

**EFFECT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON
EMPLOYEES' EMPOWERMENT, KNOWLEDGE
SHARING AND CREATIVITY IN AL-MASJID
AL-HARAM AND AL-MASJID AL-NABAWI**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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SHARING AND CREATIVITY IN AL-MASJID
AL-HARAM AND AL-MASJID AL-NABAWI**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Altruistic Calling
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CMV	Common Method Variance
DOPU	Drop-off / Pick-up
ECR	Employee Creativity
EH	Emotional Healing
EMP	Employee Empowerment
KSH	Knowledge Sharing
OS	Organisational Stewardship
PM	Persuasive Mapping
SD	Standard Deviation
SL	Servant Leadership
SLQ	Servant Leadership Questionnaire
WS	Wisdom

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**KESAN KEPIMPINAN *SERVANT* TERHADAP PEMERKASAAN PEKERJA,
PERKONGSIAN ILMU DAN KREATIVITI DI
AL-MASJID AL-HARAM DAN AL-MASJID AL-NABAWI**

ABSTRAK

Setiap tahun, organisasi “Presidensi Umum Al-Masjid Al-Haram dan Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” di Arab Saudi menguruskan berjuta-juta pengunjung untuk menunaikan Umrah dan Haji. Merujuk kepada situasi ini, para pekerja organisasi ini perlu lebih kreatif dan menunjukkan hubungan baik dengan pemimpin mereka untuk memberikan perkhidmatan berkualiti dan efisien serta memastikan tahap kepuasan yang tinggi dalam kalangan jemaah Haji dan Umrah tempatan dan juga antarabangsa. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kerelevanan kepimpinan *servant* dalam organisasi dan bagaimana dimensi kepimpinan *servant* yang berbeza dapat meningkatkan kreativiti pekerja. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menyelidiki kesan pengantaraan (*mediating*) pemerksaan pekerja terhadap hubungan antara kepimpinan *servant* dan kreativiti pekerja, dan mengkaji peranan kesan penyederhanaan (*moderating*) perkongsian ilmu pengetahuan ke atas hubungan antara pemerksaan pekerja dan kreativiti pekerja. Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan daripada 341 pegawai bukan pengurusan yang berkhidmat dalam “Presidensi Umum Al-Masjid Al-Haram dan Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan pemodelan persamaan struktur separa dengan menggunakan perisian SmartPLS versi 3.2.9. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa semua dimensi kepemimpinan *servant* seperti panggilan altruistik, penyembuhan emosi, pengawasan organisasi, dan pemetaan persuasif

kecuali kebijaksanaan mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan keatas pemerksaan pekerja. Pemerksaan pekerja didapati mempunyai pengaruh yang ketara terhadap kreativiti mereka. Keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa pemerksaan pekerja mengantarakan hubungan antara penyembuhan emosi, panggilan altruistik, pengawasan organisasi, dan pemetaan persuasif dengan kreativiti pekerja. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa perkongsian ilmu pengetahuan secara positif menyederhanakan hubungan antara pemerksaan pekerja dan kreativiti pekerja. Kajian ini memberikan implikasi penting kepada para pengamal dan penggubal dasar, khususnya, kepada pengurusan kanan “Presidensi Umum Al-Masjid Al-Haram dan Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” untuk meningkatkan kreativiti pekerja mereka dengan mengamalkan dimensi kepimpinan *servant*, dan memperkasakan para pekerja. Selanjutnya, penemuan ini dapat memberi panduan kepada pihak pengurusan untuk meningkat dan mempromosikan perkongsian ilmu pengetahuan dalam usaha memperbaiki perkhidmatan kepada para pengunjung dan jemaah Umrah dan Haji. Akhir sekali, kajian ini membuka peluang baru untuk kajian lebih lanjut dalam bidang kepimpinan *servant* dan kreativiti pekerja, khususnya, dari perspektif organisasi berasakan agama.

