

The Role of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance Mediated by Work Motivation Within Millennials

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Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to examine the role of servant leadership in employee performance within millennials, both directly and mediated by work motivation. This study refers to several studies on servant leadership, employee performance, and work motivation. **Design/methodology/approach** - This study uses a quantitative research approach, with data collection techniques by distributing surveys to employees working in a public organization in the Sumatra area, Indonesia, as the phenomena was found in this area. Samples received after several weeks of distributing questionnaire was 83. The technique of analysis of this research adopting partial least square structural equation modelling. **Finding** - The results of this study indicate that employee performance is influenced by servant leadership, both directly and mediated by work motivation; in other words, employees will perform well if driven by the external and internal roles of the individual. **Originality** - This study offers originality by examining the direct and mediated effects of servant leadership on employee performance specifically within the context of millennials working in a public organization in the Sumatera area. While previous research may have explored these relationships in other contexts, this study's focus on a specific generation and geographical location in Indonesia provides a unique contribution to the literature. Furthermore, the study highlights the interplay between external (servant leadership) and internal (work motivation) drivers of employee performance, offering practical implications for organizations seeking to enhance employee effectiveness. **Practical implications** - The implication of this study is that organizations can provide stimuli in the form of encouragement for individuals to realize the importance of self-motivation if it is obtained from their superiors.

Keywords: Triage, Guidelines and Standard of Triage, E-Triage

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership has long been regarded as a key factor influencing employee performance in an organization (Vrcelj, Bevanda, & Bevanda, 2022). Among various leadership styles that have been studied in the literature, it can be said that servant leadership has gained special attention due to its focus on employee well-being and needs. Based on previous studies, servant leadership fulfills employees' basic psychological needs, leading to increased task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and overall well-being (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

Servant leadership as a concept was first introduced by emphasizing that service to others should be a top priority, which is clearly different from the more traditional approach, which tends to pursue personal gain or power. The study found that servant leadership combines motivation to lead with the need to serve, emphasizing empowerment, development, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and

stewardship(van Dierendonck, 2011). Thus, serving leaders not only focus on business outcomes, but also strive to empower, support, and develop employees so that they can provide optimal job performance. This study found that servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, potentially leading to high loyalty and reduced turnover rates(Silalahi, Candra, Grace, Simatupang, & Julyanthry, 2022).

Based on a number of studies, it can be concluded that servant leadership is not only effective in improving individual performance, but also affects social dynamics within organizations, especially in terms of strengthening organizational culture. The study found that servant leadership has incremental predictive validity over transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership and is linked to positive individual and team-level behavioral outcomes(Lee, Lyubovnikova, Tian, & Knight, 2019).

In addition to these studies, researchers have also found that the role of servant leadership is very important because of its positive impact on the work environment; in the presence of servant leadership, the work environment becomes positive because individuals in the organization feel the importance of supporting and motivating each other because of the example given by their leaders. The study found that servant leadership style and work environment significantly affect employee motivation, which, in turn, impacts employee performance(Sinta, 2022).

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of employee performance among millennial generations. Several studies have found that millennials are indeed unique, one of which found that a supportive work environment, facilities, and encouraging superiors enhance their commitment and contribution toward achieving company goals (Normillah & Rahmah, 2024). The performance of millennials is significantly influenced by servant leadership, which aligns with their own values(Jayanagara, 2024).

Servant Leadership

One study stated that a leader is said to be effective if he has qualities like a servant and has the motivation to serve the people under him(Pekerti & Sendjaya, 2010). The servant leadership style emphasizes the importance of development at the individual level and how a leader can prioritize welfare and strive to meet the needs of his subordinates.

In fact, there is a study that highlights the role of servant leaders in fostering a sense of empowerment and empathy and providing substantial support from leaders to their followers so that the leader's subordinates can grow well both professionally and personally(Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017).

The difference between servant leadership and other leadership styles is that servant leadership focuses more on the leader's efforts to build long-term relationships with followers and create an inclusive organizational culture that is in line with humanistic and ethical values. This study found that servant leadership facilitates feelings of belongingness and uniqueness among diverse employees, fostering equitable and more humane workplaces(Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

Next, one study attempts to confirm that servant leadership is positively related to increased employee performance because servant leaders foster high levels of commitment, loyalty, and job satisfaction among their followers(Vrcelj, Bevanda, & Bevanda, 2022). Servant leadership facilitates the creation of a supportive and sustainable organizational culture in which ethical leadership becomes an integral part of organizational management, finding that servant leadership has a unique asset attributable to it, which can contribute to employee outcomes and facilitate cultural transmission in an organization(Giambatista, Mckeage, & Brees, 2020).

