

THE APPLICATION OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING CREATIVITY IN TOURISM START-UP TEAM IN SURABAYA

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Abstract: Creativity is one of the most important personalities that has to be possessed by of start-up team. It is considered as the crucial step that lead to innovation process. In this case, creative team will open more possibility for the team to be successful in their projects. As one of the industries that heavily affected in digital technology, tourism need new ideas and ne business model to develop. This opens many opportunities in building tourism start-up in the areas of goods or services. As the second biggest city in Indonesia, the city of Surabaya also become the home of many start up teams, including in tourism sector. In building team creativity, the role of team leaders is important to lead and empower the team. One of the concepts of leadership that has been known to be effective is servant leadership. The application of servant leadership in a team can give space for the member to be more creative and innovative. This study focuses on the application of servant leadership in building team creativity. The study describes and analyze the impact servant leadership that has been applied to tourism start up team in Surabaya. The leader characters and the way they practice servant leadership are being discussed. This is a qualitative study that use the leaders of start-ups tourism team from Surabaya as the respondents. The teams that are chosen consist of mostly young people in the areas of tourism, hospitality and culinary. In-depth interview with the team leaders, observation on the team activities and publication review are conducted to collect data for the study. The collected data is analyzed using manual data analysis method, through data selection and categorization. The study show that servant leadership application can be seen in three phases, namely idea generation, problem solving and target achievement. There are several attributes of servant leadership that have been practiced to boost team creativity. The data is presented narratively and the result shows indicate that the application of servant leadership has great impact on team creativity.

Keywords: *Tourism Start Up, Team Leader, Creativity, and Servant Leadership*

1. Introduction

Tourism industry has been one of the sectors that received greatest hit during pandemic Covid19. Global tourism development has undergone severe pressure that affect many people who works directly and indirectly in tourism sectors. Many tourism businesses have to find creative ways to survive the pandemic. Though, there are challenges in tourism sectors, the number of start-up business in tourism sectors are still growing. The fact that tourism is one of the industries that being heavily affected by digital technology is opening many opportunities for start up to create new ideas in products and services. One of the essential

factors for start-up to be successful in delivering their products is the team itself. The team needs to be a consistent, persistent and creative in many ways. In this case, creativity is considered the most crucial characters that needed by start-up team to plan and execute their ideas. Thus, in a start-up team, the leader has important role to influence the development of the team. Although the relation among each member may equal in terms of decision making, but the leader in away affect the start-up team performances.

As the generation of new ideas, study on creativity is discussed not only in intrinsic personal motivation but also as inter- personal interaction within a team as stated by Bullinger et al., (2004). It is also located in the crossroads of divergent avenues of knowledge and relation among individuals in relation to the rapid change and the competitiveness in the start-up business, which may heavily rely on team creativity (Tjosvold, Tang, and West, 2004), rather than individual. Many discussions regarding the factors that influence team creativity has been done, such as study by Zhou and Shalley (2003) and Shin and Zhou (2007). Several studies have revealed that aspects of leadership and organizational hierarchy can influence team creativity, as stated by Artz, Norman, Hatfield, and Cardinal (2010). Moreover, according to Sun et al., (2016), team creativity may bring success of an organization, which is referring to the collective effort of every team member to create a new idea. It grows from a contextual interaction among team members as well as support and empowerment from the team leader (Koh, Lee, and Joshi, 2019).

As stated previously that team leader has a crucial role in influencing the team member. Thus, the quality of leadership behavior is domineering to develop creativity in a team, as stated by Zhou et al., (2019). In this regard, examining leadership role in team Creativity is essential for team a start-up team, since it may influence creativity (Herrmann and Felfe, 2015). There are previous studies reveal that among various leadership style, the application servant leadership in a team significantly affect its creativity. As mentioned by Chen et al., (2022) the investigation on the influence of Servant Leadership on creativity is mostly based on the Social Exchange Theory. The servant leadership behavior is stated able empower and maximize team creativity. In a team context, a leader influences member through several challenging processes and push the member to meet the performance demand. As mentioned by Zhang, Zhang, and Law (2021), a team also needs to a motivational climate and creative environment to boost team creativity.