**EFFECT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEES’
EMPOWERMENT, KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND CREATIVITY IN
AL-MASJID AL-HARAM AND AL-MASJID AL-NABAWI**

ABSTRACT

Every year, The “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” organization in Saudi Arabia serves millions of visitors to perform Umrah and Hajj. With reference to this organization, its employees need to be more creative and demonstrate a good relationship with their leaders to provide quality and efficient services and ensure high satisfaction levels among local and international Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. This study aims to examine the relevance of servant leadership in the organization and how the different dimensions of servant leadership enhance the employees’ creativity. In addition, the study investigates the mediating effect of employees’ empowerment on the relationship between servant leadership dimensions and employees’ creativity and, the moderating role of knowledge sharing on the relationship between employees’ empowerment and employees’ creativity. A quantitative data were collected through a survey of 341 non-managerial employees serving in the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. The data collected were analyzed by adopting the partial least square structural equation modeling approach using the SmartPLS version 3.2.9 software. The findings indicated that all servant leadership dimensions such as altruistic calling, emotional healing, organizational stewardship, and persuasive mapping with the exception of wisdom had a significant effect on employees’ empowerment. Employees’ empowerment was found to have significant influence on employees’

creativity. The results also showed that employees' empowerment mediates the relationship between emotional healing altruistic calling, organizational stewardship, and persuasive mapping and employees' creativity. Moreover, the findings of this study highlighted that knowledge sharing positively moderates the relationship between employees' empowerment and employees' creativity. This study has important implications for practitioners and policymakers, in particular, for the senior management of "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" to upsurge their employees' creativity by adopting the dimensions of servant leadership, and empowering their employees. Furthermore, the findings may guide the management to enhance and promote knowledge sharing in order to improve the services provided to the visitors, the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Finally, this study opens the new avenues for further study in the area of servant leadership and employees' creativity, in particular, from the perspective of religious organizations.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the present study. The chapter consists of a brief discussion of the study background, mainly describing the theory of servant leadership and the effect of servant leadership on employees' creativity. Additionally, the chapter sheds light on the gaps that provoke the need for the present study and forms the research problem. Next, the chapter introduces the research objectives and the research questions of the study. Following the theoretical and practical significance of the study, the definitions of key terms are given. Finally, the thesis structure of the remaining chapters is offered and the chapter ends with a brief summary.

1.2 Background of the study

Organizations nowadays are in constant change to be more productive and efficient. Employees represent the backbone of an organization and they need to be more creative and demonstrate good relationships with their leaders to enhance their contributions to the goals of the organization (Burke, 2017; Javed, Rawwas, Khandai, Shahid & Tayyeb, 2018) Therefore, changes to organizational goals are increasingly becoming a major component of everyday organizational life (Rimes, 2011). One major challenge for the organizations is a shortage of skilled, creative, competent, and committed employees (Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004; Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015; Shalley & Lemoine, 2018). Organizations no longer need to rely on the product, rather depend more on their people (Ulrich, 2002). Employees are the

life-blood of organizations, and they represent the most potent and valuable resources of organizations (Gunnigle, Heraty, & Morley, 1997). An organization, regardless of its orientation, may feel prosper if have creative employees (Janssen & Giebels, 2013).

Taking into consideration the worth of employees' creativity in organizations, several factors have been conducted to identify this creative behavior. Among these several factors, leadership has been attributed to be one of the most influential factors affecting employees' creativity (Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999; Tierney, 2008; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015; Shalley & Lemoine, 2018). This is true in the sense that organizations' products and services are the outcomes of employees' creativity. It is the role of leaders to create a supportive work climate where employees are encouraged, guided, empowered and motivated to come up with creative ideas (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Leaders in organizations adopt different leadership styles to enhance their followers' creativity by creating a safe and secure climate where followers without fear and hesitation come up with new ideas (Shalley & Lemoine, 2018). Previous studies elaborated on various leadership styles for instance: transformational (e.g., Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Cheung & Wong, 2011; Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2016), empowering (e.g., Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhang & Zhou, 2014; Dong, Liao, Chuang, Zhou, & Campbell, 2015; Zhang, Ke, Frank Wang, & Liu, 2018), transactional (e.g., Politis, 2004; Herrmann & Felfe, 2014) and entrepreneurial (Janssen, 2005; Bagheri, 2017; Newman, Herman, Schwarz, & Nielsen, 2018) that have been used in studies to show the importance of employees' creativity. However, there are inconsistencies in the relationship between leadership styles and employees' creativity (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Pieterse, Van

Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam, 2010; Bratnicka, 2015; Zhu, Liao, Yam, & Johnson, 2018). Therefore, further research is required to attain a better understanding of the effect of leadership on employees' creativity within organizations (Zhang et al., 2018). The present study, therefore, aims to investigate the influence of leadership styles such as servant leadership on employees' creativity.

