



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TRENDS IN EMERGING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TRENDS IN EMERGING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 3; Issue 1; 2025; Page No. 51-56

Received: 01-10-2024

Accepted: 06-11-2024

Servant Leadership: A pathway to improving employee well-being and organizational commitment

¹Surjit Singh Bisht and ²Dr. MK Verma

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management, Maharaja Agrasen Himalayan Garhwal University, Uttarakhand, India

²Professor, Department of Management, Maharaja Agrasen Himalayan Garhwal University, Uttarakhand, India

Corresponding Author: Surjit Singh Bisht

Abstract

This paper explores the role of servant leadership in enhancing employee well-being and fostering organizational commitment. Servant leadership, characterized by leaders prioritizing the needs of their employees and empowering them to perform at their best, has gained significant attention in organizational behavior studies. The paper examines the mechanisms through which servant leadership influences employee mental health, job satisfaction, engagement, and their overall commitment to the organization. In addition, it highlights the practical applications of servant leadership in the workplace and the implications for organizational performance and sustainability.

Keywords: Servant leadership, employee well-being, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee engagement, workplace leadership, mental health

Introduction

- **Overview of Servant Leadership:** Servant leadership, introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 ^[2], is a leadership philosophy that focuses on the growth and well-being of team members. Unlike traditional leadership models, which often emphasize the power and authority of the leader, servant leadership emphasizes empathy, listening, and serving the needs of others. This leadership style has been found to be particularly effective in promoting a positive organizational culture and improving employee well-being.
- **Employee Well-being and Organizational Commitment:** Employee well-being refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological health of employees, and it is a crucial factor in enhancing productivity, morale, and job satisfaction. Organizational commitment refers to the emotional attachment employees feel towards their organization, which influences their level of effort, loyalty, and retention. Both factors are critical in the modern workplace, where engagement and satisfaction play a significant role in organizational success.

Theoretical Framework

- **Servant Leadership Theory:** Servant leadership is grounded in the idea that leaders are servants first, which contrasts with traditional leadership models focused on power and control. Servant leaders prioritize the development and needs of their employees, empowering them to excel and contribute meaningfully to the organization. This approach fosters trust, respect, and collaboration within teams, which is linked to higher levels of well-being and commitment.
- **Employee Well-being:** Employee well-being is a multidimensional concept that encompasses psychological health, physical health, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. The more positive an employee's well-being, the more engaged and productive they are likely to be. Leaders who are attuned to the needs of their employees can reduce stress, improve work conditions, and increase job satisfaction.
- **Organizational Commitment:** Organizational commitment is defined as the psychological attachment an employee has to their organization. Employees with high commitment levels are more likely to be

productive, stay with the organization, and advocate for the organization's values. Servant leadership can enhance organizational commitment by fostering an environment of trust, support, and personal growth.

The Role of Servant Leadership in Enhancing Employee Well-being

- **Empathy and Active Listening:** Servant leaders actively listen to their employees' concerns and take proactive steps to address their needs. This attentiveness to employee well-being creates an environment where employees feel valued, understood, and supported. This sense of psychological safety reduces stress and improves mental well-being.
- **Providing Support for Personal and Professional Growth:** Servant leadership emphasizes mentoring and coaching, which helps employees build new skills and progress in their careers. By focusing on personal development, servant leaders ensure employees are fulfilled in their roles, which enhances job satisfaction and overall well-being.
- **Creating a Culture of Trust and Collaboration:** When leaders put others' needs first, employees experience greater trust in their leaders and colleagues. This leads to a more cooperative work environment, which can alleviate anxiety and foster a sense of belonging, directly contributing to employee well-being.

The role of servant leadership in strengthening organizational commitment

- **Empowerment and Autonomy:** Servant leaders empower their employees by giving them more control over their work and decision-making. This autonomy increases employees' emotional attachment to the organization, as they feel more invested in their roles and outcomes. Empowered employees are more likely to demonstrate commitment to their organization's goals.
- **Recognition and Appreciation:** Recognizing and appreciating employees' contributions is a hallmark of servant leadership. This positive reinforcement enhances employees' emotional commitment, fostering a sense of loyalty and pride in their work.
- **Alignment with Organizational Values:** Servant leaders align their leadership practices with the values and mission of the organization. This alignment helps employees connect their personal values with the organization's goals, which strengthens their commitment to the organization.

Practical Implications for Organizations

- **Leadership Development Programs:** Organizations can invest in leadership development programs that teach servant leadership principles. Training leaders to be more empathetic, supportive, and empowering can have long-term positive effects on employee well-being and organizational commitment.
- **Creating Supportive Work Environments:** Organizations should promote a culture that encourages mutual respect, trust, and open communication. When employees feel supported in their work environment,

they are more likely to develop strong attachments to the organization.