As part of global city, Surabaya also has many start up team from various sectors. Being the second biggest city in Indonesia, Surabaya is the home of around 51 start-up that officially listed by the government. Actually, there are more startups that exists in within community, schools and university that are not listed yet; however, most of them are still in early development stage. Surabaya government has shown great support toward development of start up in the city, by providing free working space, networking and necessary training and funding. Among those start-up team in Surabaya, there are several successful start-up in the area of tourism. Those start-up teams have great leaders who are able to lead the team to be creative to develop their products.

This study analyzes the application of servant leadership in tourism start up team in Surabaya. It focuses on the behavior of the leaders that enable to empower their team to be creative. The study explores the attributes of servant leadership that is being practiced by the leaders in building creativity within their team. It reveals the leader's behavior and actions that encourages each member to work together in supportive environment.

1.1. Start Up Teams

Start-up team as stated by Brattström et al., (2019), is argued as more than two individuals who have commitment to each other in creating a new venture. It may come in many formats, start from small scale businesses until big scale business activities. From academic perspectives, there are more studies that begin to give more attention to start-up team, as mentioned by Klotz et al., (2014) and supported by Lazar et al., (2020). Thus far, there are more systematic evidence has been generated by scholars, on start-up team's operation. They point out three different academic sub-disciplines, namely from sociology, research strategy and social psychology. According to Kim et al., (2013), research on sociology discipline give crucial understandings on how start-up team members may come together, including their relationships, status, and the influence of social networks. This is perspectives is important to understand the composition of start-up teams and how the composition may affect team operations. The second perspectives are rooted in strategy research, such as revealed by Eisenhardt, (2013) and Eberhart, Eesley and Eisenhardt (2017). The focus of researchers on this issue is to examine the economic context of a start-up team operation. Therefore, the important insights on how teams deal with uncertainty and limited resources can be understood. Finally, the third perspective takes place on in social psychology, as stated by Breugst & Shepherd, (2017) and Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks (2017). Those kinds of studies have brought more insights about the dynamic interactions among team members which can affect the function of start-up team.

Moreover, according to Tuominen et al. (2017), start-up team is also often characterized by the definition, team performance, and the effects of team cognition. kim et al. (2020) has defined Start-up team as an entrepreneurial team that consists of individuals who possess new business ideas and willing to share the ownership of the team. Furthermore, as mentioned by Bolzani et al. (2019), start-up team is a group of individuals that pursuing business opportunities together, in which every individual has a crucial role and share ownership interest that may influence the strategy that they chose. On the other hand, Knight et al., (2020) expanded the study by using a multidimensional concept of start- up framework, namely ownership of equity and autonomy of decision-making strategy.

1.2. Team Creativity

The most important character that needed by start-up team to be successful is creativity. It is defined as the act of producing novelty through exploring new ideas (West and Farr. 1990). Creativity is constantly related with valuable idea as stated by Zhou and Shalley (2010). Moreover, as mentioned by (Klijn and Tomic, 2010), creativity is also considered as the initial steps of innovation. It includes the implementation of the whole innovation process (Tang, 2019). As mentioned by Anderson et al., (2014), the creative process has several phases, from idea generation to idea implementation, which include better products, practice and procedure.

As revealed by Amabile (1997), the earlier theory that encourages team creativity is the componential theory. It is a theory that explains three major important components of team creativity. The first one, is the expertise of team leaders and team members; secondly is the thinking skill, and lastly is the intrinsic motivations. According to Amabile and Conti (1999), there are additional components that may boost employee creativity. Thus, they become more motivated to innovate, providing great resources and practice better managerial process.

