



## EFFECTS OF SERVANT LEADER BEHAVIORS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL (OCB-I) IN THE NIGERIA'S UTILITY INDUSTRY USING PARTIAL LEAST SQUARES (PLS)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the effects servant leader behaviors on employee organizational citizenship behaviors for the individual (OCB-I) among low and middle level employees of utility sector organizations in Nigeria. Specifically, this study examined the role of five servant leader behaviors - emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, helping subordinates grow and succeed and putting subordinates first - on one major forms of employee citizenship behaviors - organizational citizenship behaviors that benefit the individual (OCB-I). A sample of 325 employees was used for empirical testing, and Partial Least Squares Method (PLS) algorithm and bootstrap techniques were used to test the hypothesized relationships. The results provided support for most of the hypothesized relationships except two. Specifically, emotional healing, conceptual skills, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, are significantly and positively related to both OCB-I. However, creating value for the community is significantly but negatively related to OCB-I. Therefore, significant positive effects of emotional healing, conceptual skills, helping subordinates grow and succeed, and putting subordinates first suggest that the servant leader constructs are important in motivating followers' OCB-I in organizations. Enhanced performance of OCB-I can improve the overall effective function of organizations. Contributions, limitations, and implications are discussed.*

**Keywords:** Citizenship behaviors, Servant leadership, Emotional healing, Conceptual skills, Helping subordinates grow and succeed, Community service, Putting subordinates first.

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## Contribution/ Originality

This study uses Partial Least Squares (PLS) as a new estimation methodology in the study of servant leadership and OCBs. Additionally, for the first time, effects of five servant leader behaviors were assessed against OCB-I. OCB-I is a pair component of Williams and Anderson (1991) OCB construct.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important areas of concern among organizational theorists and practitioners is organizational effectiveness. A good mechanism for achieving it is through employees' willingness to perform their duties beyond the formal specifications of job roles, termed as organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is defined as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, 1988). Employee OCB also benefits organizations directly or indirectly.

OCB is defined as employees' willingness to go above and beyond the prescribed roles that they have been assigned (Organ, 1990). The OCB constructs (Williams and Anderson, 1991) include organizational citizenship behavior for the individual (OCB-I) and organizational citizenship behavior for the organization (OCB-O). The organizational citizenship behavior for the individual (OCB-I) was operationalized as a behavior that immediately benefits specific individual and indirectly contributes to the organization (Williams and Anderson, 1991). This study is concerned with only the OCB-I construct. This is because OCB-I construct is the most recognized OCB construct and most important to development of cooperation, team-work and organizational development.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian utility organizations including Nigerian Electric Power Authority (NEPA) now Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), Nigeria Telecommunication Company (NITEL) and various Water Boards in all the states of Nigerian Federation have been performing abysmally. The problem of poor performance among utility organizations has been a subject of considerable discussion. Despite heavy investment in capital infrastructures, and high recurrent expenditures, efficient and effective provision of electricity, telephone, water, and transport services has remained a heinous task to achieve. The Nigerian public utilities have started to experience decreasing performance since the Nigeria's oil boom years of the 1970s (Ariyo and Jerome, 2004). The problems in the Nigerian utility sector have unfortunately reached crisis proportions when the Nigeria's electricity power system almost collapsed by increasingly becoming erratic; water taps continuously remaining dry for most of the time; and the performance of telecommunication and postal services continuously remaining to be very unsatisfactory (Ariyo and Jerome, 2004). The bulk of the performance problems and deficiencies of the Nigerian utility sector could more appropriately be attributed to managerial inefficiencies and inappropriate leadership approaches.