Servant leadership is a leadership style that first conceptualized in the scholarly work of Greenleaf (1977) as leaders who are a servant first. Servant leadership commences with the natural sensation that the leader desires to serve as a servant to the employees. Servant leaders are supposed to be more anxious regarding others and always show humbleness. Such humility inspires durable relationships with followers, thus heartening them to become completely involved in their work (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Since servant leaders are focused on the followers to comprehend their full potentials, servant leadership signifies an optimistic approach towards forming a positive behavior (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011). The uniqueness of servant leadership is in contrast with other styles of leadership that assume and emphasize on followers are led for the sole interest of the leaders or the organizations (Liden, Panaccio, Meuser, Hu, & Wayne, 2014a).

In a situation where leaders prioritize assistance and moral support, the leaders consider themselves as role models to their employees (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership has been linked to followers' outcomes, which include organizational citizenship behavior, creativity, job attitudes, and performance (Choudhary, Akhtar & Zaheer, 2013; Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014b; Williams, Brandon, Hayek, Haden, & Atinc, 2017; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Practically, servant leaders make good relationships with their followers and promote openness with them which results in affecting employees' creativity. Moreover, these

leaders empower their followers to do what they able to, therefore, affecting their creativity (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017).

Following the notion that servant leadership influences employees' creativity, the present study aims to examine the effect of servant leadership on employees' creativity within the context of a Saudi Arabian religious organization, which is the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi". The literature called for effective management for religious organizations through servant leadership (e.g., Mir, 2010; Rimes, 2011; ElKaleh & Samier, 2013; Thompson, 2015; Bowden, 2020). Judging from the Islamic perspective, ElKaleh and Samier (2013, p. 199) stated, "Greenleaf's servant leadership (1977) is similar in many aspects to the servant component of Islamic leadership". For example, in one of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) stated, "the leader of the nation is their servant" (Mir, 2010, p. 70). The "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" as Islamic religious organizations may mainly adopt the servant leadership style for the management of "Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi". Past studies have shown that servant leadership thrives in societies and organizations where collective values are being pursued with less frequent organizational changes (Hannay, 2009; Hirst, Van Dick, & Van Knippenberg, 2009; Freeman, 2011). Evidence also has it that servant leadership is best in environments that are less volatile but stable (Parolini, 2007; Reid, Anglin, Baur, Short, & Buckley, 2018). Accordingly, Saudi Arabia is known for its high level of human collectivism (Hofstede, 2011) and economic stability (Park, Allui, & AlSelaimi, 2019). Therefore, selecting Saudi Arabia to present an ideal society and context to investigate the servant leadership style that effects followers' creativity.

Saudi Arabia represents a special place in the Arabic and Islamic world. One of the reasons is because “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” are located in this country. “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” are frequently visited by millions of Muslims from around the world to perform their Umrah throughout the year and Hajj (pilgrimage) during the Hajj period. The millions of people visiting the two holy Masjids propelled Saudi Arabia to establish an organization saddled with the responsibility to manage the affairs and activities of both holy Masjids in 1397H (1976 A.C), which is nowadays known as The “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. The objective of the organization is to serve the visitors and pilgrims in satisfactory manners. The main task of this organization is to facilitate the Hajj and Umrah services for the visitors of both holy Masjids and provide them with the best and fullest services that would help them to perform Umrah and/or Hajj rituals and return safely to their home countries.

The “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” serves millions of visitors every year. In the year 2019 alone, there were more than 9.2 million visitors/pilgrims (www.haj.gov.sa). With this huge number of visitors/pilgrims, the management and employees need to be creative in managing the well-being of visitors, and at the same time responding to any incidents that may happen. For example, in September 2015, a crane fell inside “Al-Masjid Al-Haram”, and this unexpected incident resulted in many deaths and wounds (BBC News, 2015). Creative response to an unexpected incident might help to reduce and mitigate future damages. Thus, the employees of both “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” are the focus of the present study by examining their creativity in conducting their daily tasks.