Furthermore, servant leadership not only influences individual performance but also affects the performance of teams and the organization. Chiniara and Bentein (2015) stated that servant leadership plays a vital role in creating an adaptive culture that enables organizations to remain competitive in the face of

dynamic business environment changes. Servant leaders strive to facilitate the development of their followers' capacities and ensure that strategic decisions are made with the broader community's well-being in mind, finding that servant leadership positively impacts and increases the resilience capacity of those impacted by the leader, contributing to increased resilience capabilities in organizations (Eliot, 2020).

Based on these findings, servant leadership has emerged as one of the most relevant leadership approaches in addressing modern leadership challenges, particularly in an era that demands increased flexibility, adaptation, and humanization of organizations.

Employee Performance

Employee performance is the outcome of an employee in their job according to predetermined criteria. Employee performance leads to increased efficiency and productivity of overall organizational processes, making it essential for every company to pay attention to their employees' performance. To understand and explore the phenomenon of individual or employee performance, numerous empirical studies have been conducted using various variables, including conflict, leadership, organizational culture, work ethics (Ferine, Aditia, Rahmadana, & Indri, 2021), capacity building (Ahmad, Farrukh, & Nazir, 2015), social media (Cao, Guo, Vogel, & Zhang, 2016), management support, adaptability, intrinsic motivation (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2018), HR practices, job engagement, and job crafting (Guan & Frenkel, 2018).

Many research models have been used in these empirical studies and are applicable to different employees or jobs. Researchers continue to investigate the impact of employee performance to contribute to the development of the literature, with many studies conducted in Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Malaysia (Ferine, Aditia, Rahmadana, & Indri, 2021). Therefore, in Asian countries, employee performance must be the focus of companies. Meanwhile, outside Asia, there are also empirical studies measuring employee performance in countries such as the United States, Greece, Australia, Portugal, and Uganda (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2018). Ferine et al. (2021) showed that conflict has a negative impact, while leadership, organizational culture, and work ethics have a positive impact on employee performance. Guan and Frenkel indicate that HR practices, job engagement, and job crafting variables affect employee performance.

Employee performance management is considered a critical function of organizational managers. Employees represent significant resources for their organizations. Therefore, overseeing this investment through human resource management practices is a substantial financial commitment for most organizations. The importance of employee performance to the overall success of an organization can partly explain why many methods for monitoring, managing, and improving employee performance have been developed (Schraeder & Jordan, 2011).

Work Motivation

In recent years, motivation has become one of the most frequently discussed topics in organizational psychology. Work motivation is typically defined as the process of stimulating, guiding, and maintaining employee behavior toward work-related tasks. This motivation involves directing an individual's needs toward behaviors that fulfill those needs and, in turn, leads to higher employee satisfaction (Hitka, Kozubikova, & Potkany, 2018).

Work can be understood as a set of actions undertaken in an organizational environment. Employees' motivation is significantly influenced by numerous variables such as job satisfaction, employee turnover, absenteeism rates, intent to leave, performance, and organizational commitment (Freund, 2005). A high level of these values indicates effective management. Therefore, organizations must place strong

emphasis on motivating employees(Radu, 2023). Moreover, a greater emphasis on employee motivation is expected to result in noticeable improvements in overall business performance (Garg & Rastogi, 2006). Motivation can be described as the sum of actions taken to continually direct one or more employees toward specific goals(Basu, 2023).

Hypothesis Development

Several studies have found the importance of a work environment that can motivate workers to make significant contributions to increase organizational performance (Zhenjing, Chupradit, Ku, Nassani, & Haffar, 2022). Servant leadership positively influences employee performance both directly and indirectly(Sutiayatno, 2024). Through servant leadership, leaders who prioritize employees' needs foster motivation and loyalty, leading to improved job satisfaction and performance outcomes within the organization(Tanuwijaya, P, Aeeanty, & Tasruddin, 2023).

Hypothesis 1: Servant leadership influences employee performance positively

Servant leadership significantly influences employee performance, with work motivation acting as the mediator(Sinta, 2022). This study did not specifically address servant leadership. However, it highlights that work motivation mediates the relationship between work environment and employee performance, indicating that a positive work environment can enhance motivation and subsequently improve performance(Feriandy, 2024). This research indicates that leadership style, including servant leadership, does not directly affect employee performance.

