader seeks to humanize the work environment, treating employees primarily as human beings deserving of respect.
4. The leader is committed to the continuous development of employees and retaining them within the organization.
5. The leader is responsible for creating a safe and positive work environment that fosters innovation and increases employees' intrinsic motivation.
6. The leader earns trust by prioritizing employees' justified needs over personal interests.
7. The leader gains respect by prioritizing benefits for employees and society over financial results.
8. The leader listens to employees with an open mind.
9. The leader develops good relationships through empathy, kindness, and emotional intelligence.
10. The leader enhances cooperation by building strong teams and involving employees in decision-making.

N. Eva and others recognize that servant leadership is a holistic approach to management, engaging employees in multiple dimensions, including ethical, emotional, relational, and spiritual, allowing people to develop not only their competencies but also to follow universal values (Eva *et al.,* 2019).

Similarly, P.T.P. Wong notes that the concept of servant leadership is rooted in humanitarian, spiritual, and ethical values that serve the mission of unlocking the positive potential of employees (Wong, 2010).

Servant leaders are characterized by 10 traits (Spears, 2019):

1. Listening – a servant leader actively listens. They seek to understand verbal, non-verbal, and nuanced messages. Based on what they hear and see, they can reflect on their own development.
2. Empathy – a servant leader treats others with respect and empathy, which is a fundamental value. They do not reject others due to mistakes, as they do not assume infallibility or malice.
3. Healing – a servant leader constantly works on improving relationships with others, believing in the importance of interpersonal relationships. Working on emotions is seen as a path to developing harmonious relationships.
4. Awareness – a servant leader understands their situation and is willing to step outside their comfort zone, adhering to values and ethical principles during leadership. They possess high self-awareness, allowing for a coherent and holistic view of situations.
5. Persuasion – a servant leader advocates for consensus and achieves it through open discussion without attempts at coercion. Their ability to persuade and openness limit their attachment to control and the use of authority to enforce compliance.
6. Conceptualization – a leader can translate their knowledge and experience into new situations and problems, looking long-term and being open to abstract ideas.
7. Foresight – a servant leader can act proactively, anticipating possible outcomes of current situations based on past experiences.
8. Stewardship – a servant leader dedicates their work to others, viewing their role as working for higher humanitarian goals and the good of society.
9. Commitment to the growth of people – a servant leader considers the professional and personal development of employees as one of their most important missions, taking responsibility for it.
10. Building community – the goal of a servant leader is to integrate employees and build a group identity that derives value from the community.

Recognition of servant leadership as the best leadership style, as claimed by P.T.P. Wong and D. Davey, is based on a combination of distinguishing traits and attitudes of the leader that translate into benefits for employees (Wong, 2010):

- The leader's sense of responsibility for developing people's potential and framing positive work conditions fosters the real use of employees' strengths and the acquisition of future leadership competencies.
- An ego-free attitude focused on enhancing security makes employees willing to take risks and try new things.
- Leaders' sensitivity to diversity increases self-confidence and self-esteem among all subordinates.
- A partnership attitude means delegating power to team members, who receive developmental incentives. This increases their sense of effectiveness and engagement.
- The leader's open attitude fosters autonomy, especially the knowledge sought by employees.
- The leader's open attitude enhances employees' intrinsic motivation to act in a changing and turbulent environment, shaping their hope and optimism.

Caring for employees becomes an excellent tool for preventing burnout and stress. The ethical stance of the leader attracts younger generations of employees who are sensitive to the negative effects of power abuse and seek authentic leaders. Such an attitude positively influences group relations.

Leaders play a decisive role in shaping organizational culture. According to M. Tenney, servant leadership has the most beneficial impact on organizational culture among other leadership styles, supporting employees due to the leader's authentic and positive attitude, which strengthens performance, engagement, and psychological safety (Tenney).

Research provides data on the positive impact of servant leadership on various areas of management (Table 3).

Table 3. *The Positive Impact of Servant Leadership in an Organization*

Benefits- positive impact	Source of literature
- Efficiency (improvement by 15-20%) - Productivity (increase by 20-50%) - Profitability	P.T.P. Wong (2010)
- Results of employees - Organizational involvement - Citizen behaviour	R.C. Liden, S.J. Wayne, H. Zhao, D. Henderson (2008)
Results of the team	M. Sousa, D. Van Dierendonck (2016)
Organizational results	A.I. Choudhary, S.A. Akhtar, A. Zaheer (2013)

● Innovative behaviour	A. Panaccio, D. Henderson, R.C. Liden, S.J. Wayne, X. Cao (2015)
● Knowledge sharing	L.T. Tuan (2016)
● Customer Service Quality	Z. Chen, J. Zhu, M. Zhou (2015)
● Employee and team creativity	J. Yang, H. Liu, J. Gu (2017)

Source: *Own elaboration based on Wong, 2010; Liden, et al., 2008; Sousa and Van Dierendonck, 2016; Choudhary et al., 2013.*

The concept of positive organizational theory understands the role of leadership and human resource management practices as essential in creating an environment where employees want to develop, exhibit mental resilience, positive energy, vitality, and humility (Roberts *et al.,* 2005). A similar approach is presented by servant leadership. In both cases, motives and factors are sought that contribute to the flourishing of people by utilizing what is best in them.

Positive leadership means assigning importance to values that are highly valued by the organization and also have universal human significance. Such values, also called virtues, include courage, justice, wisdom and knowledge, empathy, humility, and temperance understood as humility and moderation.

Servant leadership aligns with these values and suggests that a leader with a people-oriented attitude will seek extraordinary results in the development of psychological capital as a basis for positive attitudes. The "tools of positivity" of a servant leader, based on humanistic values, serve not only the knowledge workers themselves but ultimately enable the creation of innovative solutions and the generation of revenue for both the organization and the employees.

6. Conclusion

Conscious organizations of the 21st century are undergoing a kind of evolution in their approach to management. This evolution stems from the need to find an answer to a crucial question—how to ensure that the intellectual capital of the organization can be developed to increase innovation?

In seeking an answer, it becomes essential to define ways that will materialize the potential within employees in accordance with the needs of the company, but also with the human pursuit of well-being and a high quality of life. Adopting an analysis of organizations through the lens of POS (Positive Organizational Scholarship) and servant leadership enables an understanding of the benefits of viewing employees and the effects of their work through a lens of positivity.

Positivity allows appreciating the resources of employees while simultaneously creating an organization based on values that build partnerships between parties in the business relationship.

Forming positive teams, attitudes, and supportive processes requires leaders, on the one hand, to have entrepreneurial alertness, but on the other hand, self-awareness and the development of competencies that demand a much broader perspective on management than merely seeking quickly achievable benefits.

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