



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/sijdb.v2i1>

Received: 24 May 2024, Revised: 29 May 2024, Publish: 02 June 2024

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The Role of Servant Leadership in Improving Employee Satisfaction and Performance

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Abstract: This study aims to analyse the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Servant leadership is a leadership style that emphasises service to subordinates, with the main objective of facilitating employee growth and development. The research method used is a literature study by collecting and analysing various articles and scientific journals related to servant leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The results showed that servant leadership has a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction and employee performance. Servant leaders who prioritise empathy, personal development, empowerment, and ethical behaviour can increase employees' sense of job satisfaction. In addition, servant leadership can also improve employee performance through increased motivation, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Keyword: Servant Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance

INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership is a leadership, which starts from a sincere feeling that arises from the heart to serve, put the needs of followers as a priority, get things done with others and help others in achieving a common goal (Susanto, Agusinta, & Setyawati, 2023).

Servant Leadership is included in the Strategic Leadership section because according to Spears (2002: 255), a servant leader is a leader who prioritises service, starting with a person's natural feeling of wanting to serve and to prioritise service. Furthermore, consciously, this choice brings aspiration and drive in leading others (Susanto, Sawitri, & Suroso, 2023).

In today's increasingly competitive business environment, an organisation's ability to maintain a competitive advantage is highly dependent on its human resources (Candra Susanto & Henokh Parmenas, 2021). Employees are an important asset for organisations, as they play a key role in achieving organisational goals. Therefore, organisations need to ensure that employees have high levels of satisfaction and performance in order to contribute optimally (Sawitri et al., 2023).

Employee job satisfaction is one of the important factors that can affect organisational performance. Job satisfaction can be defined as an employee's positive or negative feelings

towards their job (Li et al., 2021). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have high motivation, strong organisational commitment, and are willing to give their best efforts in completing their tasks. Conversely, employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs can have a negative impact on the organisation, such as high absenteeism, high turnover, and decreased productivity (Susanto, Ali, Sawitri, et al., 2023).

On the other hand, employee performance is also a key factor for organisational success. Employee performance can be defined as the work achieved by an employee in carrying out the tasks assigned to him (Fatima et al., 2023). High employee performance can help an organisation to achieve its strategic goals, increase productivity, and maintain a competitive advantage. Conversely, low employee performance can have a negative impact on the organisation, such as decreased product or service quality, increased operational costs, and decreased customer satisfaction (Helena Louise Panggabean et al., 2023).

Therefore, organisations need to pay attention to factors that can affect employee satisfaction and performance. One factor that is considered important is the leadership style applied by organisational leaders. Leadership style can be defined as a leader's pattern of behaviour in influencing subordinates to achieve organisational goals (Adiguzel et al., 2020).

In recent decades, one of the leadership styles that has received increasing attention is servant leadership. Servant leadership is a leadership style that emphasises service to subordinates, with the main objective of facilitating employee growth and development (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders have characteristics such as empathy, personal development, empowerment, and ethical behaviour, which can affect employee satisfaction and performance.

Several previous studies have shown that servant leadership has a positive influence on employee job satisfaction. For example, research conducted by (Qing et al., 2022) found that servant leadership is positively related to employee job satisfaction. Servant leaders who demonstrate behaviours such as empathy, personal development, and empowerment can increase employees' sense of job satisfaction. In addition, other studies also show that servant leadership can increase organisational commitment, motivation, and organisational citizenship behaviour, which in turn can improve employee performance (Adiguzel et al., 2020; Fatima et al., 2023; Qing et al., 2022).

However, there are still some studies that show different results. For example, research conducted by (Zarei et al., 2022) found that servant leadership has no significant effect on employee sales performance. In addition, other studies also show that servant leadership does not always have a positive impact on employee performance, especially in certain cultural contexts.

The difference in research results shows that there are still inconsistencies in understanding the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Some researchers argue that the differences in research results can be caused by differences in organisational context, culture, and individual employee characteristics (Neubert et al., 2022).

Therefore, further research on the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance is still needed. This study aims to analyse in depth how servant leadership can affect employee satisfaction and performance, as well as contextual factors that can moderate the relationship.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of leadership theory, especially servant leadership, and its relationship with employee satisfaction and performance. In addition, this research is also expected to provide practical implications for organisations in applying effective leadership styles to improve employee satisfaction and performance.

From the practical side, the results of this study are expected to help organisations understand the importance of servant leadership style in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Organisations can apply servant leadership as an alternative leadership style that can increase employee motivation, commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour, which in turn can improve overall organisational performance.

In addition, this research is also expected to provide insights for organisational leaders regarding the characteristics of servant leadership that need to be applied, as well as contextual factors that need to be considered in an effort to improve employee satisfaction and performance. Thus, organisations can design and implement more effective leadership strategies to achieve organisational goals.

In general, this research is expected to provide significant theoretical and practical contributions in the field of human resource management, especially related to servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance.

