

THE EFFECT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR MEDIATED BY EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the impact of servant leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) mediated by employee engagement. The methodology used is quantitative, focusing on civil servants of class 4 in Tanah Datar Regency as the population. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to respondents. For data analysis, SmartPLS software version 4.0 was applied using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method. The results of the study indicate that servant leadership has a significant positive influence on OCB and employee engagement. Furthermore, employee engagement also showed a positive and significant influence on OCB. These findings also confirm that employee engagement functions as a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and OCB. This research contributes to the development of human resource management theory and practice, while supporting organizations in improving employee performance and satisfaction.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, Employee Engagement

1. Introduction

Effective leadership is a key factor in improving organizational performance. One leadership style that can improve organizational performance is servant leadership. Among various leadership styles, servant leadership is one of the most widely studied approaches because it emphasizes service orientation towards subordinates. According to Greenleaf (1970), servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes the needs and interests of team members, and focuses on their development and empowerment. Servant leadership is believed to be able to create a healthy work environment and can increase employee engagement, which is the level of employee involvement and commitment in their work. Leaders who play a servant role not only focus on achieving targets but also encourage individual growth by building positive interpersonal relationships.

Employee engagements a crucial factor in improving organizational performance. Organizations are required to have employees who are not only physically present but also emotionally and psychologically engaged with their work. This concept is known as employee engagement. According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is a psychological state that reflects employee involvement and commitment to their work. Employee engagement can improve employee and organizational performance, as well as reduce turnover and absenteeism. Conversely, low employee engagement can lead to reduced motivation, increased turnover, and decreased performance. Therefore, understanding and managing employee engagement is crucial for the sustainability and competitiveness of organizations. Previous research has shown that servant leadership can improve employee engagement and organizational performance.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is voluntary behaviour that is not directly related to work tasks, but can improve organizational performance. According to Organ (1988), OCB is behaviour that reflects an employee's willingness to help co-workers and the organization,

as well as participate in activities that are not directly related to work tasks. OCB plays an important role because it can increase cooperation, reduce conflict, and strengthen team performance. Employees who demonstrate OCB generally have high commitment, motivation, and a sense of belonging to the organization. Therefore, it can be interpreted that OCB is important for organizations to be able to create a productive and harmonious work culture.

According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees who feel valued and supported by the organization are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours, such as OCB. Servant leadership can increase employee engagement and OCB because social exchange explains that when employees feel support, fairness, and concern from their leaders or their environment, they will tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes, loyalty, engagement, and extra-role behaviour that support organizational performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that social exchange is an important foundation in understanding the dynamics of work relationships and employee behaviour in an organizational environment. According to Suhermin et al., (2021), the human resources aspect plays an important role in various operational activities of a productive organization. Thus, this research is expected to provide valuable information for organizations in developing strategies to improve employee performance and satisfaction, as well as increase OCB through servant leadership and employee engagement.

2. Theoretical review

Employee Engagement

According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is a mental state that reflects employee participation and commitment to their tasks. Engaged employees demonstrate high enthusiasm, commitment, and participation, enabling them to make maximum contributions to the company. Schaufeli et al. (2002) define employee engagement as a positive mental state manifested by energy (vigor), commitment (dedication), and concentration (absorption) while working. This definition became the basis for the development of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which is frequently used in research. Therefore, it can be concluded that employee engagement is an employee's emotional, cognitive, and behavioural bond with their work and organization, demonstrated through enthusiasm, commitment, and effort to achieve optimal performance. The indicators of employee engagement according to Schaufeli et al., (2002) are as follows: (a) Vigor, (b) Dedication, (c) Absorption.

Servant Leadership

According to Greenleaf (1970), servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes the needs and interests of team members, and focuses on their development and empowerment. Servant leadership can improve organizational performance and employee satisfaction. According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when leaders demonstrate supportive and caring behaviour toward team members, team members will feel indebted and tend to exhibit positive behaviour in return. The indicators of servant leadership according to Liden et al., (2008) are as follows: (a). Service, (b). Development, (c). Empowerment.

H1. Servant Leadership has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H2. Servant Leadership has a positive influence on organizational citizenship behaviour.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

According to Organ (1988), Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is voluntary behaviour that is not directly related to work tasks, but can improve organizational performance. Podsakoff et al., (2000) explain OCB as individual behaviour that is discretionary (of one's own will), not included in formal job descriptions, but contributes to the smooth

functioning of the organization. According to research by Aini and Suhermin (2016) in organizational life, individual behaviours that are beneficial to the organization are needed. With high OCB in an organization, it is expected to improve employee performance and also organizational performance. High OCB can also create solidarity among employees within the organization. So that difficulties and problems that exist in the organization will be resolved well. The indicators of OCB according to Podsakoff et al., (2000) are as follows: (a). Altruism, (b). Conscientiousness, (c). Sportsmanship.

H3. Organizational citizenship behaviour has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H4. Organizational citizenship behaviour mediates the influence of servant leadership on employee engagement.

3. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach, more specifically, the quantitative approach used is quantitative causality. The population of this study was all 1,005 civil servants (PNS) class 4 in Tanah Datar Regency. The sampling technique used in this study was probability sampling. Sampling used simple random sampling. This situation is done by providing opportunities for all members of the population to be selected as specimens. This study was conducted in Tanah Datar Regency.

The data used in this study is primary data, that is, data obtained directly from the research object. The data collection procedure used in this study is a questionnaire. The measurement technique for questionnaire responses can be measured using a Likert scale.

This study used SmartPLS software version 4 as a data analysis method. PLS (Partial Least Squares) is a variance-based structural equation analysis (SEM) that can simultaneously test measurement models and structural models. The measurement model is used to test validity and reliability, while the structural model is used to test causality (hypothesis testing with a predictive model).

4. Result and Discussion

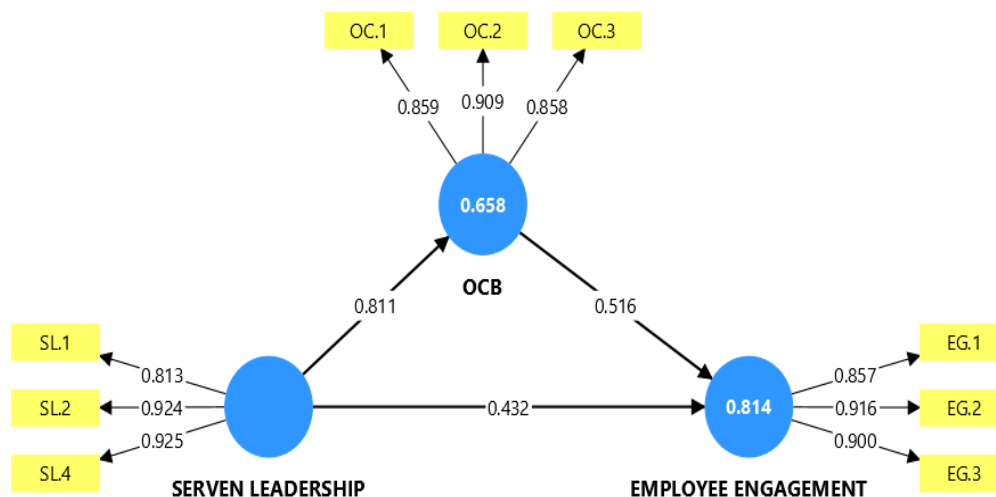


Figure 1. Outer Model

Convergent Validity Test

The following are the results of the convergent validity test in this study, namely:

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test

	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	OCB	SERVANT LEADERSHIP
EG.1	0.857		
EG.2	0.916		
EG.3	0.900		
OC.1		0.859	
OC.2		0.909	
OC.3		0.858	
SL.1			0.813
SL.2			0.924
SL.4			0.925

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the results of the tests carried out, it shows that all the indicators of the variables have met the Loading Factor ≥ 0.7 requirement, so that the data in this study can be declared valid.

Discriminant Validity Test

Discriminant validity testing is a method for assessing the validity of each indicator by comparing the cross-loading values on variables other than the variable being measured. Data is considered valid if the cross-loading value reaches ≥ 0.7 . Discriminant validity testing can be demonstrated as follows:

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Test

	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	OCB	SERVANT LEADERSHIP
EG.1	0.857	0.771	0.745
EG.2	0.916	0.768	0.762
EG.3	0.900	0.777	0.766
OC.1	0.739	0.859	0.725
OC.2	0.749	0.909	0.688
OC.3	0.786	0.858	0.716
SL.1	0.601	0.548	0.813
SL.2	0.814	0.799	0.924
SL.4	0.823	0.780	0.925

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The cross-loading results show that the correlation value of the construct with its indicators is greater than the correlation value with other constructs. Thus, all constructs or latent variables have good discriminant validity, where the indicators in the construct indicator block are better than the indicators in other blocks. Discriminant validity testing is measured by comparing the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value of each construct with the correlation between other constructs in the model. The criteria for the AVE value to be declared acceptable and valid is ≥ 0.5 .

Reliability Test

The reliability test measurement in this study used the criteria of a Cronbach Alpha value ≥ 0.6 , which was declared reliable. If the Cronbach Alpha value < 0.6 , it was declared unreliable. The following are the results of the reliability test:

Table 3. Reliability Test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	0.870	0.870	0.921	0.794
OCB	0.848	0.848	0.908	0.767
SERVANT LEADERSHIP	0.867	0.896	0.918	0.790

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the table above, each variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value ≥ 0.6 , indicating that the variables used in this study are reliable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the entire construct meets the reliability requirements, both according to Cronbach's Alpha criteria.