A few studies have investigated the relationships between servant leadership and OCB generally (Ehrhart, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010; Hu and Liden, 2011; Güçel and Begeç, 2012; Hunter *et al.*, 2013). However, except Walumbwa *et al.* (2010) all the previous studies were concentrated in the US and Europe. In addition, none of the previous studies has focused on the employees of utility organizations. This study is unique in three different ways. In the first place, this study tries to investigate the effects of servant leader behaviours on the performance of OCB-I among the employees of utility organizations (electricity, telecommunications and water). Secondly, for the first time, this study has investigated the effects of servant leader behaviours on the performance of OCB-I in Nigeria. Nigeria is the biggest and most populous nation in the African continent with a population of about 170 million people. Thirdly, and more importantly, this study is unique from the previous studies because of the use of partial least squares (PLS) path analysis to establish the nature of the relationship between servant leader behaviours and OCB-I. Methodologically, therefore, this study would offer a new approach to explaining the empirical relationship between servant leader behaviours and OCB-I.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

With the help of the literature for this study and theoretical justifications, hypotheses for this study have been formulated for empirical testing and validation. This study has eight constructs namely emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, helping subordinates grow and succeed and putting subordinates first as the independent variables, and OCB-I as the dependent variable.

### **2.1. Servant Leader Behaviors and OCB-I**

Servant leadership behavior creates a pervasive positive social context that in turn positively affects subordinates' work attitudes and behaviors. Servant leaders provides situational response-producing stimulus from which their subordinates interpret and understand their environment (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2009) thus influencing subordinates' attitudes and behaviors in form of OCB-I.

A few studies have investigated the relationships between servant leadership and OCB (Ehrhart, 2004; Neubert *et al.*, 2008; Vondey, 2010; Hu and Liden, 2011; Güçel and Begeç, 2012; Hunter *et al.*, 2013). Ehrhart (2004) was the first to examine servant leadership and OCB among 298 employees of grocery departmental stores in the USA. He has tested a model in which perception of procedural justice climate was hypothesized as a mediator between servant leadership and OCB. He revealed an indirect significant relationship between servant leadership and OCB through the mediating effect of procedural justice climate. Neubert *et al.* (2008) also conducted another servant leadership-OCB study by examining the mediating effects regulatory focus has on the relationship between servant leadership and OCB among 229 US workers. Among other things, the results demonstrated that servant leadership through regulatory focus has significant positive effects on OCB. Additionally, Liden *et al.* (2008) provided additional

empirical evidence about the relationship between servant leadership and employee citizenship behaviors by using a sample of 298 students from a Midwestern university in the USA. They demonstrated that servant leadership at individual level makes a unique contribution beyond transformational leadership and LMX in explaining community citizenship behaviors.

Important to this study is the work of [Walumbwa et al. \(2010\)](#) who conducted a dyadic servant leadership-OCB study among 815 employees of seven multinational companies in Kenya. They examined the extent to which employee attitudes including affective commitment to the supervisor and self-efficacy and two specific group climates namely procedural justice climate and service climate, mediate the relationship between servant leadership and OCB. Results demonstrated support for indirect significant positive effect of servant leadership on OCB. A major weakness of the study is limited generalization as all the samples used were drawn from multinational companies. So, the findings may not be relevant to explain the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) in indigenous and public organizations. Thus, similar studies were needed in different work settings and cultural contexts. Against this background, [Walumbwa et al. \(2010\)](#) themselves stressed the need for a similar study in different organizational and cultural settings.

Similarly, [Vondey \(2010\)](#); [Hu and Liden \(2011\)](#) and [Hunter et al. \(2013\)](#) in the US; [Van Dierendonck and Nuijten \(2011\)](#) in Netherlands, and [Güçel and Begeç \(2012\)](#) in Turkey using different measures investigated the effects of servant leadership on OCB and found to a large extent significant relationship.