Work motivation can mediate the relationship between compensation and employee performance but does not mediate the relationship between leadership style and employee performance(Putri, Sarmigi, & Desiana, 2024). Motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, which exists in everyone, is thought to mediate the relationship between leadership and employee performance, which can ultimately increase organizational effectiveness (Azhar et al., 2021). In studies conducted by Anggraini and Pratama (2020), Rahmawati et al. (2021), and Susanto and Wahyudi (2022), work motivation plays a role as a mediator between servant leadership and employee performance.

Hypothesis 2: Servant leadership influences employee performance with work motivations as mediator

Below presented the visualization of this research model (Figure 1.)

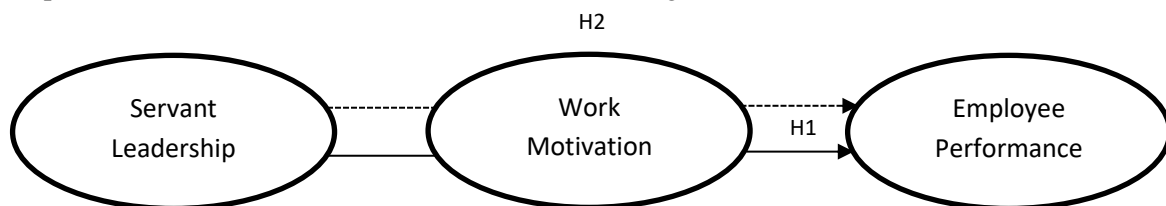


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach was quantitative. The researcher chose the research object from among millennials who work in various organizations and are not specific to a particular industry. The population of millennials who work is unknown, so the researcher refers to the sampling technique approach, which states that the

ideal sample size is between 30 (minimum) and (0 a maximum) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Then, for the operationalization of the variables, it can be stated as follows: 1) to measure servant leadership, the researcher adopted the item The Servant Leadership Questionnaire or SLQ formulated by Liden et al (2008), and from the 28 original items, this study used 25 items, where one of the items has the statement "my boss values honesty more than profit", 2) to measure work motivation, the researcher adopted the Motivation at Work Scale developed by Gagne et al (2010) which originally had 12 items, and in this study 11 were used, where one of the items had the statement "I feel the reason for doing my current job is to get a salary", 3) to measure employee performance, the researcher used measurements adopted from the research of Koopmans et al(2014), and for this study 26 statement items, where one of the items has the statement "I feel able to keep myself busy doing something while at work". The distribution of the questionnaire was carried out for one month in October 2024 using an online formula that was distributed randomly using online media channels. To ensure that those who filled it out were millennials, the researcher also applied a filter question, namely asking for the respondent's age and year of birth. For the analysis of this research data, the researcher adopted PLS-SEM, or partial least squares, where there are two data processing procedures, namely the measurement model and structural model; for bootstrapping, it refers to one-tailed because the hypothesis statement shows the direction, and Smart-PLS was used as a tool.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the survey distribution, for one month, the researcher encountered obstacles because the data collected did not move too much from October to 14-22, 2024, and finally, at the end of October 2014, we received 83 responses. However, because the researcher adopted a minimum sample size of 30, the number of responses obtained was followed up. From the results of data collection, all incoming data that can be continued are only respondents who can be classified as millennials, namely between 21 and 30 years old, so the data was reduced from 83 to 70 forms. However, this number is worthy of further research. The respondents who volunteered to fill out this survey had an average of working for less than five years, the majority were female, and the job they were doing when filling out the survey was their first job. Therefore, this study reflects the group groups, as explained in the respondent profile description.

Measurement Model Results

Based on Hair et al.(2019), the assessment procedure for the reflective measurement model was to look at outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and HTMT, and the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Employee Performance	0,978	0,979	0,979	0,643
Servant Leadership	0,967	0,971	0,970	0,569
Work Motivation	0,919	0,928	0,932	0,559

As for the outer loadings in Table 1 the results obtained are the smallest at 0.522, and the largest is 0.91. Then from table 1. It can be seen that all variables can be continued because they meet the standard parameters (Cronbach's alpha > 0.9; AVE > 0.5, composite reliability > 0.7). Discriminant validity results are presented in table 2., below.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-monotrait ratio)

	Employee Performance	Servant Leadership	Work Motivation
Employee Performance			
Servant Leadership	0,620		
Work Motivation	0,875	0,692	

The results are presented in table 2., it can be concluded that all variables meet the standard parameters for HTMT, that is, <0.9. Finally, the measurement model is illustrated in the following image (Figure 2.):