The importance of the leader's role in fostering employees' creativity cannot be neglected. Managers are beginning to understand the role they play in the employees' creativity process (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Such managerial influence is due to the conditions of the working environment that is characterized by increasing demands, and the use of more resources (Turulja & Bajgoric, 2019). While on the other hand, The concept of empowerment involves providing employees with freedom and the ability to participate in decision-making in their organizations (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995; Al Ghamdi, 2016). The two holy Masjids receive more and more visitors on a yearly basis, which calls the managers to empower their employees to make decisions to enhance the creative behavior to fulfill the visitors' expectations. servant leadership promotes individual relational identification and collective prototypicality with the leader which, in turn, fosters employee creativity (Al Harbi, Alarifi & Mosbah, 2019; Azim, Fan, Uddin, Jilani & Begum, 2019). Moreover, servant leadership would endorse employees' creativity through psychological empowerment sue to psychologically empowered employees are more likely to be motivated to seek diverse creative alternatives and produce novel solutions, hence tending to be more creative.

Managements of the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" in their process of developing employees' creativity have conducted several activities that empower their employees through youth promotions, awareness and knowledge raising, and forming leadership committee dedicated to employees' empowerment (General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi, 2019c, 2019b, 2019a). Therefore, the intervention of

employees' empowerment in the relationship between servant leadership style and employees' creativity has been studied in the present study.

Despite the inconsistent findings and weak relationship between employees' empowerment and outcomes such as creative performance and innovative behavior (Yang & Choi, 2009; Kmiecik, Michna, & Meczynska, 2012; Yang, Gu & Liu, 2019), a few previous research have linked employees' empowerment with employees' creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Çekmecelioğlu & Özbağ, 2014; Cingöz & Kaplan, 2015; Al Ghamdi, 2016). Some authors have suggested the moderating role of knowledge sharing on such links with employees' creativity (Wang & Noe, 2010; Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Akram, 2017). Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck (2019) argued that a moderator might be more impressive for a weak relationship.

One way to increase the employees' knowledge is through their knowledge sharing (Dong et al., 2016; Abukhait, Bani-Melhem, & Zeffane, 2018; Akram, Lei, Haider, & Hussain, 2018). In particular, society in Saudi Arabia is high on collectivism dimension (Hofstede, 2011). "In a collectivist society, each individual is encouraged to conform to the group, work, and cooperate with others for the benefit of the group. Everyone in the group is expected to rely on others for support and help. This explains why subjective norm positively affects one's attitude towards knowledge sharing as well as knowledge sharing behavior" (Ramayah, Yeap, & Ignatius, 2013, p. 147). More specifically, in "Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi", the employees meet each other during the periods they are performing their tasks and the praying times. During these times, they communicate and share their knowledge based on the challenges they face while delivering visitors' services.

In the present study, knowledge sharing is considered as the moderating variable between employees' empowerment and creativity.

1.3 Problem Statement

The employees in the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” serve a huge number of domestic and foreign Hajj pilgrims during the Hajj season every year. Meanwhile, domestic and foreign Umrah pilgrims are served on a daily basis. Thus, the employees need to give their best service every day to facilitate these pilgrims in both “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. Table 1.1 shows statistical information about the number of pilgrims in the period from 2015 to 2019.

Table 1.1
Numbers of Umrah and Hajj pilgrims from 2015 to 2019

Year	Number of Pilgrims for Umrah (International)	Number of Pilgrims for Hajj (National and International)
2015	6,750,000	1,952,817
2016	6,393,492	1,862,909
2017	6,532,074	2,352,122
2018	6,765,614	2,371,675
2019	6,730,109	2,489,406

Source: (www.statista.com, 2019) and General Authority of Statistics in Saudi Arabia

The statistic in Table 1.1 shows a massive number of visitors to “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” from 2015 to 2019. From 2020 onwards, it is expected by the Saudi government that 15 million visitors from different countries will perform Umrah on yearly basis. Apparently, the number of Umrah pilgrims is growing constantly year-by-year. In accordance with this factual expectation, the Government of Saudi Arabia has announced the Saudi Vision 2030, on 25th April