On the basis of previous literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated:

*Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional healing and organizational citizenship behaviors for the individuals (OCB-I)*

*Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between creating value for the community and organizational citizenship behaviors for the individuals (OCB-I).*

*Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between conceptual skills and organizational citizenship behaviors for the individuals (OCB-I).*

*Hypothesis 4: There is a significant positive relationship between helping subordinates grow and succeed and organizational citizenship behaviours for the individuals (OCB-I).*

*Hypothesis 5: There is a significant positive relationship between putting subordinates first and organizational citizenship behaviors for the individuals (OCB-I).*

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

Relationships between servant leader behaviors and OCB-I in this study were explained by the use of social exchange theory ([Blau, 1964](#)). The fundamental basis of social exchange theory is that relationships providing more benefits than costs will yield enduring mutual trust and attraction ([Blau, 1964](#)). These social transactions encompass material benefits (i.e. salaries, bonuses, and allowances) and psychological rewards in form of status, loyalty and approval [Yukl](#)

(1994). Central to both social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity is the concept of unspecified obligations. Unspecified obligations denote human behaviour that when one individual party does a favour to another, there exists an expectation of some future return from the other individual party.

Exchange relationships with the organization and with one's immediate supervisor are of great significance to subordinate employees (Jawahar and Carr, 2007). Based on social exchange theorem of unspecified obligations which is central to both the norm of reciprocity, employees' exchange relationship with the organization is influenced greatly by unspecified obligations. One of good mechanisms for the unspecified obligation to develop for employees is through servant leader behaviors. Employee OCB-I could be developed as a result of beneficial leadership behaviors employees experience in the course of their normal day-to-day relationships with supervisors or managers.

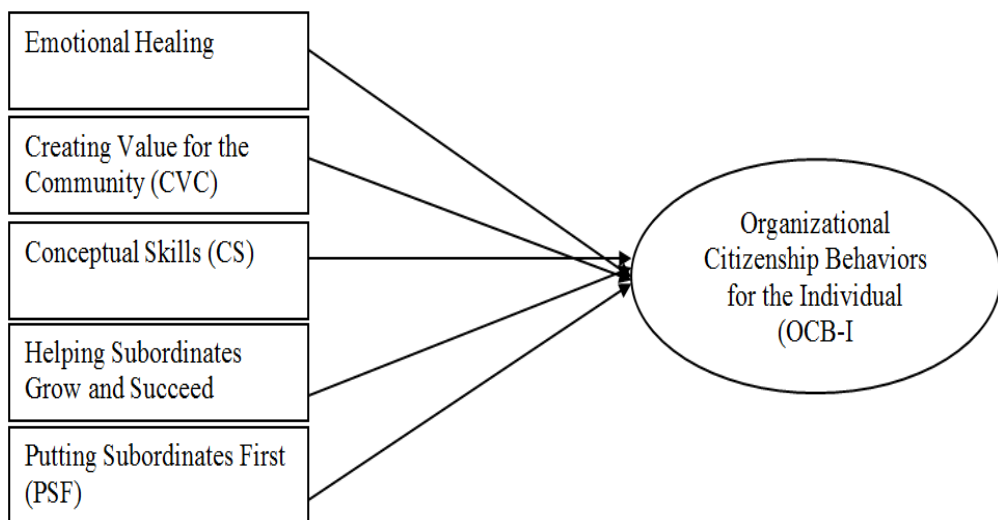


Figure-2.1. Conceptual Framework of Servant Leader Behaviors and OCB-I

Specifically, because servant leaders continually strive to heal emotionally, create value for the community, help solve organizational problems, helping subordinates grow and succeed, and putting subordinates first before any other consideration (Liden *et al.*, 2008) employees might be influenced to exhibit OCB-I. In other words, employees might be prompted to perform OCB-I to reciprocate the good gestures (good leadership behaviors) performed toward them by their leaders.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Sample

A sample of 291 middle and lower level employees from three utility organizations including PHCN, NITEL and Kano State Water Board operating in Kano State of Nigeria were used in this

study. Stratified probability sampling was employed in drawing the sample from the three utility organizations. Majority of the respondents were males (76%) and were non-supervisory (56%). Also most of the respondents have fallen within 31-40 age brackets, while respondents within the age bracket of 51 and above constitute the minority. In addition, data reveals that majority of the sample (56%) population have had quite long working experience. Finally, the descriptive statistics shows that majority (39%) of the respondents have had their first degree, or equivalent