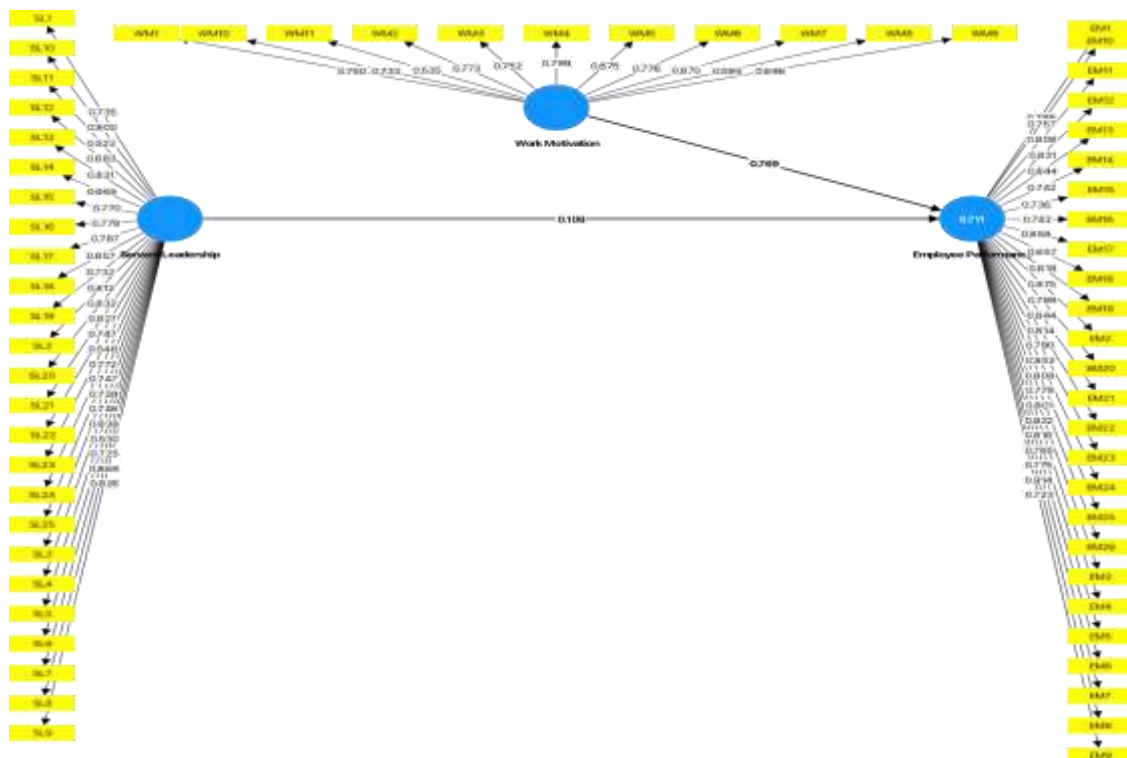


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Structural Model Results

According to Hair et al.(2019), the assessment procedure for the structural model is based on VIF, followed by explanatory power and path coefficients. However, there was a possibility for collinearity since the VIF results are above than 0,5, but however, since VIF will only reflect stability, we continue going to the next procedure, that is, explanatory power, and in this case, we rely on R-Square.

Table 3. Explanatory Power

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Employee Performance	0,711	0,702

Based on table 3 it may conclude that the explanatory power of this research may represent the real case in reality as much as 71,1 %, or on the other hand, servant leadership may predict employee performance by as much as 71,1 %. Then, we move on to the next procedure, bootstrapping, as follows:

Table 4. Bootstrapping

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Conclusions
Servant Leadership -> Employee Performance	0,099	0,116	0,129	0,766	0,222	Not Supported
Servant Leadership -> Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0,516	0,510	0,090	5,743	0,000	Supported

Based on table 4 it may conclude, that in this case, employee performance may not be concluded as positively affected by servant leadership. However if work motivation act as mediating, then servant leaderships may affect employee performance. Next, the illustration of the results of the structural model assessment is shown in Figure 3, below.