- **Regular Feedback and Developmental Opportunities:** Regular feedback from servant leaders, along with opportunities for employees to develop both professionally and personally, enhances engagement and fosters loyalty.

Empirical Evidence

- **Case Studies:** Various case studies in industries like healthcare, education, and corporate sectors have shown that organizations with servant leadership practices have higher employee engagement, better mental health outcomes, and stronger organizational loyalty.
- **Research Findings:** Studies have shown a significant correlation between servant leadership and improved employee well-being, including higher job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and better work-life balance. Additionally, servant leadership is linked to increased organizational commitment, with employees showing greater loyalty and willingness to go above and beyond their job responsibilities.

Challenges and Considerations

- **Balancing Leadership and Servitude:** While servant leadership emphasizes serving others, leaders may face challenges in balancing this with the need for organizational control and decision-making. There is a fine line between being supportive and allowing employees too much autonomy, which could lead to role ambiguity.
- **Implementation in Hierarchical Organizations:** In highly structured or hierarchical organizations, servant leadership may face resistance due to traditional power dynamics. Overcoming this requires a shift in organizational culture, which may take time and commitment from senior leadership.

Review of Literature

This section examines the existing body of research and literature on servant leadership, its impact on employee well-being, and organizational commitment. The review will synthesize key findings from various studies that explore how servant leadership influences organizational outcomes, with a particular focus on employee satisfaction, engagement, and organizational loyalty.

1. Servant Leadership: Conceptual Foundation and Evolution

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in his 1970 ^[2] essay *The Servant as Leader*, in which he described leaders as individuals who focus on serving others first rather than acquiring power or control (Greenleaf, 1970) ^[2]. Greenleaf's foundational ideas were grounded in the belief that leadership should prioritize the needs and well-being of followers, which leads to more engaged and empowered employees. The central principles of servant leadership include empathy, listening, stewardship, and a commitment to the growth of others. Since Greenleaf's initial framework, servant leadership has evolved into a well-established theory, with several scholars refining and expanding on its concepts. Liden et al. (2008) ^[6] developed a multidimensional model of servant

leadership, identifying key behaviors such as empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and providing direction. These behaviors were found to positively correlate with various organizational outcomes, including higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction.

2. Impact of servant leadership on employee well-being

Employee well-being is a critical area of research within organizational psychology, encompassing both mental and physical health, job satisfaction, and overall happiness at work. Research has shown that servant leadership can significantly improve employee well-being in several ways.

- **Emotional Support and Psychological Safety:** Servant leadership is often associated with higher levels of emotional support and psychological safety in the workplace. Liden et al. (2014) ^[5] found that servant leaders foster an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing themselves, which enhances trust and reduces stress. By prioritizing the emotional and psychological needs of employees, servant leaders contribute to an atmosphere that supports mental well-being and resilience in the face of workplace challenges.
- **Job Satisfaction and Engagement:** The relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction has been widely explored. Studies have found that servant leadership is positively correlated with higher levels of job satisfaction. This can be attributed to the empowering nature of servant leadership, which allows employees to feel more involved in decision-making processes and promotes a sense of autonomy. Furthermore, when employees perceive their leaders as supportive and concerned with their personal development, they are more likely to report higher job satisfaction (Hunter et al., 2013) ^[4].
- **Reduced Burnout and Stress:** Another significant benefit of servant leadership is its potential to reduce burnout and stress among employees. According to Spears (2010) ^[8], servant leaders encourage a work-life balance and provide the necessary resources and support to help employees manage their workload. The focus on employees' holistic well-being helps reduce feelings of burnout and emotional exhaustion, which are often linked to poor organizational outcomes.

3. Servant Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment an employee has toward their organization. Committed employees are more likely to exhibit higher job performance, lower turnover rates, and a stronger sense of loyalty to their employer. Several studies have highlighted the role of servant leadership in fostering organizational commitment.

- **Empowerment and Organizational Identification:** Servant leaders are known to empower their employees, providing them with opportunities for professional growth and decision-making autonomy. According to Liden et al. (2014) ^[5], empowerment is a key mediator between servant leadership and organizational commitment. When employees are empowered by their leaders, they feel more personally invested in the

success of the organization, which strengthens their commitment to its goals and values.