Based on Yuan and Woodman (2010) and Zhou and Shalley (2010), the theory of organizational creativity is considered one of the most developed theories in terms of

organizational creativity and innovation. It explores the interaction process between individuals as a team and an organization. This situation can occur in various phases of the institution, namely individual, team unit, and also organization. In this case, creativity can be a result of holistic combination of genetics, cognitive, knowledge, social status, and surrounding inspiration. Team creativity is also related with individual talents that form a great team work. Previous studies reveal that team creativity is the form of individual abilities that improved over the time and through hard work. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009), it is necessary to work on the development continuously to become innovative team. Furthermore, Colvin (2010) stated that it is possible for individual to develop creativity that may become team creativity.

Therefore, to encourage team creativity, it is crucial to have a creative individual who serve as the leader of the team who can empower to team to be more motivated and creative. In this case, Meyers and Woerkom (2014) stated that motivated team members may use their creativity more and are able to create new and original ideas in their work. It is argued that a lack of creativity or innovative behavior may be often considered as one of the basic causes of team failure, as stated by Martín-De Castro, et al. (2013). Therefore, it is important to create an organizational culture that open rooms to innovations and creativity. It is crucial to have a leader in the team who has the ability to inspire their team members and create creative atmosphere in within the team. It implies that there are certain characters that are needed by the team leader to be able to not only identify their team talents, but also continue creating support system and working environment that foster creativity within the team.

1.3. Servant Leadership

Among several leadership styles, the servant leadership is considered as one of the approaches that can encourage team creativity. Servant leadership is a leadership approach that has an exceptional technique introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1970. As stated in Greenleaf (2002) and Fisher (2004), servant leadership is identical with the following attributes, namely listening, empathy, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, ethics, and an intention to serve others. Moreover, Spears (1996), expands Greenleaf's early argument and pinpoint servant leadership as new leadership model that prioritize and serve team member's needs. Thus, the Spear's concept of servant leadership emphasizes on more holistic approach of leadership that applicable in community and work place. It encourages power-sharing in decision-making principles.

It is argued that servant leadership concept is built on several theoretical frameworks, namely the power theory as stated by French and Raven (1959); the social exchange theory, by Blau (1964); social learning theory, as mentioned by Bandura and Walters (1977); and social identity theory by Tajfel (1978). Furthermore, according to Sikorski (2016), the power theory is a valuable theory to explain the influence of a servant leader as well as describes the leaders' impact on their team. That theory was introduced by French and Raven in 1959 and extended by Cohen (1992). In this case, the reward power is the aptitude of leader to provide a reward, on the other hand, the coercive power is the ability of leader to give punishment (Sikorski, 2016). The legitimate power is the capability of leader to give impact on their team. Furthermore, the social exchange theory, which is introduced by Blau (1964), has explained the relationship between servant leaders and their member, because it is based on the reciprocity of norm. Meanwhile, the social learning theory that initiated by Bandura (1977), reveals that leaders are the role models in value and behavior for the member. The servant leaders are considered as role models as they act unselfishly to provide services to

others (Schwarz et al., 2016). The social learning theory shows how leaders may influence the performance of the team member through modelling (Liden et al., 2014), as well as encourage creativity for the members (Newman et al., 2017). Furthermore, the social identity theory, which is stated by Tajfel (1978), explains the reasons why servant leaders consider their team members as partners in the team. These social theories give an understanding about servant leaders' behaviour that makes them different from other leadership style.

Current studies on servant leadership stated the method as multi-dimensional and holistic leadership which covers the members' and the leaders' ethical, emotional, relational, rational as well as their spiritual aspects, as stated by Sendjaya and Cooper (2011). This inclusive method allows leaders to address completely the dimensions which is impossible to be found in other leadership methods, as stated in Liden., et al (2008). In this case, there are three aspects of servant leadership, namely reflection of a hearty internal orientation to serve others, a follower-galoped approach and a complete approach in which leaders seeking the positive difference of the team members (Sendjaya et al., 2008). As stated in Eva et al. (2019), servant leadership will develop an engagement between leaders and team members, in which empowers the team member to perform their best effort in the projects.