### **3.2. Measures**

#### **3.2.1. OCB-I**

The organizational citizenship behavior for the individual was defined as a helping behavior of an employee towards another employee that indirectly contributes to organizational goal achievement (Williams and Anderson, 1991). The OCB-I construct was measured using 7 items of the Williams and Anderson (1991) instrument. Example of items concerning this construct is “I help others who have heavy workloads”. The composite reliability coefficient of this instrument was .94 in the study sample.

#### **3.2.2. Putting Subordinates First (PSF)**

This means the act of using actions and words to make it clear to the immediate followers that satisfying their work needs is a priority to the leader (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Putting subordinates first construct was measured using 3 items from Liden *et al.* (2008) instrument. Example of item concerning putting subordinates first is “My manager seems to care more about my success than his/her own”. The composite reliability coefficient of this instrument was .93 in the study sample.

#### **3.2.3. Helping Subordinates Grow and Succeed**

This is an act of demonstrating genuine concern for others’ career growth and development by providing support and mentoring (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Helping subordinates grow and succeed construct was measured using 3 items from Liden *et al.* (2008) instrument. Example of item concerning helping subordinates grow and succeed is “My manager makes my career development a priority”. The composite reliability coefficient of this instrument was .92 in the study sample.

#### **3.2.4. Conceptual Skills**

This means leader’s ability of possessing the knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand so as to be in a position to effectively support and assist others, especially immediate followers (Liden *et al.*, 2008). The conceptual skill construct was measured using 4 items from Liden *et al.* (2008) instrument. Example of items concerning conceptual skills is “My manager is able to

effectively think through complex problems'. The composite reliability coefficient of this instrument was .89 in the study sample.

### **3.2.5. Creating Value for the Community**

Creating value for the community refers to a conscious and genuine concern for helping the community by offering service to help them achieve their objectives (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Creating value for the community construct was measured using 4 items from Liden *et al.* (2008) instrument. Example of item concerning creating value for the community is "My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community". The composite reliability coefficient of this instrument was .90 in the study sample.

### **3.2.6. Emotional Healing**

This dimension is concerned with supervisor's act of showing sensitivity to others' personal concerns. Emotional healing construct was measured using 3 items from Liden *et al.* (2008) instrument. Example of item concerning emotional healing is "My manager cares about my personal well-being". The composite reliability coefficient of this instrument was .85 in the study sample.

The OCB-I construct that represented the endogenous construct of this study was among the famous two OCB constructs (OCB-I and OCB-O) developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). The 5 servant leader behaviors (emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, putting subordinates and helping subordinates grow and succeed) were derived from 7 dimensional servant leadership instrument developed by Liden *et al.* (2008). All the separate measurements representing 6 constructs of this study were combined into a single instrument and respondents were asked to rate their responses on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

### **3.3. Procedure**

The data in this study was collected using survey research. Copies of the questionnaire used were delivered to the respondents using hand delivery. Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which their supervisors exhibit certain servant leader behaviors and to what extent they perform certain extra-role behaviors that benefit their colleagues or superiors. Data were fed into to SPSS version 16 for cleaning and descriptive analysis and later exported to PLS for path for analysis.

## **4. ANALYSES AND RESULTS**

### **4.1. Measurement Model**

PLS principal component analysis was used to refine and fit the data for this study. After PLS confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), five of the seven servant leader behaviors (Liden *et al.*, 2008)

survived and were retained. Although the two dimensional constructs of OCB Williams and Anderson (1991) were retained, only OCB-I was used in this study. This study looked at organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) construct from individual perspective (OCB-I) because organization is an invisible entity, and, therefore, more logical to look at OCB from individuals' perspective.