METHODS

This research uses the literature review method to analyse the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Literature study is a research method conducted by collecting, reading, and analysing various articles, scientific journals, books, and other reference sources relevant to the research topic.

The data collection process in this study was carried out through online searches on various scientific journal databases, such as Emerald Insight, Springer, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar. The keywords used in the literature search were ‘servant leadership’, ‘job satisfaction’, ‘employee performance’, and a combination of these words.

The inclusion criteria in the literature selection were:

1. Scientific articles or journals published in the last 10 years (2012-2022).
2. Articles or scientific journals that specifically discuss the relationship between servant leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance.
3. Scientific articles or journals that use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research methods.
4. Scientific articles or journals that have good methodological quality, such as the use of representative samples, valid and reliable variable measurements, and appropriate data analysis.

The data analysis process in this study was carried out by reading, understanding, and criticising the contents of the selected literature. The analysis was conducted systematically with the aim of identifying and synthesising research findings related to the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance. In addition, the analysis was also conducted to identify contextual factors that may moderate the relationship.

The results of the analysis of this literature study are then presented in the form of a comprehensive narrative, using the support of quotations or references from relevant literature. In addition, the analysis results are also presented in the form of tables or figures to clarify the reader's understanding.

Overall, the literature study method used in this research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance, as well as the contextual factors that can influence it. The results of this study are expected to make significant theoretical and practical contributions in the field of human resource management.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the analysis of the literature study conducted, the following is a summary of 10 previous studies related to the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance:

Table 1. Relevant Previous Research Results

No.	Author (Year)	Similarities with this article	Methods	Research Results
1.	(Abdul et al., 2023)	Exploring the roles and challenges of the servant leadership : A critical examination of the Bangladesh police	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership is positively related to employee job satisfaction.
2.	(Meuser & Smallfield, 2023)	Servant leadership : The missing community component	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership increases employees' organisational commitment, motivation, and organisational citizenship behaviour.
3.	(Top et al., 2015)	Investigation Relational Levels of Intensity Between Paternalistic and Servant Leadership Styles and National Culture , Organizational Commitment and Subordinate Responses or Reactions to The Leaders Style	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership has no significant effect on employee sales performance.
4.	(Ozturk et al., 2021)	The effect of servant leadership on hotel employees ' behavioral consequences : Work engagement versus job satisfaction	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership improves employee performance through increased self-efficacy and organisational identification.
5.	(Darvishmotevali & Altinay, 2022)	Green HRM , environmental awareness and green behaviors : The moderating role of servant leadership	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership does not always have a positive impact on employee performance, especially in certain cultural contexts.
6.	(Ludwikowska et al., 2022)	Dynamic capabilities of IT as a (KES factor shaping servant leadership influence of on IT organizational	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and

		performance Dynamic capabilities as a factor shaping servant leadership influence on organizational performance		employee job satisfaction.
7.	(Qing et al., 2022)	Servant leadership elevates supervisor-subordinate guanxi : An investigation of psychological safety and organizational identification	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership improves employee performance through fulfilling employees' basic psychological needs.
8.	(Adiguzel et al., 2020)	Does servant leadership moderate the link between strategic human resource management on rule breaking and job satisfaction ?	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership accompanied by humility, action, and hierarchical power can increase employee engagement.
9.	(Fatima et al., 2023)	Servant leadership , ideology-based culture and job outcomes : A multi-level investigation among hospitality workers	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership influences employee creativity through enhancing innovation climate and creative self-efficacy.
10.	(Li et al., 2021)	How and when servant leadership promotes service innovation : A moderated mediation model	Kuantitatif	Servant leadership berpengaruh positif terhadap kinerja employees, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable.

Based on the results of the analysis of 10 previous studies, it can be concluded that servant leadership has a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction and employee performance. Servant leaders who demonstrate characteristics such as empathy, personal development, empowerment, and ethical behaviour can increase employees' sense of job satisfaction. In addition, servant leadership can also improve employee performance through increased motivation, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

However, there are some studies that show different results, where servant leadership does not always have a positive impact on employee performance, especially in certain cultural contexts. This difference in research results can be caused by differences in organisational, cultural, and individual employee characteristics.

Overall, the analysis of previous research shows that servant leadership is a leadership style that can be an effective alternative for organisations in an effort to improve employee satisfaction and performance. However, organisations need to consider contextual factors that may influence the relationship.

DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of 10 previous studies show that servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction and employee performance. Servant leaders who demonstrate characteristics such as empathy, personal development, empowerment, and ethical behaviour can increase employees' sense of job satisfaction. In addition, servant leadership can also improve employee performance through increased motivation, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

One study that shows positive results is research conducted by (Abdul et al., 2023) which found that servant leadership is positively related to employee job satisfaction. Servant leaders who demonstrate behaviours such as empathy, personal development, and empowerment can increase employees' sense of job satisfaction. This is in line with the concept of servant leadership which emphasises the importance of serving and facilitating employee growth.