2. Research Method

This study is using qualitative study methods with two main tools to gather the data, namely in-depth interview and observation. This research is using a case study approach that involves the start-up teams from Surabaya. As stated by Simons (2009), a case study is an in-depth exploration from several perspectives of the complexity in specific context, condition, institution, program and project. In this case, all teams selected in this study are working in tourism related business. The chosen start-up teams are having a minimum of one-year operational experience to ensure that the team has gone through several innovations process, that involves creativity in their products or services. This study also uses secondary data, through academic's publication reviews. Thus, the data collected are being analyzed, by collecting, categorizing, concluding and presenting the data through a narrative argumentation. In the process of analysis data from the interview and observation are being compare and analyzed.

The in-depth interviews are being done with the leaders of start-up team. According to Brounéus (2011), in-depth interview is used to deepen the understanding of the complexities of certain issues. Furthermore, in the process of in-depth interview, the researcher must direct the informant in an extended discussion, as mentioned by Rubin and Rubin (2005). It involves a well-prepared and thought-through questions. The process includes active and reflective listening from the interviewer to the informants. In this study, there are 10 leaders from start-up team who have products and services in tourism related business. The chosen start-up teams are focusing their business in the area of tourism information, medical tourism, tour operation, merchandise and destination brand. The leader from each team is being interviewed one by one in comfortable setting and informal meeting, within duration of 1 hour. The questions are set up to reveal the ways they lead their team to encourage creativity within the team. The process of the interview explores the leaders' behavior in practicing servant leadership in the interaction with the team members. The interview is being recorded and transcript for the purpose of data analysis.

Besides conducting the interview with the leader, this study also observes the interaction among the team member. Observation is one of the most fundamental research in qualitative methods. It involves the process of collecting data using human senses, by looking and

listening in a systematic and meaningful way, as stated by McKechnie (2008) In this case, the process of discussion and problem solving within the team are also being analyzed. The behavior of the leaders and the reaction of the members are being observed, especially during their meetings. The process ideas generation among each member as the result of servant leadership application become one of the crucial points to address. Capturing the process of creativity within the team as the result of servant leadership application by the leader is the main objective of the observation. To complete the collected data, the secondary data is also used through the process of reviewing academic publication on servant leadership and creativity in start up team.

In the process of data analysis, the data is categorized based on the information collected from the interviews and observation. Thus, the data is being synchronized and analyzed based on the objectives of the study. The findings are explained and discussed through argumentative narration that explain application of the servant leadership in building team creativity in start-up team. The section is divided in several section based on the components of servant leadership that being applied in the team that affects the process of creativity. The conclusion is drawn through the discussion section and reveal the form of servant leadership practices that encourages creativity in the team.

3. Discussion

The objective of this study is to explain the effect of servant leadership application by the leaders in building start up team creativity. It is argued that a creative team will have more chance to achieve sustainability and success in their projects. The behaviors of the leaders in coordinating with the team in any activities may affect the creativity process within the team, as stated by Sendjaya, Sarros and Santora (2008). In this case, the analysis is divided into several points based on the situation of the team. One of the focal points of servant leadership style is putting the team members as the central of attention. However, what kind of attentions and actions that may give more space for creativity within the team will be explained further in the discussion.

3.1. Idea Generation

Most start-up teams are built in an agreement about certain ideas. The team should be able to recognize and identify the problem that become the concerns. The teams are expected to find a solution toward the problems, which become their products or services that offered to the markets. According to Pellegrino, Piva and Vivarelli M (2012), prior to ideation process as part of design thinking, the team must be able to define the problems that occurs in the society. Thus, in the process of defining problems, the initial process that needed to be taken is having great empathy on the situation that happens around community.

The role of the leaders in this part is crucial. From all the informants, seven of them mentions that they direct the team to explore the problems in the society together at the same time, while three of the informants do the exploration first and asked the team member to do the same. The exploration is used to find out what is going on in the society that may become problems that need to be solved. The process of investigation in the society involved great deal of empathy by all member of the team. When all the data have been collected from the people, furthermore, as the leaders of the team, they need to arrange a meeting to discuss and explore the issues together, as stated by Walrave, et al (2017). In this case, of the attributes of servant leadership is being applied by all the informants, which is the listening process. This means, the leaders are paying attention to any arguments, opinion and suggestion from all the members.