2016. The Saudi Vision 2030 aims to enhance the capacity to receive and serve Umrah pilgrims up to 30 million a year by 2030 (Saudi Press Agency, 2016). The huge increment in the capacity to receive and serve Umrah pilgrims requires the enhancement of the provided services. Also taking into consideration, the importance of upgrading the quality of services needs consideration with a strong emphasis on obtaining and ensuring high satisfaction levels among local and international Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. The employees at these two holy Masjids need to have a high level of creativity to be able to serve the huge number of pilgrims and visitors on a daily basis. Moreover, the ‘Shura Council’ of Saudi Arabia calls the Presidency of the two holy Masjids to manage the crowds and raise the creativity and performance of service providers effectively (Shura Council, 2017).

Many incidents happened during the Hajj seasons which contemplate the need of employee empowerment, knowledge sharing, and employee creativity in the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. In the year 2015 alone, there were two major incidents; the first was a crane incident resulted in 1107 people dead and 230 were injured, and the second was the ‘crush and stampede’ which cause 717 casualties and 863 injuries (BBC News, 2015). These incidents were an unpredictable situation for the employees and henceforth could be handled more efficiently and promptly. Therefore, the employees need to be creative while handling and dealing with the occurrence of such unpredictable events to avoid any unexpected losses and keep visitors and pilgrims safe. Contemplatively, employees’ creativity is demanding due to serving a mass crowd such as guiding or ensuring the safety of the crowds comes with problems and unpredictable situations on daily basis. In support of this argument, Spreitzer (1995); Amabile (1996); Zhang and Bartol (2010); and Zhang et al. (2018) emphasized that employees’ creativity is

an enabler that provokes creative problem solving and a creative response to unpredictable change.

In the context of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”, both management and employees are facing vast challenges to provide the best services to pilgrims and visitors (AL Masud, Bakar, & Yussof, 2018). These challenges tend to be more on the surface due to the diverse nationalities, ages, cultures, and languages of the visitors resulting in hardships to deal and understand their requirements (Almathkuri, 2016). As stressed by Hirst et al. (2009), creative solutions to the problems in the context of teamwork can be a crucial way for employees to determine the success of their team. Thus, the employees need to be advocated with a high level of creativity to enable themselves to fulfill pilgrims' and visitors' needs.

In order to get more insight into the situation in both “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”, the researcher carried out interviews with the management members of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. The top management members that the researcher has interviewed were:

(L1) Vice President of the Affairs of “Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”.

(L2) Head of Financial and Administrative Affairs in the Agency of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”.

(L3) Assistant of the General President of the Affairs of “Al-Masjid Al-Haram”.

From the interviews, the management members confirmed the essential need of the employees' creativity due to several reasons. The first interviewee (L1) stated that:

“Employees’ creativity is important due to the privacy of the place and its sanctity, and the nature of the work which is continuous during the 24 hours throughout the year, no holidays. Moreover, during public holidays, work becomes more intensive due to the increase in the number of pilgrims from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and worldwide”.

The second interviewee (L2) stated:

“The visitors and pilgrims in both Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi are from different countries, cultures, languages and different religious sects. In this case, the creativity is obligatory for employees as an enabler to resolve simultaneous emerging issues”.

The third interviewee (L3) stated:

“Yes, we are in urgent need of creativity, especially in the field or places where the religious rituals are performed like ‘Tawaaf’ and ‘Al-Saie’ that have more tendency of issues occurrence related to routine procedures which require direct and creative intervention to resolve”.

From these three interviewees, it can be concluded that creativity is a vital need for the management of “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. The self-reported concerns of managers highlighted the need for servant leadership, employee creativity, and knowledge sharing for the enhancement of employee creativity. The huge crowds need to be managed by creative employees who are able to observe, measure, and evaluate the capacity of each site and intervene before the maximum capacity is exceeded. This procedure requires proactive and creative management of entrance, exits, and corridors with the support of modern technology applications. In addition, the employees need to be creative while dealing with

health-related emergencies as it requires activating the alternative paths for the ambulance teams to deal with injuries and take care of the elderly to protect lives.

