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# Exploring the relationships among servant leadership & multiple dimensions of wellbeing in an international organization



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## Purpose of the Study

This study examines relationships among servant leadership, employee job satisfaction, & multiple measures of wellbeing (psychological & subjective wellbeing, perceived stress) amongst employees at a multinational company.

The ownership & management team prides itself on nurturing servant leadership throughout the global business, & see servant leadership as a lifestyle which is explicitly focused on followers' needs (van Dierendonck, 2011).

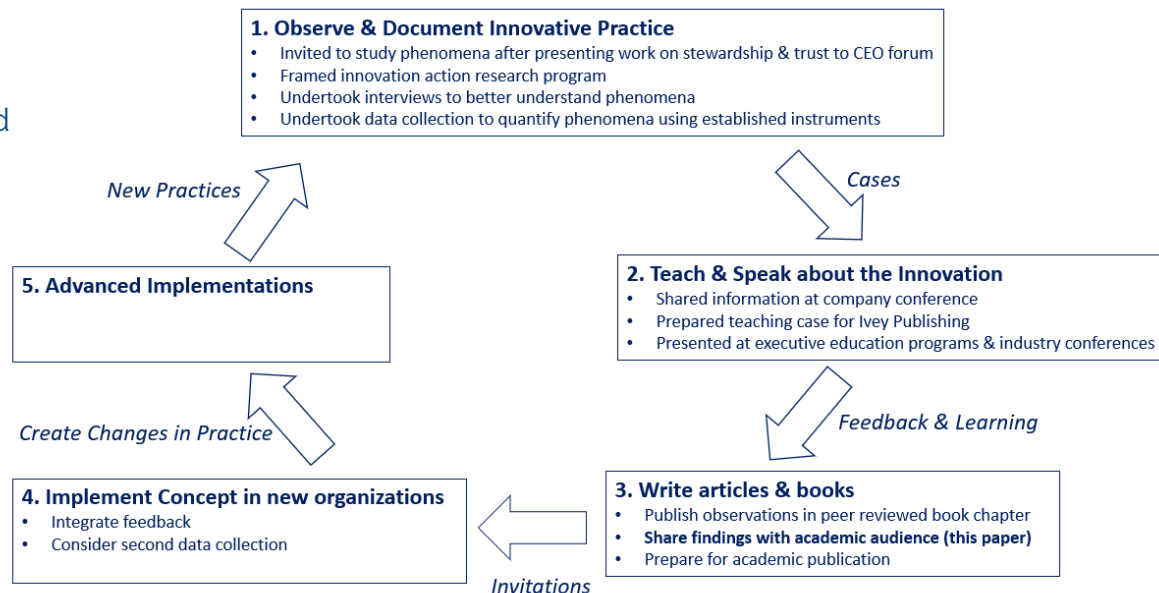
## About the Case

- Established in 1961, family-owned & operated
- Molecular science company manufactures speciality ingredients for humans & animals
- Provide innovative nutritional & health solutions for a changing world, with the aim to make things better for people, pets, animals, plants, planet
- Headquartered in USA, with manufacturing facilities in India, China, Brazil and Russia
- Workforce numbers 2000+
- Products are sold in 120+ nations

## Study Design

This study is embedded in longitudinal action research (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1989; Rapoport, 1970).

We are currently in stage 3 of Kaplan's (1998) innovation action research cycle as shown.



## Method

Online questionnaire to all staff:

- n=1205 respondents (52% of company)
- Gender (645 male; 325 female; 49 unspecified)
- Age (M=39.07 years; SD 10.46 years)
- Race (51.5% Caucasian; 28.5% Asian; 5.1% Hispanic; 3.1% Black; 1.6% Multiracial; 10% other)
- Current locations (38.5% North America; 30.4% Asia; 17% Europe; South America; 3.1% Africa; 0.8% Australia; 3.2% not stated)

# Measures

**Individual Level of Analysis:** Employees perception of their supervisors' servant leadership quality & their own wellbeing.

**Independent Variable:** Barbuto & Wheeler's (2006) five-dimensional construct of servant leadership.

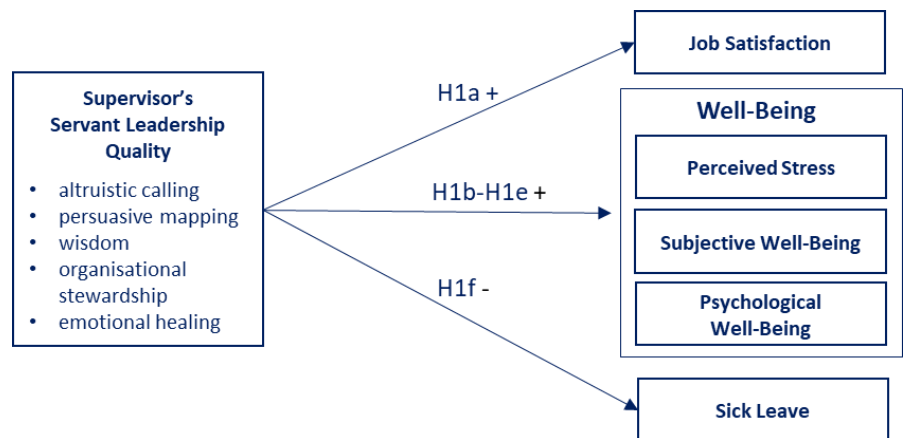
**Dependent Variables:**

- job satisfaction (1-face-item assessment)
- psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995)
- subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985)
- perceived stress (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983)
- overall health and sick days

## Key Findings

All hypotheses were supported.

Employees who rate their supervisor as possessing the qualities of servant leadership will:



<b>H1a</b>	...experience improved job satisfaction.	All factors of servant leadership predicted significantly or marginally significantly greater job satisfaction with exception of <b>emotional healing</b> . This was true even if we controlled for job category & work location.
<b>H1b</b>	...experience less stress.	Having a supervisor high in <b>wisdom</b> appeared to have the greatest impact on reducing stress.
<b>H1c</b>	...experience greater subjective wellbeing.	Individuals reported greater satisfaction with their life in general. Having a supervisor high in <b>organizational stewardship</b> & <b>emotional healing</b> seemed to be most strongly associated with greater well-being.
<b>H1d</b>	...experience greater psychological wellbeing.	Having a supervisor high in servant leadership was most strongly related to environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life & positive relations with others. Psychological well-being was best predicted only by <b>organizational stewardship</b> .
<b>H1e</b>	...experience improved health & wellbeing.	Aggregate measure of wellbeing (i.e. psychological wellbeing, subjective wellbeing & perceived stress scales) showed a significant main effect of servant leadership on wellbeing. Staff also had significantly improved health compared to those who reported supervisor being low in servant leadership.
<b>H1f</b>	...take fewer sick days.	Sick days appeared to be influenced by two opposing factors. Having a boss high in <b>emotional healing</b> was associated with taking more sick days; having a supervisor high in persuasive mapping was associated with fewer sick days.

<b>H2</b>	The degree to which supervisors embody servant leadership will vary by job category & location.	Supervisors in India, South Africa and Belgium were amongst highest rated, followed by United States. Italy was among the lowest. As a control, we found a discrepancy between self-rating & supervisor rating in servant leadership quality.
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