In order to get a solid understanding about the problems that the team members identify from the society, the leaders need to have a great deal of empathy toward their members. All informants agree that they also have understand the team member perspectives in the discussion. The other attribute of servant leadership, which is empathy, is an action that the leader's practice in order to come out with ideas regarding the problem. Therefore, the process of idea generation in start up team affected by how much the leaders willing to listen and empathize toward the team members. By willingness to listen to the team members opinion, the creativity of teams has more chance to develop. Giving room and space for the team members to express their arguments, encourage the team be more creative in finding idea about certain issues. In the process of idea generation, all the informants agree that they have to listen to their team member opinion, since they may have different perspectives regarding the issues. Moreover, different academic and experience background that the team members may have is a valuable asset of the team. Based on Arham, Boucher, and Muenjohn (2013), more ideas will be explored and more possibility can be discussed if the leaders apply servant leadership attributes, namely listening and empathy.

3.2. Solving Problems

In the operational process of startup, there are various problems that occur along the ways. The problem maybe appears in several stages of development, and in any aspects of team. During the early stages of team formulation, the common problems that occur in the team, based on all informant's opinion is the commitment of the team, in term of job roles, time and money. Each start up may have different issues regarding financial aspects. Among ten informants, four of them are having dominant portion in money put in the team, whereas only one team have equal portions. However, even though, most of the team may not equal in putting their money as initial investment for the operational, all of them agree that it is not the main issues.

All informants stated that they already make a clear agreement about money and initial investment to run the startup. Therefore, money may not the main problems in all the initial phase of start up team, especially in terms of sharing profit if any. However, the issue about money mostly deal with lack of fund to finance the operational of the team. In this case, as the leaders, most informants have to be in the mode of serving their team member. It means that the leaders have to put the members' interest above their own. Although mostly the startup, the decision is made by collective collegial approach, but the role of the leader in persuade and encourage the team member to make one solid decision is important, as argued by Antonio,et al (2021).

As the products or services created by the start-up team developed, more problems may appear. Most common problem is the time commitment and job roles of each member. One of the common problems that may occur is the time management issues of each member. As the team grows, the individual team member is definitely also grown in age. Therefore, more personal problems come into the process. In this case, when the team member has personal problems that more likely to influence the performance of the team, the leaders have to practice one of the attributes of servant leadership which is persuasion and ability to conducts ethics for the sake of the team. According to Chen, Zhu, and Zhou (2015), the leaders have to be able to persuade the team member to stay focus on the team issue and not bringing personal problems become the start-up business problem. As stated by all informants, to do so is by showing example to the team members. The leaders have to have high ethical values and behavior that can be seen by the members. In this case, leaders who show ethical

behavior may offer integrity, thus, they can expect the team member to demonstrate loyalty and consistent ethical behavior as well.

The other emerging problems in more mature start-up is mostly in the area of job description. It is argued by the informants, that sometime each member can have a feeling about unequal job division. Some team members may think that they work harder than the rest of the team. As the business develop, unclear roles between each member is more likely to happen, since everybody is trying to do something for the business, which in a way may overlaps other team roles. In this situation, the leaders have to step up to facilitate the dispute to avoid bigger problem. Therefore, before the problems escalate, the leader will have to show stewardship in the team. It means the informants have to listen to each of the team member and to have empathy toward the members and find out the source of the conflict. The leaders show the it is important to put the interest of the team development above the personal interest of each member, as stated by Autry, Spears and Noble (2001.) By knowing and understanding what is going on each member's perspectives, hopefully the problem can be overcome.