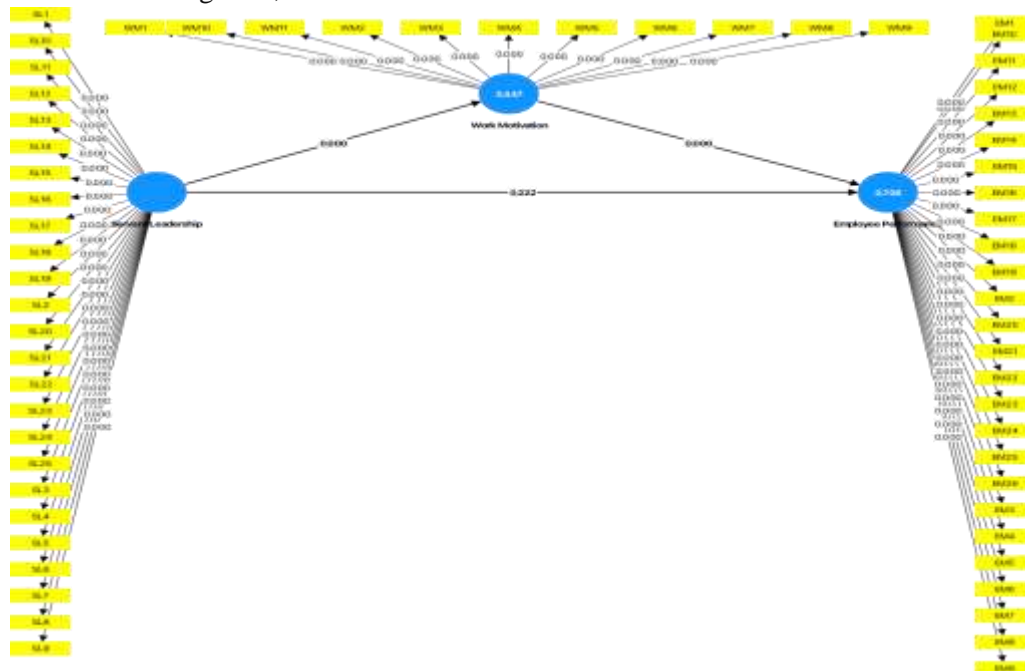


Figure 3. Structural Model

The results of this study are interesting for further discussion. In particular, this study found that servant leadership did not have a positive influence on employee performance. The results of this study illustrate an interesting phenomenon among millennials who have worked for less than five years when looking at the role of servant leadership in their superiors and its association with employee performance, specifically female. A number of possibilities could be the cause, and the researcher formulates these possibilities as follows.

Differences in millennial employees towards their leaders could be a factor. Servant leadership in its concept tries to promote a "serving" leadership style, and a number of studies see the important role of this leadership style because it is considered to have a good influence on employee performance, as the results of previous studies stated that ideally servant leadership can provide change because its actions can provide positive encouragement for its subordinates, and this study is contrary to the results of previous studies that were once conveyed by Sutiyatno (2024) and even Tanuwijaya's studies(2023).

Since the majority of respondents were women, the researcher attempted to further explore what might be possible regarding women's views on servant leadership. Some women self-identify as servant leaders and view this leadership style as a means of authentically enacting their social roles(Lehrke & Sowden, 2017). Thus, it could be because female respondents have not seen how the role of servant leadership is authentic; it requires a willingness from leaders to sincerely show authenticity when treating their subordinates; thus, employees who come from millennials and have worked for less than five years can feel that the role of leadership that transmits the servant leadership style has a positive effect on individual performance.

Regarding the second supported hypothesis, the results of this study confirm the results of previous studies that saw the important role of work motivation as a mediator between servant leadership and employee performance. When this study also revealed that the respondents were mostly women and had worked for less than five years, the results of this study also showed the challenges experienced by millennial employees who have worked for less than five years to be able to grow their work motivation. A number of items are used to measure work motivation can be used as a benchmark for what ideal work motivation is, and the item, for example, is "I feel able to complete the work easily," which implies that if the respondent feels capable of themselves, then the presence of a leader will be useful for improving performance, but if there is no sense of confidence, then the presence of a leader is useless because this is very closely related to the perception of the problems faced in the work space.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to prove the role of servant leadership in employee performance, both directly and when there is work motivation as a mediator. The results of this study indicate that servant leadership for millennial employees who have worked for less than five years is not considered to have a positive effect on employee performance. However, when work motivation is involved in mediation, servant leadership is believed to play a role. This phenomenon shows that millennials who have worked for less than five years, especially women, prefer to develop their own roles so that whatever is done by the organization or company will have a good impact on individual performance.

LIMITATIONS

The most obvious limitation of this study is the number of samples. Although it was not intentional to obtain as many respondents as 70, the need to have representative data to generalize the phenomenon is also very important. In particular, the results of this study show interesting results that are contrary to those of previous

studies. Then, for the scope of the study, it is also necessary where a specific description of this phenomenon occurs in which location and industry is also very important.

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