According to Hofstede (2011), forming groups is more common for countries citizens who adopt the collectivist culture. Hence, pilgrims and Umrah visitors tend to form groups according to their countries in order to feel safer and more comfortable. This requires intensive attention and creative applications by the employees of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” to avoid potential issues in crowds’ management especially during ‘Tawaaf’, ‘Al-Saie’ and also at the entrance of the two holy Masjids.

Noticeably, previous researchers had neglected to encompass the servant leadership while conducting their researches in employees’ creativity field, despite the suggestions given by the researchers in the field of creativity that authors should put more emphasis and efforts on leadership approaches which may discourse the fundamental underpinnings of creativity (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Tierney, 2008; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Whereas servant leadership is comparatively a new notion in the literature of leadership, much of what is described regarding servant leadership has not been brought based on empirical investigation. The literature regarding servant leadership is rather indeterminate, somewhat ambiguous, and mostly anecdotal (Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; Nisar, 2018). Previous studies such as Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta and Kramer (2004), Al Harbi et al. (2019) and Azim et al. (2019) found a positive and significant relationship between leadership and employee creativity. Besides, they also suggested further investigation into this emerging research field. For instance, a recent study conducted by Saleem, Zhang, Gopinath, and Adeel (2020) recommended the need for further investigation in different social-cultural contexts

to consider leadership characteristics while modeling servant leadership and employees' behaviors. Hence, the present study aimed to answer this research call by investigating servant leadership and employees' creativity in the context of the religious organization.

The characteristics of the Arab countries including Saudi Arabia are attributed to high power distance and hierarchy, which implies that senior managers must be deeply committed toward improving the environment for creativity (Rice, 2006). Managers are responsible and accountable to provide clear directions in order to form and develop creativity among employees. In general, Saudi Arabian employees who are working in the government sectors have a high level of job security (Mellahi, 2006; Asad Sadi & Al-Dubaisi, 2008; Al-Ahmadi, 2009; Alomi, Alghamdi, & Alattyh, 2018), which is considered as a highest-ranking barrier in terms of creativity. Because of the high job security, employees may not be taking work seriously as they should and they may not take creativity as an important element in their job. Some of the Saudi employees do not take task achievement seriously and, as a result, the lack of improving creativity and productivity (Mellahi, 2006; Asad Sadi & Al-Dubaisi, 2008; Al-Ahmadi, 2009). Sadly, very little and inadequate researches have been carried out to examine employees' creativity in Saudi Arabia.

It was affirmed in the literature that creative thought requires motivation and engagement to support the refinement and successful implementation of creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhang et al., 2018). Motivation and engagement can be observed via employees' empowerment (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhang et al., 2018). Zhang and Bartol (2010) found the many findings suggested that empowering employees might develop their creativity.

In accordance, His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, President of the headquarter of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” stated, “We are empowering employees to invest in their youths and creative thinking, in accordance with Saudi Arabia 2030 vision”. He further emphasized that “The Presidency is concerned with empowering all employees to be creative and innovative” (General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi, 2019c). However, the employees’ empowerment in the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” has never been investigated in the empirical and scientific way in relation to employees’ creativity. In a collectivist society such as Saudi Arabia, employees are expected to rely on others for support and help which explains their attitude towards knowledge sharing (Ramayah et al., 2013). However, there is a scarcity of research in investigating the moderation role of knowledge sharing in developing Saudi Arabian employees’ creativity. Therefore, up to the researcher best knowledge, the present study is the first empirical research being conducted to investigate the mediation role of employees’ empowerment and the moderation role of knowledge sharing in developing employees’ creativity in relation with the servant leadership dimensions in the organization of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”.

The scarcity of empirical research is noticeable on the servant leadership from the context of “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” to examine the employees’ creativity and employees’ empowerment. This is probably because the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” does not practice open-door policy to the public. Due to its terms as holy Masjids and issues concerning its privacy and sacred, it is not feasible for outside

researchers to conduct scientific research. The researcher of the present study was holding a managerial post at the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” before starting this thesis. Thus, it would be easy and advantageous for the researcher to gain entrance and permission from the top management to conduct the present study.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present study examines the relationship between servant leadership dimensions and employees’ creativity through employees’ empowerment as a mediator and knowledge sharing as a moderator. To that end, the study develops the following objectives:

1. To examine the effect of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” Managements’ servant leadership dimensions (emotional healing, altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship) on employees’ empowerment.
2. To examine the effect of employees’ empowerment on employees’ creativity in the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”.
3. To examine the mediation role of employees’ empowerment on the relationship between the General Presidency Management’s servant leadership dimensions (emotional healing, altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship) and employees’ creativity.

