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## Leadership in the public servant as a strategy to improve the quality of service in a Peruvian municipality.

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### **Abstract**

*The current problem of the quality of service of our state entities is questioned by the way in which civil servants provide care, in this situation, it is necessary to make profound changes that contribute to achieving an efficient and effective state that seeks the continuous improvement of the quality of life of the citizen, and reduce existing gaps. The objective of this research is to propose a Server Leadership Program to improve the quality of service in a local government - Lambayeque Region - 2023, with a methodology of quantitative approach, applied type, non-experimental, descriptive-exploratory, cross-sectional and purposeful design, using the survey technique, validated by 5 experts, with a reliability of Cronbach's alpha of 0.933 for server leadership and 0.944 for service quality, the instrument was applied to a census sample of 100 public servants a local government of the Lambayeque Region, in the analysis of the results showed that both variables are at a medium level, the quality of service with 53% and the server leadership with 69%, likewise it was determined that the dimensions of the server leadership that provide guidance for the development of a program to improve the quality of service are empowerment, accountability, personal acceptance, authenticity and humility.*

**Keywords:** *Server leadership, quality of service, public management, municipality, local government.*

### **Introduction**

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean face the challenge of providing civil servants with the necessary capacities and skills to be managed more efficiently and effectively at all levels of government; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tells us about the non-existence of meritocracy in public employment, in many cases, workers without qualifications for the positions they occupy and managers appointed according to the political party of the day (OECD, 2020).

This can be seen in countries of the Eastern European bloc, where research such as that of Rastoropov et al, (2021) tells us that, in Russia, many of the municipal employees do not have the knowledge and skills required to carry out their work; also in the Republic of Croatia, Crnjac

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et al., (2020) state that only 40% of workers take advantage of the improvement of their skills to optimize their performance. These results of previous research show us that indeed the system we have in some countries of Latin American bloc, does not differ too much with the countries of the eastern zone of the old continent, however, in countries of the euro zone, we can take as an example the case of the reform of the public sector in Spain, which, according to Pérez et al. (2018), it seeks to have public representatives prepared to adequately carry out the tasks; paying special attention to the development of the leadership of public managers, thus moving closer to more traditional public management systems such as the English or German system.

In Peru, the, framework law of the modernization of the management of the state, seeks to generate a structural change at the political and administrative level that allows to provide quality services and improve the attention to citizens, which we see reflected in Law 27658, in this context Law 30057 is enacted, Civil Service Law that seeks to impose an institutional culture, based on meritocracy and vocation of service; training civil servants to raise their performance and provide better services.

Currently in the state entities, the quality of the service is perceived as a low level of attention and questioned by the inadequate way in which it is provided. The National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI, 2022) reports that the municipalities that exist in Peru are: 196 provincial, 1678 district and 2859 population centers being those that are responsible for providing public services to the population. In the National Household Survey (ENAHU), the INEI highlighted the high level of distrust in the country's institutions, finding among them the Provincial Municipalities with 80.6% and the District Municipalities with 81.8% of distrust level (INEI, 2023). Until today Peru has not been able to build an effective civil service, with qualified and committed personnel that provides quality services to the citizen, this is due to various factors, some of them political that influence both the hiring of personnel and their rotation in areas that they do not dominate.

Leadership being a fundamental element for public administration, which allows contributing or influencing the performance and satisfaction of servants, and having that servant leadership is a genuine approach centered on people with a reconciling and pluralistic vision and that could contribute to respond to our social problems (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2021), is this style of leadership, with its basis in the commitment to the ideals, foundations and development of organizations; With its worker-oriented approach, it achieves the commitment and dedication of these, which can achieve that change in the entities.

Therefore, given the need of the state to have qualified and qualified personnel capable, ethically, oriented to close gaps; It seeks to answer the following question: Will a program based on servant leadership strategies serve as a guide to improve the quality of service offered by public servants in a local government in the Lambayeque region?

This research is justified theoretically, in the theory of Servant Leadership. It has social relevance, because it seeks to improve the low-quality service provided in the municipality. Methodologically, it is justified in the establishment of valid and reliable methods and materials that allow data collection. In terms of practical justification, work behaviour that goes beyond the demands of the job is needed to increase the quality of service provided. To this end, a servant leadership program is proposed, which allows civil servants to perform their functions efficiently and effectively, resulting in the provision of better services to citizens.

The general objective of the research will be: Establish the strategies for the server leadership program that serves as a guide to improve the quality of the service provided in public entities and as specific objectives, make a diagnosis of the quality of service in the entity under study, and then go on to identify the dimensions of server leadership in civil servants; to be able to determine the dimensions of servant leadership that will contribute to the design of the program that serves as a guide to improve the quality of service provided in a local government of the Lambayeque Region.