The other significant problems may occur, especially when the start-up is already well developed and begin to attracts many investors, whether it is angel investors or venture capitals. The issues of roles of each member become bigger and the money matter also appear, especially if the business involving big investment. At this point, as stated by the informants, the practice of servant leadership in terms of intention to serve others and put the team interests above all personal interest become a crucial attribute to show, this is in line with the study by Alghamdi (2018). The decision still has to be made, but the leaders have to hold on the values that have been built by the time, and at the same time give up their ego to listen and consider other opinion, especially from the team members. By opening more discussion and room to hear other opinion, the innovation process in the team will be running smoothly, since room from creativity of each member is not expurgated by the leaders.

3.3. Target Achievement

The most important matter that become a center of attention by all startups is achieving the target, either revenue targets or number of users' target. Each of the start-up must have target achievement that they have set up in the beginning of the process. In determining the target, all the team member need to discuss it thoroughly together (Ashkanasy & Nicholson 2003). All informants in this study stated that the target is set up together through discussion and argumentation within the team. In this condition each leader apply two attributes of servant leadership, namely listening and conceptualization. There are other attributes that may also be practiced by the leaders to make the team achieving the targets. However, the informants in this study mentions that the most important aspect is giving space for the team members to be creative in the setting the goals and figure out the way to achieve it. As mentioned by Carmeli and Paulus (2015), mostly the initial target of the start-up is getting as much as public exposure, in which resulting in user acquisition.

In order to be able to achieve the objectives of the startup, it is important for the leaders to listen the member's opinion. In this case the target achievement of start-up can be obtained by listening the team member's opinion, prior to setting up the goals (Herrmann & Felfe2014). Thus, the leaders need to communicate, by listening what team have to say. In this study, all the informants stated that they do listen to their team member before setting up the goal; they believe that by having a discussion with the team, the objectives will be common goals that everybody has to achieve. It is argued that listening is a skill that includes practice to able to value the ideas of others. This attitude allows the team to be creative in any

aspects to the organization, from setting up goals, planning the strategy and achieve the target together (Yang, Liu and Gu 2017).

The other important attributes of servant leadership that crucial to achieve target is conceptualization. This attribute requires the leaders to be able to inspire the team and able to plan the way to reach the goal. The leaders must encourage the team member to be able to have a big dream regarding their start up. All the informants stated that as the leaders that have to seek to nurture their team abilities to have a great dream. They revealed that they have to think beyond day-to-day realities. Nevertheless, as the leaders they have to show and encourage the team members how to live in their big dream, and transform it to strategy planning and executable targets (Liu, Wong and Fu 2012). The servant leaders have to be able to influence the member to leap from one milestone to the other. The informants of this study claim that they have done this in various ways, however they also stated that this action requires discipline and great deal of practice.

4. Conclusion

From the study it can be concluded that by giving more freedom, roles and engagement to the team member, the start-up leaders can have a creative team. In a way, as stated by Bledow et al., (2011), that leaders should motivate their team creativity. However, the mechanism of the simulation needs more exploration and application of servant leaderships. This study tries to reveals that leadership behavior can function well to boost creativity in a team, by proper implication of servant leadership. This finding resonance the work of Ucar, Alpkan, and Elci (2021) who stated that servant leadership can directly affect team member creativity. The research shows that servant leadership is a better antecedent to team climate and team creativity.

This study begins with question about what are the applications of servant leadership to foster team creativity in start-up team. Thus, the simple question has been answered by explaining how the leaders apply the attributes of servant leadership in three process of start-up development, namely idea generation, problem solving and target achievements. Using the leaders of tourism start-up teams in Surabaya as the informants, this study reveals that several attributes of servant leaderships can boost creativity in start-up team. The interviewed result is also confirmed with the observation on the start-up activities. The implications for articulating servant leadership theory and its application in team start-up have been explored. In this case, great team leaders are imperative for start-up team to maintain their performance through creativity. Both vertical leadership and horizontal leadership types play a crucial role in embracing the creativity in startups. Team leaders should be able to listen, have an empathy, able to persuade, have good conceptualization of dream big and great commitment to the growth of the members (Dimas, et al, 2018). Thus, the success of start-up creativity depends not only on the team but also on the quality of the leaders.

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