4. To examine the moderation role of knowledge sharing in the relationship between employees' empowerment and their creativity in the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi".

1.5 Research Questions

The present study answers the following questions:

1. Do the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" Managements' servant leadership dimensions (emotional healing, altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship) significantly influence employees' empowerment?
2. Does employees' empowerment positively affect employees' creativity in the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi"?
3. Does the employees' empowerment mediate the relationship between General presidency Management's servant leadership dimensions (emotional healing, altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship) and employees' creativity?
4. Does the knowledge sharing among employees of the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" moderate the relationship between the employees' empowerment and their creativity?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study examines the influence of the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" Managements' servant leadership on employees' creativity. It provides significant theoretical and practical contributions

in the area of religious services organizations. The contributions of the study are as follows:

1.6.1 Theoretical Contribution

First, the present study provides a multidimensional explanation of servant leadership within an Islamic context and explains how these multidimensional factors could influence employees' creativity through their empowerment. It follows a distinguished perspective to examine the servant leadership theory further.

Second, the present study provides enrichment to the existing literature regarding the relationship between servant leadership and employees' creativity. In particular, this study strengthens the knowledge body on Muslim religious organizations from the context of servant leadership dimensions and employees' creativity. Literature review of management's servant leadership and employees' creativity highlighted the scarcity of information in this field (Newman, Neesham, Manville, & Tse, 2017a; Williams et al., 2017; Nisar, 2018). Furthermore, the present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by employing the theory of Servant Leadership from the perspective of a religious organization for testing the relationship between servant leadership and employees' creativity.

Third, the study validates the applicability of employees' empowerment as the mediating variable according to Regulatory Focus Theory in the relationship between servant leadership and employees' creativity. Based on literature review, it was found that several studies had identified employees' empowerment as a motivational factor that may influence their creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Krog

& Govender, 2015; Heidari, Ghasemi, & Heidari, 2019; Van Der Hoven, 2016; Ashgar & Naseer, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018).

Fourth, the present study contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge by exploring the moderating role of knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing helps to increase the predictive power of the regulatory focus theory towards explaining employees' creativity. Researchers of servant leadership and employees' creativity have suggested conducting further studies with an extended framework (Yang et al., 2019). Therefore, in an attempt to provide a further understanding of the relationship between servant leadership and employees' creativity, this research explores the relationship between servant leadership and employees' creativity. In addition, it expands the knowledge by considering the employees' empowerment as a mediating variable and knowledge sharing as a moderating variable.

1.6.2 Practical Implications

In the context of the practical implications, the present study provides a better considerate of the status quo of the servant leadership and its influences on employees' creativity of the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi". The results of the study exhibit insight into the relationship of management's servant leadership and employees' creativity in the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi", as it is executing the services and operations in the two most important Masjids for the Islamic world. The results of the study help the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" to understand the role of employees' empowerment in the enhancement of employees' creativity. Thus, enabling the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi" to boost their employees' creativity

by empowering them. The findings of the study also help the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” to recognize the importance of knowledge sharing among their employees. While the services provided to the pilgrims are becoming better with the high level of creativity of the employees, it is expected that the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims will be highly satisfied.

Further, the results of the present study also provide useful information to the government of Saudi Arabia to execute Saudi Vision 2030. Moreover, this study adds to the existing literature by providing and developing an enhanced understanding of the area of religious services organizations, which are providing services for religious sites and managing religious rituals.

For the visitors, the level of service quality they received and expectations met may increase the level of their revisit intention to these two holy Masjids. These will, in turn, increase the demands for high-quality services at these two Masjids which requires the management to thrive to be creative in providing quality services. The consideration of these steps will, in the long turn, increase the revenue generation of the Saudi government.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The present study is directed among the employees serving in the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” in Saudi Arabia. They are non-managerial employees working in various departments. All these employees are Saudi citizens engaged in full-time work under permanent contracts with the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”.