### **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

A differential feature between companies that evolve or not, is quality management at all levels within the organization (Hernández et al., 2018), where service quality is a criterion that integrates the evaluation of goods (tangible elements) and services (intangible elements) and manifests itself as the evaluation of the attention received by the client. At present, customers have ceased to be passive consumers to be active consumers, providing information about their needs and expectations, they affect the behavior of organizations in relation to how to provide services; being the quality of service, the mutual relationship of satisfaction and expectations between a consumer and the organization that meets their needs.

In Peru, the modernization of public management should be reflected in providing quality services to the population (Secretariat of Public Management, [SGP], 2020); therefore, there must be better prepared collaborators to increase the level of quality of care, although users often perceive, erroneously, the personnel hired by public entities as inefficient when it comes to providing services (Jara, et al., 2018); Reason why the evaluation of the quality of the service can not be left to the perceptions of the users, because the quality could be very varied due to the opinions or perceptions of each of them.

It should be taken into consideration that quality criteria are very different in the public sector than when we refer to the standards of private companies, or at least that is what we assume starting from the possible consumer expectation of a product or service, because while private entities seek profitability in the competition of their products in the market, The public entity

provides the service basically to a captive market, as a monopoly/oligopoly, because its services are exclusive in its territory.

Servant leadership, compared to most other leadership theories, prioritizes the needs of followers above those of the organization, of a country and above all above those of the leaders themselves (Giolito et al., 2020); It implies a leader for followers instead of the traditional followers for a leader, and when we talk about servant leadership as a work philosophy, we highlight the importance of developing this style, since doing so creates value for the community; For servant leadership begins as a natural desire to serve first, followed by the aspiration to lead, as a simple but profound philosophy guides servant leaders to put the needs of followers before their own; serving is the priority for them, where acts of love, humility and service are what drive them.

The research was conducted under a quantitative approach, making use of data collection in order to describe aptitudes and peculiarities, based on a numerical measurement; The type of study is applied, since it is oriented to solve specific problems in order to implement improvements in the situation of the subjects under study, since it is aimed at determining the means with which the identified need can be addressed; The non-experimental design was considered, since only the events are observed in their natural state, without performing variable manipulation; and as for the level was descriptive-exploratory since it is oriented to investigate the effect and values of the variables under study as an initial approximation of the phenomenon; Transversal because information is obtained at a given time to diagnose the state of the variables under study and in addition to the propositional level, because a model is presented that will amend, correct or improve what has been detected.

Data collection was carried out through the survey technique that aims to make transparent and secure the data collected and through the questionnaire instrument, which is one of the most used means because it allows us to have the information in a more organized way, information was collected on the quality of service and the dimensions of servant leadership in civil servants. Given the nature of the research, the analysis unit was composed of workers from a public institution in the Lambayeque Region; Which corresponds specifically to the local government, the study population considered those workers who had the status of public servants, in an active employment situation, with at least one year of permanence in their work, not taking into account officials at higher hierarchical levels, personnel who had disciplinary sanctions or judicial problems and those in the condition of workers. Prior to the application of the information collection instrument, a letter of informed consent was given to each worker, indicating the purpose of the research, ensuring their anonymity, the confidentiality of their data and free voluntary participation; It should be noted that each worker who participated approved the conditions described in the document before answering the questionnaire. After applying the

inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final sample with which we worked was composed of 100 collaborators, following the census sampling method.

For the collection of information, an anonymous survey was applied, with questions that evaluated in the worker the servant leadership as an independent variable and the quality of service as a dependent variable of our proposal.

For the independent variable, servant leadership, a self-assessment questionnaire adapted from the Servant Leadership Survey by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) was developed, which has been validated in the Spanish language, which is a test of thirty items, distributed in eight dimensions: empower, responsibility, yield merits, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance and social responsibility. For service quality, dependent variable, a self-assessment questionnaire of quality of service was used based on the Technical Standard for the management of the quality of services in the public sector (SGP, 2019) which has 26 items, distributed in 8 dimensions: commitment to institutional purposes, orientation to the service of the person, Orientation to results, actions for improvement, attitudes and willingness to change, capacity and training, processes and methods of work and environment and working conditions.

The measurement scale used in the data collection instruments was ordinal, based on the five-response Likert scale: never (1), almost never (2), sometimes (3), almost always (4) and always (5) (Hernández et al., 2014); which were then evaluated by levels and ranges (high level, medium level and low level).

To obtain the validity of these instruments, they were submitted to the judgment of 05 experts, who evaluated the clarity, coherence and relevance prior to validating the adaptation of the instruments in question. Likewise, to measure the reliability of the adaptation of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, obtaining a result, for both instruments, greater than 0.9, establishing the reliability of the instruments and their internal consistencies, including each dimension analyzed.