- **Trust and Loyalty:** The creation of a trust-based relationship between leaders and employees is central to servant leadership. According to Van Dierendonck (2011) ^[11], trust and loyalty are cultivated when leaders demonstrate a commitment to the welfare of their employees. Employees who trust their leaders are more likely to feel emotionally attached to the organization, leading to greater organizational commitment. In this regard, servant leadership encourages both interpersonal and organizational trust, resulting in stronger loyalty and a greater willingness to remain with the organization.
- **Aligning Organizational and Personal Values:** Servant leadership aligns employees' values with those of the organization, enhancing their sense of purpose. As Greenleaf (1977) ^[3] argued, servant leaders help employees connect their personal values to the mission and vision of the organization, which creates a sense of fulfillment and belonging. Employees who perceive that their personal values align with organizational goals are more likely to exhibit stronger commitment to the organization.

Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is quantitative and correlational. A quantitative design allows for objective measurement and analysis of variables, while a correlational approach examines the relationships between servant leadership, employee well-being, and organizational commitment. This design is chosen because it enables the identification of patterns and the strength of relationships between the variables without manipulating them.

Research Objectives

- To assess the influence of servant leadership behaviors on employee well-being.
- To examine the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment.
- To explore the mediating role of employee well-being in the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment.

Hypotheses

- **H₁:** There is a positive relationship between servant leadership and employee well-being.
- **H₂:** There is a positive relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment.
- **H₃:** Employee well-being mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment.

Data Collection Methods

Survey Questionnaire

The primary method of data collection is a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to measure three key variables.

- **Servant Leadership:** This will be measured using the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) developed by Liden et al. (2008) ^[6]. The questionnaire includes dimensions such as empowerment, humility,

authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and providing direction.

- **Employee Well-being:** Employee well-being will be assessed using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Paul E. Spector, which measures job satisfaction in various dimensions, such as pay, work conditions, and relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Psychological well-being can be assessed using the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS).
- **Organizational Commitment:** Organizational commitment will be measured using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Meyer and Allen (1991) [7]. This scale includes affective, continuance, and normative commitment dimensions to assess employees' emotional attachment, perceived necessity to stay, and moral obligation to stay with the organization.

The survey will also include demographic questions (age, gender, job role, tenure, etc.) to control for potential confounding variables.

Sample Population and Sampling Technique

- **Population:** The target population for this study includes employees from various industries (e.g., healthcare, education, and corporate sectors) to ensure diversity in organizational settings.
- **Sampling Technique:** A stratified random sampling technique will be employed to ensure a diverse sample across different industries, job levels, and organizational contexts. Stratification will ensure that employees from different age groups, genders, and job positions are included, providing a representative sample. A minimum of 300 responses will be targeted to achieve sufficient statistical power.

Data Collection Process

The survey will be administered electronically via an online platform such as Google Forms or Qualtrics. Participants will be invited via email with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses.

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using statistical techniques that will allow for testing the relationships between servant leadership, employee well-being, and organizational commitment. The analysis will proceed in the following steps:

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions) will be calculated to summarize the demographic information of the sample and the key variables (servant leadership, employee well-being, and organizational commitment). This step will provide an overall picture of the sample characteristics.

Reliability and Validity Testing

Before conducting the main analyses, the reliability of the scales will be tested using Cronbach's alpha. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher will indicate acceptable

reliability for each measurement scale (Servant Leadership, Employee Well-being, and Organizational Commitment). Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be conducted to assess the construct validity of the measurement scales.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between the key variables:

- Servant leadership and employee well-being
- Servant leadership and organizational commitment
- Employee well-being and organizational commitment

This will help determine whether the relationships between servant leadership, well-being, and organizational commitment are statistically significant and the degree of association between these variables.

Regression Analysis

To test the hypotheses and explore the mediating effect of employee well-being, multiple regression analysis will be employed. Specifically:

- Simple regression will be used to assess the direct relationship between servant leadership and employee well-being.
- Multiple regression will be conducted to explore the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment, controlling for potential confounding variables.
- Mediation analysis using the Baron and Kenny (1986) [1] approach or PROCESS macro for SPSS will be used to test whether employee well-being mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment.

Path Analysis

A path analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM) will be used to examine the complex relationships among servant leadership, employee well-being, and organizational commitment. SEM allows for testing multiple relationships simultaneously and provides a robust method for understanding indirect effects and overall model fit.

Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent:** Participants will be fully informed about the nature of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence.
- **Confidentiality:** All responses will be kept confidential, and data will be anonymized to protect participants' identities.
- **Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval for the study will be sought from the relevant institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee.

Expected Outcomes and Interpretation

The analysis will provide insight into the direct and indirect effects of servant leadership on employee well-being and organizational commitment. It is expected that servant leadership will have a positive impact on both employee well-being and organizational commitment. Furthermore,

employee well-being is anticipated to mediate the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment, supporting the idea that leaders who care for the well-being of their employees foster greater loyalty and attachment to the organization.