Inner Model Test

R-Square

R-Square (R²) can indicate the strength or weakness of a research model. The R-Square value criteria are said to be weak if the R-Square value is ≥ 0.25 , $x < 0.5$, and the R-Square value criteria are said to be moderate if the R-Square value is ≥ 0.5 , $x < 0.75$, and the R-Square criterion value is said to be strong if the R-Square value is ≥ 0.75 . The following are the results:

Table 4. R-Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	0.814	0.809
OCB	0.658	0.653

After testing with SmartPLS, it was found that employee engagement (EG) has an R-Square value of 0.814 which is included in the "STRONG" category with a value range of ≥ 0.75 , so it is said that the ability of the servant leadership (SL) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) variables in explaining the employee engagement (EG) variable is quite strong at 81.4%, while the remaining 18.6% is the influence of other independent variables that were not measured in this study. Meanwhile, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has an R-Square value of 0.658 which is included in the "Moderate" category with a value range of ≥ 0.5 , $x < 0.75$, which means that servant leadership (SL) is able to explain the relationship with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) by 65.8%.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis test in this study used a t-test with a significance level of > 1.96 and a P-Value of $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ (5%).

Table 5. Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
OCB -> EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	0.516	0.520	0.099	5,196	0.000
SERVENT LEADERSHIP -> EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	0.432	0.429	0.109	3,949	0.000
SERVENT LEADERSHIP -> OCB	0.811	0.813	0.030	26,826	0.000

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Table 6. Specific Indirect Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
SERVENT LEADERSHIP -> OCB -> EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	0.419	0.423	0.086	4,839	0.000

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Discussion

Previous research has shown that servant leadership can improve employee engagement by prioritizing the needs and interests of team members, and focusing on their development and empowerment (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This is in line with research by Setiawan and Santoso (2020), which proves that servant leadership has a positive effect on employee engagement, where servant leadership makes employees more enthusiastic, dedicated, and motivated to deliver their best performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that servant leadership has a positive influence on employee engagement. By implementing servant leadership principles, organizations can foster strong employee engagement, which ultimately increases productivity, loyalty, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Previous research has shown that servant leadership can enhance OCB by prioritizing the needs and interests of team members, and focusing on their development and empowerment (Liden et al., 2008). Walumbwa et al., (2010) showed that servant leadership increases employees' sense of fairness, satisfaction, and commitment, which in turn encourages the emergence of OCB. Therefore, it can be concluded that servant leadership can create a work environment that supports employees' extra-role behavior. Relationships built on mutual care and service not only increase job satisfaction and engagement but also strengthen commitment to the organization. Thus, servant leadership plays a crucial role in fostering OCB, which ultimately contributes to organizational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is voluntary behavior that is not directly related to job tasks, but can improve organizational performance (Organ, 1988). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when employees demonstrate OCB behavior, they can improve social relationships and trust with coworkers and the organization, which can increase their involvement and commitment to work. Employee engagement is a psychological state that reflects employee involvement and commitment to their work (Kahn, 1990). Previous research has shown that OCB can increase employee engagement by improving social relationships and

trust between employees and the organization (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Engaged employees are more likely to demonstrate OCB, which includes behaviors such as helping coworkers and going above and beyond job requirements (Nandana and Putra, 2024).

Servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes the needs and interests of team members, and focuses on their development and empowerment (Greenleaf, 1970). Theories supporting this hypothesis include servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and employee engagement theory (Kahn, 1990). According to servant leadership theory, leaders who demonstrate servant leadership behavior can increase OCB in team members. Furthermore, according to social exchange theory, OCB can improve social relationships and trust between employees and the organization, which can increase employee engagement. Thus, OCB can mediate the effect of servant leadership on employee engagement. OCB serves as an important mediator between servant leadership and employee performance, enhancing the positive effects of leadership on organizational outcomes (Fakhri, 2024). Studies show that OCB not only mediates the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement but also positively influences employee performance (Alajhar and Salam, 2022).

5. Conclusions

This study highlights the critical role of servant leadership in fostering employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Previous research has shown that servant leadership enhances employee engagement by prioritizing team members' needs, supporting their development, and empowering them to contribute beyond formal job demands. Similarly, servant leadership positively influences OCB by fostering a sense of fairness, trust, and commitment to the organization, ultimately encouraging employees to voluntarily engage in extra-role behaviors that benefit the organization.

Furthermore, by referring to servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and work engagement theory (Kahn, 1990), this study shows that OCB functions as an important mediating mechanism in linking servant leadership with employee engagement. Through prosocial behavior, strengthening social relationships, and increasing trust in the workplace, OCB strengthens the positive effect of servant leadership on engagement. Empirical evidence also supports this mediating role, where OCB not only strengthens the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement but also makes a positive contribution to employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Thus, servant leadership should be considered as a strategic leadership approach for organizations seeking to foster employee engagement and maintain productivity, loyalty, and long-term organizational success. By encouraging leaders to serve, empower, and prioritize employee needs, organizations can foster OCB, which in turn increases engagement and creates a sustainable foundation for competitive advantage.

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