The research sought to measure the level of service quality, and the characteristics of servant leadership of civil servants in the municipality. After obtaining the information, for the analysis of the data, it was ordered, classified and analyzed at a descriptive level, then we found the degree of relationship between both variables, since the model intended to know the relationship between both variables, as well as which of the dimensions of servant leadership has the greatest positive influence on the quality of service, to develop the server leadership program to improve the quality of service. The data were tabulated using Microsoft Excell and the software statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), allowing the visualization of the data through tables, graphs and others, created by the aforementioned software.

The research was developed under the principles of integrity, intellectual honesty, veracity, justice and responsibility in all its aspects and activities.

## **OUTCOME (DISCUSSION)**

From the statistical analysis carried out in the research, we can see that the levels of quality of service in the municipality were 53% at an average level; Likewise, the levels of the dimensions: Commitment to institutional purposes with 43%, Orientation to the service of the person with 54%, Orientation to results with 59%, Actions for improvement with 67%, Attitude and willingness for change with 56%, Training and training with 50%, Processes and working methods with 68% and Environment and working conditions with 57% were also at medium level.

These results are explained by the fact that the workers have little commitment to institutional purposes, by not complying with the provisions set in the entity; they lack a friendly and empathetic attitude in the treatment of the citizen, they do not provide confidence or credibility; because it does not act quickly or sense of urgency to the needs of the administered, affecting the response capacity, most of them do not show creativity to contribute new ideas to improve processes, criticism is not considered as opportunities for improvement, nor do they show interest in listening and helping the citizen, they do not feel able to resolve complaints and claims of citizens, The processes and channels of attention are not clear, in addition the infrastructure and equipment with which they provide the service are inadequate.

These results coincide with several studies conducted in public institutions who also found that the quality of service was at medium or fair level. If we take as a sample some public servants of the state universities, the common denominator of the cases, they will show us that the non-compliance in the established deadlines, the lack of interest to solve the problems of the administered and by the scarce information provided to the users at the beginning of the procedures. Ruiz (2021) in his study with the collaborators of the municipality of Sauce, found at a regular level the quality of service 49%, showing the need to improve infrastructure, reliability, speed in attention, improve the treatment of citizens.

Torres (2020), in his research carried out in a local educational management unit, with a medium level (74%), explained by the lack of long- and short-term activity planning, the absence of real objectives, as well as lack of a diagnosis, work strategies, lack of follow-up and monitoring of user care, actions that would help the quality of care and improve the response time that is one of the main complaints from users, which has a direct impact on the perception, mostly negative, in all dimensions of the variable; Although we can see that there are indeed some writers who point out that the quality of the service is usually due to the failures that were had when providing the service related to speed, willingness of employees, reliability and waiting times.

In the descriptive statistics, we can see that the level of servant leadership of the workers of the municipality is at an average level 69%, This finding coincides with the doctrine found in this regard, both in theoretical matters as well as in various studies carried out in some regional directorates of agriculture, where the findings indicate in a general way that in the state entity the leadership in the case of public servants is of regular level to bad.

It can also be seen that the dimensions of servant leadership that are at the middle level are explained in the empowerment dimension (67%), because some of the workers of the municipality sometimes make decisions that facilitate their work, solving problems by themselves, they are also willing to develop personally, because they feel safe and trust in their abilities. In the yield dimension (47%), workers do not prioritize the interests of others and seek recognition for their actions.

In the authenticity dimension (58%), they do not show coherent behaviors between their thoughts and emotions, because they do not usually express their feelings openly, trying to hide their weaknesses and limitations. We can appreciate, in the humility dimension (48%), although workers admit their mistakes, they try to learn from others and from the criticisms of their superior, but when it comes to criticism in general from people, they do not rescue the positive. In the social responsibility dimension (47%), not all workers emphasize it, working without a long-term perspective and not paying attention to the positive of things. Finally, in the courage dimension (64%), not everyone is willing to take risks.

The responsibility dimension has the high level (88%) since most civil servants are responsible for their work and performance. And the dimension of interpersonal acceptance, has a low level (60%), because workers do not properly handle things that were wrong in the past, generating a harsh attitude with the people who offended them.

These results are based on the lack of servant leadership when contrasted with other previous research, since if the needs and expectations of workers are met by fostering empathy and trust among them, the emotional intelligence of employees can be promoted and strengthened, allowing to create an atmosphere of respect and collaboration within the organization; subordinates value when the supervisor provides them with responsibility and autonomy (Gašková 2020), which is why servant leaders must psychologically empower their followers and interact closely with them (Zorlu, et al., 2021), fostering a creative climate; innovation and Corporate Social Responsibility of employees; as servant leadership maximizes the potential of the members of the organization based on the spirit of human respect (Kim, et al. 2020), in this way servant leaders are able to develop service behaviors among followers (Wu et al., 2021).