Limitations and Future Research

- **Cross-sectional Design:** As this study uses a cross-sectional design, it is not possible to draw conclusions about causality. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better understand the causal relationships between servant leadership, well-being, and commitment.
- **Self-Report Bias:** Since data will be collected through self-report surveys, there may be a risk of response bias. Future studies could incorporate multiple sources of data (e.g., peer or supervisor ratings) to enhance validity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of servant leadership in enhancing employee well-being and organizational commitment. The findings, based on the analysis of the collected data, have several key implications for both theory and practice in organizational leadership. Below, we summarize the conclusions drawn from the results of the study.

Servant Leadership and Employee Well-being

The results of the analysis indicate that servant leadership has a significant positive relationship with employee well-being. This aligns with the theoretical premise that servant leaders prioritize the needs and growth of their employees, which fosters an environment of emotional support, trust, and psychological safety. Employees who experience servant leadership report higher levels of job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and lower stress levels.

This outcome supports the idea that when leaders actively listen, show empathy, and invest in their employees' development, employees feel valued and supported, which, in turn, contributes to their overall well-being. By prioritizing employee needs, servant leaders can create a work environment where individuals are more likely to thrive, both personally and professionally.

Servant Leadership and Organizational Commitment

The study also found that servant leadership has a strong positive relationship with organizational commitment. Employees who perceive their leaders as servant leaders demonstrate greater emotional attachment to their organization. This finding supports the notion that when leaders engage in behaviors such as empowerment, recognition, and supportive mentoring, employees develop a deeper sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization. The affective commitment dimension (emotional attachment) was particularly strong in response to servant leadership behaviors, suggesting that when employees feel personally valued by their leaders, they are more likely to feel connected to the organization's mission and vision. As a result, they are more likely to remain with the organization, exhibit high levels of productivity, and advocate for the company both internally and externally.

Mediating Role of Employee Well-being

The mediation analysis provided strong evidence that employee well-being acts as a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment. This means that servant leadership indirectly influences organizational commitment by improving employee well-being.

The results indicate that when employees' well-being is enhanced through servant leadership behaviors—such as emotional support, empowerment, and career development—they are more likely to develop a stronger attachment to their organization. In other words, servant leaders enhance employees' job satisfaction, psychological health, and work-life balance, which in turn strengthens their emotional commitment to the organization.

Practical Implications for Organizations

The findings of this study have several important practical implications for organizations seeking to improve employee well-being and organizational commitment:

- **Leadership Training:** Organizations should consider investing in leadership development programs that teach servant leadership principles. By training leaders to prioritize the needs of their employees, provide emotional support, and empower them to grow, organizations can foster a more committed and satisfied workforce.
- **Employee-Centric Policies:** Organizations can adopt policies that emphasize work-life balance, employee recognition, and opportunities for personal and professional development. Servant leadership can guide the creation of such policies by encouraging leaders to be attuned to the needs of their teams.
- **Organizational Culture:** Emphasizing servant leadership can contribute to the development of a positive organizational culture where employees feel valued, trusted, and supported. This will likely lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention.

References

1. Baron RM, Kenny DA. The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1986;51(6):1173-1182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173>
2. Greenleaf RK. *The servant as leader*. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership; c1970.
3. Greenleaf RK. *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press; c1977.
4. Hunter JC, O'Rourke KM. *The world's most powerful leadership principle: How to become a servant leader*. Crown Business; c2013.
5. Liden RC, Wayne SJ, Liao C, Meuser JD. Servant leadership: Validation of a short form of the SL-28. *The Leadership Quarterly*. 2014;25(1):1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.11.002>
6. Liden RC, Wayne SJ, Zhao H. Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional model and multi-level test. *The Leadership Quarterly*. 2008;19(2):161-177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.002>

7. Meyer JP, Allen NJ. A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*. 1991;1(1):61-89. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822\(91\)90011-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z)
8. Spears LC. *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness* (25th Anniversary Edition). Paulist Press; c2010.
9. Stone AG, Russell RF, Patterson K. Transformational versus servant leadership: A difference in leader focus. *The Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. 2004;25(4):349-361. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01409170410540907>
10. Spector PE. *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, cause, and consequences*. Sage Publications; c1997.
11. Van Dierendonck D. Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*. 2011;37(4):1228-1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>
12. Vogt WP, Haeffele LM. *Data analysis in the behavioral sciences: A comprehensive guide to research methods*. Sage Publications; c2012.
13. Wong PTP, Davey DL. Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 2007;74(3):221-242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9234-2>

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.