The factor loadings from the final PLS measurement models were reported in Table 1. All items loaded significantly ( $> .50$ ) on their respective constructs, thus indicating items reliability. Composite reliability (Werts *et al.*, 1974) coefficients for scales used in the study have exceeded the minimum threshold level of .70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) which was indication of reliability of all scales used in this study (Table 1). In addition, results revealed that the variance extracted regarding all the constructs in this study exceeded the minimum threshold value of .50. This indicated convergent validity of all scales used in this study (Table 1).

Similarly in Table 2, Fornell and Larcker (1981) test for discriminant validity has demonstrated relatively high variance extracted for each construct compared to the inter-scale correlations, thus indicating discriminant validity of the 5 constructs involved in this study (i.e., OCB-I, PSF, HSGS, CVC, CS and EH).

- a. Composite reliability ( $\rho_c$ ) =  $(\sum \lambda_i)^2 / [(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum Var(\epsilon_i)]$ , where  $\lambda_i$  is the outer factor loading, and  $Var(\epsilon_i) = 1 - \lambda_i^2$  is the measurement error or the error variance associated with the individual indicator variable(s) for that given factor (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table-4.1. Convergence and Reliability Analysis

Construct	Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE
EH	SL1	0.78	0.85	0.60
	SL2	0.83		
	SL3	0.77		
CVC	SL5	0.81	0.90	0.70
	SL6	0.86		
	SL7	0.83		
	SL8	0.83		
CS	SL9	0.72	0.89	0.67
	SL10	0.83		
	SL11	0.88		
	SL12	0.85		
PSF	SL16	0.90	0.93	0.81
	SL17	0.92		
	SL18	0.88		
HSGS	SL24	0.95	0.92	0.78
	SL25	0.90		
	SL26	0.80		
OCB-I	OCB3	0.81	0.94	0.80
	OCB5	0.76		
	OCB6	0.99		
	OCB7	0.99		

Source: Survey Data

Note: EH = Emotional healing ; CVC = Creating value for the community; CS = Conceptual skills; PSF = Putting subordinates first; HSGS = Helping subordinates grow and succeed; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behavior for the individual.



b. Average variance extracted (AVE) =  $(\sum \lambda_i^2) / [(\sum \lambda_i^2) + \sum Var(\epsilon_i)]$ , where  $\lambda_i$  is the outer factor loading, and  $Var(\epsilon_i) = 1 - \lambda_i^2$  is the measurement error or the error variance associated with the individual indicator variable(s) for that given factor (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table-4.2. Discriminant Validity

Construct	CS	CVC	EH	HSGS	PSF	OCBI
CS	<b>0.82</b>					
CVC	0.50	<b>0.83</b>				
EH	0.30	0.35	<b>0.77</b>			
HSGS	0.29	0.41	0.42	<b>0.89</b>		
PSF	0.16	0.41	0.43	0.52	<b>0.90</b>	
OCBI	0.15	0.06	0.29	0.19	0.26	<b>0.89</b>

Source: Survey Data

Note: Diagonals that appeared in bold represent the average variance extracted while the other entries represent the squared correlations.

#### 4.2. Structural Model

The results as demonstrated in Table 4 indicated support for hypotheses 1, 3 and 5, while hypotheses 2 and 4 were not empirically supported.