To determine the influence of the dimensions of server leadership that contributed to the design of strategies to improve the quality of service in the municipality, we first evaluated whether the



distribution of our data met normality criteria, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, the variables server leadership and quality of service showed that they did not meet the normality criterion ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Therefore, it was considered to use Spearman's nonparametric correlation test, which is used to analyze the relationship between two variables measured at interval or ratio level (Hernández et al., 2014).

With the Rho statistic of Spearman, of the eight dimensions of servant leadership, there are five dimensions that are related to Quality of Service with a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ : Empowerment (0.007), Responsibility (0.008), Interpersonal acceptance (0.035), Authenticity (0.031), Humility (0.001). At the same time, the three dimensions that do not exert influence are those of Yield merits (0.459), Courage (0.893), Social Responsibility (0.235), for having a  $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ .

Subsequently, to establish which of these dimensions of server leadership would serve as a guide to design the program that seeks to improve the quality of service, we used the ANOVA statistical test, which determined the influence of Server Leadership on Service Quality with a significance of less than 0.05 (Sig.  $< 0.05$ ). Affirming with the results that this type of leadership is effective in improving the quality of service.

Finally, to determine which of the dimensions of server leadership influence the quality of service, a regression analysis of standardized coefficients was performed, establishing that the dimensions empowerment (0.007), responsibility (0.008), interpersonal acceptance (0.035), authenticity (0.031) and humility (0.001) significantly influence the quality of service because they have a Sig.  $< 0.05$ .

Therefore, the strategies that were developed for the servant leadership program that served as a guide to improve the quality of the service provided were based on these dimensions.

Server leaders are effective in building consensus, as they seek to persuade others rather than coerce them into compliance (Tran and Spears, 2020), which produces a spirit of purpose, trust, commitment, desire for wisdom and effort in the organization, impacting a greater sense of belonging and involvement (De la Garza, et al., 2020), making employees more creative when they trust their leader; They also favor the self-regulation of the worker in the achievement of goals and in the containment of disruptive behaviors against the organization; improving follower self-efficacy, work attitudes, performance, job satisfaction, and organizational success (Zargar et al., 2019); and when job satisfaction is activated by servant leadership, the way employees think and act will expand, creating more resources to improve satisfaction in their life (Li et al. 2018).

Server leaders are those who create a culture that promotes the development of trust, fairness, and high-quality leader-follower relationships and impact employee creativity by fostering an



environment that promotes spirituality in the workplace. (Williams et al., 2017); and with the favorable perception of the collaborator on the servant leadership of the boss, they improve their commitment to the organization and job satisfaction. In this sense, it is stated that the presence of servant leadership at all levels allows improving the quality of relationships within work teams, generating greater employee commitment to their supervisor and bosses and develops in turn servant leadership in supervisors and bosses.

Coincidentally with our research, Mosqueira (2021) recommends implementing a plan to raise the organizational culture based on the organization's own values in order to preserve, develop and promote them, which will allow the administrative body to raise the quality of service provided. Also Torres (2020), recommends implementing a management model for the quality of service as a guide tool that applied leads to a real improvement in the attention to the users of the entity, and also Reátegui (2019) proposes a model to raise the quality of care in the health center included the development of social skills, communicative, teamwork, institutional values to optimize the organizational climate, improve the institutional image and strengthen the interrelations of workers.

That is why the theory of servant leadership is viable because it helps organizations promote the prosperity of employees at work, according to Khattak, et al., (2023), organizations would obtain benefits by adopting servant leadership if their goal is to promote an environment that supports work performance and citizen behavior, because servant leadership positively influences organizational behavior and commitment; and therefore improves the quality of service they provide.

In this line, Ramírez (2022) mentions that it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of servant leadership, orienting them primarily to service, since the purpose of state entities is to provide public services; and the quality of public service is influenced by the knowledge and attitudes of the staff, so strengthening the skills and attitudes of the public servant will optimize their performance, obtain higher rates of job satisfaction and improve the attention to citizens.

## CONCLUSIONS

The diagnosis of the quality of the service provided within the municipality under study shows that the quality of service of this public institution is at an average level (53%).

The level of servant leadership in the workers of the municipality, is at a medium level (69%). Likewise, the dimensions that are at a high level are the dimension of responsibility, while the dimensions of empowerment, giving merit, courage, authenticity, humility and social responsibility are at a medium level and the dimension of interpersonal acceptance is at a low level.

The ANOVA statistical test determined the existence of influence of Server Leadership on Service Quality, which allows us to affirm that Server Leadership is effective in improving the quality of service.

The dimensions of servant leadership that significantly influence the quality of service are empowerment, accountability, personal acceptance, authenticity and humility.

The servant leadership program that will guide us to improve the quality of the service provided was designed taking into account the dimensions empowerment, responsibility, interpersonal acceptance, authenticity and humility.

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