The present study is confined to the effect of General Presidency management servant leadership on the employees' creativity. In addition, the study explores employees' empowerment role as a mediating variable in the relation between the General Presidency managements' servant leadership and employees' creativity. Finally, the moderating role of knowledge sharing is also investigated in the present study.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

The key terms of the present study are defined as follow:

1.8.1 The “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”

A governmental religious and service organization that is directly linked to the Prime Minister in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and it is responsible for the supervision of Al-“Masjid Al-Haram” located in Mecca and “Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi” located in Medina.

1.8.2 Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is an other-oriented approach to leadership, manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, van Dierendonck & Liden, 2019).

1.8.3 Emotional Healing

Emotional healing is the commitment and skill of a leader in fostering spiritual recovery by creating a safe environment for employees and provide for them a channel to share personal and professional issues (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

1.8.4 Altruistic Calling

Altruistic calling describes a leader's deep-rooted desire to make a positive difference in others' lives and puts others' interests ahead of himself, trying to meet the employees' needs (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

1.8.5 Wisdom

Wisdom is the ideal of perfect and practical, combining the height of knowledge and utility (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

1.8.6 Persuasive Mapping

Persuasive mapping describes the extent that leaders use sound reasoning and mental frameworks to convince others to do things (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

1.8.7 Organizational Stewardship

Organizational stewardship is the capability of the leader to help an organization to make a positive contribution to society and promote a community spirit among employees (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

1.8.8 Employees' Creativity

Employees' creativity refers to the production of novel and useful ideas by an employee or by a group of employees working together that contributes to organizations' renewal, survival, and growth (Zhou & George, 2001).

1.8.9 Employees' Empowerment

Employees' empowerment is a motivational construct manifested in a set of four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role: competence, impact, meaning, and self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995).

1.8.10 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is frequent face-to-face communication and the creation of shared learning experiences and includes activities such as informal communication, brainstorming sessions, mentoring, and coaching (Kianto, Vanhala, & Heilmann, 2016).

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter of the present study introduces a general overview of the research environment, background, problem statement, objectives, questions, significance, and scope. The second chapter explores in detail the research environment by introducing an overview of Saudi Arabia, "Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi", the structure of the "General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi". The third chapter investigates the related literature to support the conceptualization of the framework. The fourth chapter

provides a methodological background. The fifth chapter provides data analysis and findings. Finally, the sixth chapter discusses the finding.

1.10 Chapter Summary

The overview of the present study is given in this chapter. It contains a brief discussion on the background of the study, mainly describing the theory of servant leadership and the effect of servant leadership on employees' creativity. Additionally, the chapter sheds light on the gaps in previous researches, which has created the need for this study to be conducted. Next, the research objectives and the research questions have been introduced and explained. Furthermore, the significance of the study was discussed from both theoretical and practical perspectives. In addition, the definitions of the key terms in this study were presented. The following chapter provides an overview of Saudi Arabia, "Al-Masjid Al-Haram" and "Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi".

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW ON SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GENERAL PRESIDENCY OF AL-MASJID AL-HARAM AND AL-MASJID AL-NABAWI

2.1 Introduction

In order to set the background on the related environment for the present study, this chapter provides an overview of Saudi Arabia, “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”, and the structure of the “General Presidency of Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. The extensive background is provided as Saudi Arabia has a specific social and cultural context and many other aspects for instance; the sacred place, the geographic nature, and the different religious rituals that relating to this context might be affecting the results of the present study. This chapter starts with an overview of Saudi Arabia followed by historical and structural information about “Al-Masjid Al-Haram and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi”. Finally, this chapter is summarized.

2.2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Historically, Saudi Arabia has undergone through several phases, it has emerged as an Arabian State in Najd (the center of the Arabian Peninsula) around 1744 to be the first Saudi State. At the time, Prince "Mohammed bin Saud" joined the Islamic leader, "Mohammed bin Abd Al-Wahhab" to establish the foundation of Saudi Arabia (Bowen, 2014; Alasmari, 2017). The country then extended to lands from Kuwait and Jordan in the north and to Oman and Yemen in the south (Al-Rasheed, 2010). King Abdul Aziz bin Saud is considered as the establisher of recent Saudi Arabia. He was the first king of the new Saudi Arabia. He was born in 1876 in