In the first place the results indicated that emotional healing leader behavior strongly influences followers' OCB-I in organizations ( $\beta = 0.222$ ;  $t = 3.362$ ,  $p < .000$ ). In other words, whenever a leader exhibits genuine concern for personal well-being of his/her followers, the followers reciprocate strongly by helping co-workers or even supervisors to accomplish job tasks or fix their personal problems. Secondly, the results demonstrated significant negative relationship between creating value for the community and OCB-I ( $\beta = -0.183$ ;  $t = 2.153$ ,  $p < .016$ ). In other words the results showed that when a leader exhibits genuine concern for community well-being and development, his/her followers react by reducing their citizenship behaviors toward colleagues or supervisors (OCB-I). Thirdly, the results demonstrated that the conceptual skills (CS) strongly influenced OCB-I ( $\beta = 0.169$ ;  $t = 2.796$ ,  $p < .003$ ). This indicates that subordinate employees may perform OCB-I when a leader or supervisor exhibits his/her ability to understand and solve complex organizational problems. Fourthly, results indicated that helping subordinates grow and succeed was not significantly related to OCB-I ( $\beta = 0.022$ ;  $t = 0.328$ ,  $p < .371$ ). This indicated that respondents from the sampled organizations did not associate their supervisors with exhibiting positive behaviors directed at helping subordinates grow and succeed as individuals in their respective organizations.

Table-4.3. Results for Servant Leader Behaviors and OCB-I

Path Coefficients	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	T Statistics	Decision
EH -> OCB-I	0.222**	0.068	3.362	Supported
CVC -> OCB-I	-0.183*	0.089	2.153	Not Supported
CS -> OCB-I	0.169**	0.067	2.796	Supported
HSGS -> OCB-I	0.022	0.068	0.328	Not Supported
PSF -> OCB-I	0.213**	0.068	3.092	Supported

Source: Survey Data

Note: \*\* Indicates the item is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level. \* Indicates the item is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

Lastly, results have demonstrated that putting subordinates first (PSF) do significantly and positively influence employees to perform OCB-I ( $\beta = 0.213$ ;  $t = 3.092$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The results, thus indicated that when supervisors demonstrate high level consideration of subordinates' interests involving leader's personal sacrifices, prioritizing interests of followers, and considering followers' interest first, the followers in return respond with strong level of OCB-I. Importantly, the results demonstrate that among the five predictors of OCB-I, emotional healing (EH) has the highest significant standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.222$ ), which indicates that the predictor is the most important variable in predicting the OCB-I.

#### 4.3. Discussion of Findings

This study examined 291 employees of utility sector in Kano, Nigeria about relationship amongst five servant leader behaviors including emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, putting subordinates and helping subordinates grow and succeed as exogenous constructs and OCB-I as endogenous construct. Most of the proposed hypotheses received considerable support. Based on the available literature, this is the first study in West African region to assess the relationship of the 5 servant leader behaviors with OCB construct that focuses on employees only (OCB-I). In this study, OCB-I refers to the level of employee positive voluntary behavior that benefits other individuals in the organizations (Williams and Anderson, 1991).

Results of this study shown that four servant leader behaviors including emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills and putting subordinates first have significant relationships with the overall OCB-I. Only one servant leader behavior, namely, helping subordinates grow and succeed did not significantly relate to the overall performance of employee OCB-I.

Hypothesis 1 of this study stated that emotional healing (EH) is significantly related to OCB-I. As expected, the finding provides support for the hypothesis. The finding showed that supervisors or managers exhibit emotional healing toward their subordinates, the subordinates, in turn, would respond by exhibiting helping behaviors toward co-workers and supervisors. The reciprocal employees' behavior is consistent with social exchange (Blau, 1964). In the current study, participants might have demonstrated OCB-I in an attempt to emulate the supervisors' extra efforts of emotional counseling, preaching the gospel of patience and rekindling of hope and confidence on subordinate employees.

Hypothesis 2 of this study stated that creating value for the community (CVC) is significantly but negatively related to OCB-I. Creating value for the community (CVC) is a servant leader behavior demonstrating the leader's unlimited liability for a specific community-related activity that is needed to rebuild the community (Greenleaf, 1972). Contrary to expectation, a negative relationship was found. Hence, hypothesis H 2 was not supported. This finding has significantly differed from the previous findings (Liden *et al.*, 2008; Vondey, 2010) that demonstrated positive

significant relationship. One plausible explanation for the present finding may be that employees possibly see community development activities as a waste of resources because they cannot see any direct benefit to themselves or the organization.