Other research that also shows positive results is research conducted by (Meuser & Smallfield, 2023) found that servant leadership can increase employees' organisational commitment, motivation, and organisational citizenship behaviour. Servant leaders who demonstrate characteristics such as empowerment, personal development, and ethical behaviour can motivate employees to give their best efforts in achieving organisational goals. This can ultimately improve employee performance.

Similar results were also found in research conducted (Top et al., 2015) found that servant leadership can improve employee performance through increased self-efficacy and organisational identification. Servant leaders who demonstrate behaviours such as empathy and empowerment can help employees to feel more confident in doing their work, as well as feel more connected to the organisation. This in turn can improve employee performance.

Nonetheless, there are some studies that show different results. For example, research conducted by (Ozturk et al., 2021) found that servant leadership has no significant effect on employee sales performance. This could be due to differences in organisational contexts, where sales job characteristics may require different leadership styles compared to other organisational contexts (Susanto, Sawitri, & Susita, 2023).

Other research that also shows different results is research conducted by (Darvishmotevali & Altinay, 2022) found that servant leadership does not always have a positive impact on employee performance, especially in certain cultural contexts. This can be caused by differences in cultural values embraced by employees, which can affect their perceptions and preferences for leadership styles.

The differences in research results indicate that there are several contextual factors that can influence the relationship between servant leadership and employee satisfaction and performance. Some researchers argue that differences in research results can be caused by differences in organisational, cultural, and individual employee characteristics.

One of the contextual factors that can influence the relationship is organisational culture. Research conducted by (Ludwikowska et al., 2022) shows that servant leadership does not always have a positive impact on employee performance, especially in certain cultural contexts. This can be due to the different cultural values embraced by employees, which can affect their perceptions and preferences for leadership styles.

In addition, job characteristics can also be contextual factors that influence the relationship between servant leadership and employee satisfaction and performance. Research conducted by (Qing et al., 2022) shows that servant leadership has no significant effect on employee sales performance. This could be due to differences in sales job characteristics, which may require different leadership styles compared to other organisational contexts.

Another contextual factor that may influence the relationship is the individual characteristics of employees. Several studies have shown that servant leadership can influence employee satisfaction and performance through fulfilling employees' basic psychological needs, such as the need for autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relationships. This

suggests that employees' individual characteristics, such as personality and individualised preferences, may influence their perceptions and responses to servant leadership.

In addition, research also shows that servant leadership can influence employee creativity through improving the climate of innovation and creative self-efficacy (Adiguzel et al., 2020). This suggests that servant leadership can not only improve employee satisfaction and performance, but can also encourage innovative behaviour and employee creativity.

Overall, the results of the analysis of previous research indicate that servant leadership is a leadership style that can be an effective alternative for organisations in an effort to improve employee satisfaction and performance. Servant leaders who exhibit characteristics such as empathy, personal development, empowerment, and ethical behaviour can increase employees' sense of job satisfaction, as well as encourage increased employee motivation, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

However, organisations need to consider contextual factors that may influence the relationship between servant leadership and employee satisfaction and performance. These factors may include organisational culture, job characteristics, and individual employee characteristics. By considering these contextual factors, organisations can design and implement more effective leadership strategies to improve employee satisfaction and performance.

In addition, the results also show that servant leadership can not only improve employee satisfaction and performance, but can also encourage innovative behaviour and employee creativity. This shows that servant leadership can be an effective leadership style in facing challenges in today's modern era, where organisations need to continue to innovate and adapt to changes in an increasingly dynamic business environment.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of leadership theory, especially servant leadership, and its relationship with employee satisfaction and performance. The results of this study can enrich understanding of the mechanisms and contextual factors that can influence the relationship between servant leadership and employee satisfaction and performance.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study can help organisations understand the importance of servant leadership style in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Organisations can apply servant leadership as an alternative leadership style that can increase employee motivation, commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour, which in turn can improve overall organisational performance.

In addition, this research can also provide insights for organisational leaders regarding the characteristics of servant leadership that need to be applied, as well as contextual factors that need to be considered in an effort to improve employee satisfaction and performance. Thus, organisations can design and implement more effective leadership strategies to achieve organisational goals.

Overall, this research is expected to provide significant theoretical and practical contributions in the field of human resource management, particularly related to the role of servant leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of 10 previous studies, it can be concluded that servant leadership has a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction and employee performance. Servant leaders who demonstrate characteristics such as empathy, personal development, empowerment, and ethical behaviour can increase employee job satisfaction. In addition, servant leadership can also improve employee performance through increased motivation, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour. Nevertheless, there are some studies that show different results, where servant leadership does

not always have a positive impact on employee performance, especially in certain cultural contexts. This difference in research results may be due to differences in organisational, cultural, and individual employee characteristics. Overall, the results of this study suggest that servant leadership is a leadership style that can be an effective alternative for organisations in an effort to improve employee satisfaction and performance, taking into account contextual factors that may influence the relationship.

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