Hypothesis 3 of this study stated that conceptual skill (CS) is significantly related to OCB-I. Conceptual skill is defined as a supervisor's ability to possess the knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand in order to effectively support and assist subordinates and others within the organization (Liden *et al.*, 2008). The current findings provided empirical support for the hypothesis and are, thus, consistent with past studies (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2008; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010; Hu and Liden, 2011). Additionally, the current finding is in line with social exchange theory. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when a person does a favor for another person, there is an expectation of some future favorable return. It is, therefore, likely that the OCB-I shown by the participants in the current study was an appreciation of benefits received from their managers and supervisors.

Hypothesis 4 of this study stated that helping subordinates grow and succeed (HSGS) is significantly related to OCB-I. Helping subordinates grow and succeed is a behavior that demonstrates genuine concern for subordinates' career growth and development through mentoring and other supportive services (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Results demonstrated a not significant relationship between the two constructs. The finding contradicted the teachings of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The current findings demonstrate that helping subordinates grow and succeed does not directly influence OCB-I. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2008; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010; Hu and Liden, 2011). The insignificant result may suggest that the positive leader behavior of helping subordinates grow and succeed might be misinterpreted as mere impression management. Impression management consists of behaviors initiated by an individual to establish a particular identity or shape people's attributions of the individual's dispositions (Jones and Pittman, 1982). It might be possible that employees perceive the helping behaviour of their leaders to be artificial and manipulative, and therefore becomes of no effect on their behavior.

Hypothesis 5 of this study stated that putting subordinates first (PSF) is significantly related to OCB-I. Putting subordinates first is defined as a leader's use of words and actions to clearly convince the immediate followers that their work needs are the leader's priority (Liden *et al.*, 2008). As expected, the current findings validated the hypothesis by providing strong empirical support. The finding is similar to that of previous studies (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2008; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010; Hu and Liden, 2011). The finding means that the leader behaviour of putting subordinates first directly and positively relates to employee OCB-I. It is not surprising for putting subordinates first to enhance OCB-I as demonstrated in this finding because naturally people are motivated to reciprocate good with good (Blau, 1964).

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the present study have several important implications regarding to organizational management or practice, theory development and methodology of research. The implications were discussed one after the other in the following sections.

The current findings have contributed to management practice by revealing the importance of servant leadership as a significant leadership style. Certainly, increased managers' awareness about the connection between servant leader behaviors and positive work outcomes (for e.g. OCB-I) can help to motivate supervisory employees to develop servant leader behaviors. In addition, the current findings have revalidated the significant relationship of servant leadership and OCB in newer context (i.e. Nigeria). Consequently, the current study has provided additional demographic bases for comparative studies and additional validation regarding the significant relationship between servant leadership and OCB.

Previous servant leadership-OCB studies have employed the use of analytical tools including the SPSS and SEM AMOS to produce results (Ehrhart, 2004; Vondey, 2010). This study has explored a relatively new tool of analysis (i.e., PLS) to explain the structural relationship the constructs of this study. The use of PLS tool provides an opportunity for testing the robustness and predictive power of the tool in a study that explores integrative relationships of servant leader behaviors and OCB-I. Secondly, by using servant leadership-OCB model in this study, the PLS tool provided a new framework for comparisons of results obtained from previous studies that used different tools of analysis.

## 6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Despite the revealed findings, this study has the following limitations.

Firstly, this study only employed the self-reporting method to collect the needed data on the relationship between servant leader behaviors and OCB-I. Although this method is consistent with previous OCB studies (Ehrhart, 2004; Vondey, 2010; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010), some researchers are skeptical of the reliability of the measure because of possible rater's bias. Despite the fear of bias, employee rating still remains the most effective and reliable mechanism to assess employee OCB (Eastman, 1994; Ehrhart, 2004).

Secondly, this study used stratified random sampling without a sampling frame. Lack of sampling frame is considered one of the major methodological limitations encountered in this research. This study was conducted among the lower and middle level employees of Nigeria's utility organizations. Given that these organizations do not officially allow lists of their employees to outsiders for reason of confidentiality, it poses a constraint on the current study's sampling technique. To avoid the challenge of unavailability of a sampling frame, future research should consider different organizations with less stringent need to protect confidentiality. Future studies may consider public universities or institutions of higher learning as they may be more liberal and cooperative in releasing the list of their employees.

Thirdly, cross-sectional survey was adopted for this study in which data was collected within the period of only three months. The problem of using the cross-sectional survey is that the studied variables (i.e., servant leader behaviors and OCB-I) might change over time. A change in management policy, leadership style or economic situation could have an impact on the research variables. Because this study is not longitudinal, it has a specified expected period of completion of three years; a longer period for data collection is not feasible. In view of this procedural short coming, future research may use a longitudinal study to explore the interactions between servant leader behaviors, psychological ownership and OCBs. Specifically, future research may use experimental or qualitative interview designs to assess causality.

Fourthly, this study only focused on the employees of Nigeria's utility organizations (PHCN, NITEL and KSWB) in Kano State, indicating limited scope of the study. Although this study did not aim at comparing the employees of Nigeria's utility organizations (PHCN, NITEL and KSWB) at different regions, differences may be found. Given the fact that workers of the three utility organizations are homogenous and available resources are limited, focusing on one geographical region (North-west) became more appropriate and economical. Because of the differences in geographical locations and the possible variance, it is recommended that future research should consider covering all the remaining five geo-political regions (north-east, north-central, south-west, south-east and south-south) and comparisons of various responses be made.

Fifthly, the model presented in this study is too small in scope to explain adequately employee performance of OCB-I in Nigeria's utility organizations. However, future research may come in to investigate other variables that may adequately provide high variance in employee OCB-I. Along this line, future studies should consider various conditions under which servant leader behaviors would be more or less effective. Therefore, this study suggests future study to investigate the possible use of personality factors including conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness to experience and extraversion as moderating variables on the relationship between servant leadership behaviors and OCB-I. Because servant leaders spend great deal of time on encouraging and inculcating characteristics that may be useful to followers, employee personality characteristics can facilitate or increase performance of OCB-I. Similarly, future study can investigate the possible use of job satisfaction as a mediating variable between servant leader behaviors and OCB-I. This is because servant leader behaviors focus on identifying and meeting the needs of employees. Therefore, employees are likely to experience job satisfaction when experienced servant leader behaviors, thus capable of leading them to possibly exhibit OCB-I.

Because some employees hate jobs that have challenge and responsibility, some employees do not desire to work with servant leaders who try to know employees closely so as to help, develop and guide them for career and organizational success (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, from the informal conversations with participants in the current study, it is discovered that some employees who are corrupt minded view servant leaders as "restraining" in their way of thinking and approach of discharging organizational responsibilities. Therefore, future research may

investigate the extent to which people's mindset on leaders within a given culture can moderate effectiveness of servant leader behaviors in influencing employee OCB-I.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Results of this study shown that four servant leader behaviors including emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills and putting subordinates first have significant positive relationships with the overall OCB-I. Only one servant leader behavior, namely, helping subordinates grow and succeed did not significantly relate to the overall performance of employee OCB-I. The present study has contributed to the body of knowledge by providing validating empirical evidence about the relationship between servant leader behaviors and OCB-I using a newer context (Nigeria) and setting (utility sector). Against this background, this study would practically be relevant to ailing Nigerian utility organizations, specifically PHCN Plc, NITEL Limited and KSWB. Results of this study indicate that embracing, inculcating and practicing of servant leader behaviors and OCB-I, by the ailing or rather ineffective utility sector organizations, could help to revive and enhance the effective functioning of the organizations. For the first time PLS path analysis was employed in explaining the relationship between servant leader behaviors and OCB-I.

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