

# LECTURER PERFORMANCE MEDIATES THE INFLUENCE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON SERVICE QUALITY

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the influence of servant leadership and organizational culture on service quality in higher education, with lecturer performance examined as a mediating variable. Employing a quantitative design, the research was conducted among lecturers and students in private universities. Data were obtained through Likert scale questionnaires and analyzed using structural equation modelling with a partial least squares. The findings indicate that servant leadership positively and significantly influences lecturer performance, whereas organizational culture has a negative effect. However, neither servant leadership nor organizational culture directly contributes to service quality. Moreover, lecturer performance does not significantly influence service quality and fails to mediate the relationship between servant leadership, organizational culture, and service quality. These results suggest that service quality in private higher education institutions is influenced by other factors outside the examined model. This study contributes theoretically to understanding the interplay of leadership, organizational culture, and lecturer performance in higher education, while also offering practical insights for university management in efforts to enhance service quality.

**Keywords:** Servant Leadership, Organizational Culture, Lecturer Performance, Service Quality, Higher Education

## 1. Introduction

Higher education institutions play a strategic role in enhancing the quality of the nation's human resources. As providers of educational services, they are required to deliver high-quality services to students, educators, educational staff, and the wider community in line with Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services. Service quality in this context extends beyond fulfilling student expectations; it is also an important determinant of institutional competitiveness in the face of global competition (Darwis et al., 2021).

Recent developments reveal notable dynamics within private universities in Surabaya. As shown in Table 1, the number of institutions, lecturers, and students has fluctuated, reflecting instability in the management of private higher education. These fluctuations point to fundamental challenges in sustaining human resources, attracting new students, and ensuring the consistent delivery of competitive educational services. The downward trend in the number of students and teaching staff directly affects the operational sustainability and overall service quality of private universities, highlighting structural challenges in human resource management and the quality of higher education services.

**Table 1. Private University Data in Surabaya (2020–2024)**

| Year | Number of Institutions | Teaching Staff | Number of Students |
|------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 2020 | 70                     | 6.520          | 147.387            |
| 2021 | 68                     | 6.619          | 161.502            |
| 2022 | 64                     | 6.402          | 148.769            |

| Year | Number of Institutions | Teaching Staff | Number of Students |
|------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 2023 | 66                     | 6.274          | 143.462            |
| 2024 | 66                     | 5.698          | 139.168            |

**Source: Statistics Agency of East Java (Badan Pusat Statistik Jawa Timur), 2020**

On the other hand, previous studies emphasize that the service quality in higher education is shaped not only determined by technical aspects, but also greatly influenced by the performance in carrying out the *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* (Three Pillars of Higher Education). Lecturer performance, in turn, is influenced by internal factors, such as competence, motivation, infrastructure, information technology support, leadership, and organizational culture (Supriyanto, 2017; Firmansyah & Hersona, 2021; Gultom et al., 2024). Nevertheless, findings in the literature remain inconclusive. For instance, while some studies suggest that organizational culture positively affects lecturer performance (Soomro & Shah, 2019), other report that certain cultural dimensions, such as consistency and adaptability, show no significant relationship with performance (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). Similarly, although servant leadership has been recognized as a leadership style that can enhance lecturer performance and service quality, research on this topic remains limited in the Indonesian private university context. This creates an opportunity to further explore the interconnections between servant leadership, organizational culture, lecturer performance, and service quality, particularly within private universities in Surabaya.

This study contributes by simultaneously examining the influence of servant leadership and organizational culture on service quality, with lecturer performance as a mediating variable. The main objective is to analyze how these factors interact to shape the quality of higher education services, with the central research problem focusing on the extent to which servant leadership and organizational culture influence the service quality through lecturer performance as an intervening variable.

## 2. Literature Review

### Quality of Higher Education Services

Higher education institutions hold a pivotal function in enhancing the quality of a national human resources, and, consequently, are expected to deliver high-quality services to their stakeholders (Kotler, 2016). Within this framework, service quality in higher education is not limited to fulfilling the expectations of students and the community, but also represents the implementation of public service principles as mandated in Law No. 25 of 2009 on the Implementation of Public Service. The service quality measurement model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1998) through the SERVQUAL dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles is widely used to assess the satisfaction of higher education customers (Amtu et al., 2023). Empirical evidence demonstrates that enhancing the quality of higher education services constitutes a key strategy for reinforcing institutional competitiveness in the face of global competition (Darwis et al., 2021). However, service quality is not only determined by technical aspects but is also influenced by internal factors such as the performance of lecturers and educational staff (Along, 2020; Sari et al., 2020).

### Lecturer Performance in Higher Education

Lecturer performance serves as an important indicator in realizing the objective of higher education, particularly goals, which include the implementation of the *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* – teaching, research, and community service. Performance outcomes are shaped by multiple factors, including competence, motivation, facilities, and infrastructure (Supriyanto,

2017; Gultom et al., 2024; Saing et al., 2024), as well as information technology support (Firmansyah & Hersona, 2021). More recent studies also highlight the growing importance of digital competency development, psychological well-being, and effective leadership in improving lecturer performance (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023). These findings underscore that lecturer performance is not an isolated construct but is influenced by the dynamics of the organizational environment and management practices within higher education institutions.

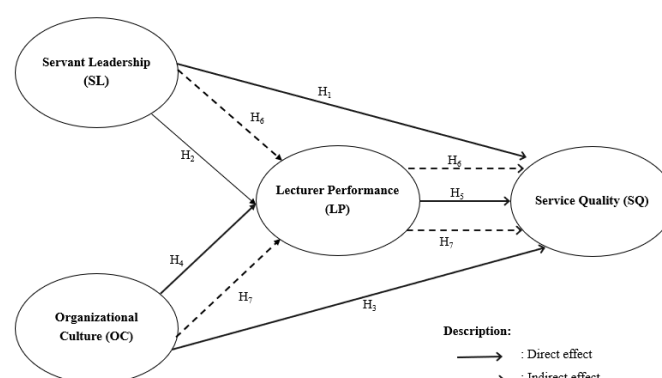
### Leadership in Higher Education

The shift from traditional leadership models toward servant leadership emphasizes the role of leaders who prioritize the needs of organizational members, develop potential, and enhance the welfare of employees and the community (Adda et al., 2020; Ragaisis, 2018). Studies by Ling et al. (2017) and Hoch et al. (2018) demonstrate that servant leadership is more effective than other leadership styles in improving individual and organizational outcomes. Within higher education, this approach has been shown to positively influence lecturer satisfaction and performance by fostering innovation, reducing work stress, and strengthening academic motivation (Gaskin, 2022; Dami et al., 2022; Keradjaan et al., 2023). Further research also confirms that servant leadership contributes to strengthening institutional competitiveness through improvements in teaching, research quality, and institutional attractiveness (Linda & Hidayat, 2021; Bayangkari et al., 2024; Ramdan et al., 2024). Consequently, this leadership style has a direct implication on the achievement of higher education service quality.

### Organizational Culture and Performance

Organizational culture, as a set of basic assumptions and shared values (Schein, 2004), has an important role in supporting organizational learning, improving adaptation, and encouraging employee commitment. Several studies reveal that a strong organizational culture is able to improve employee performance and service quality (Soomro & Shah, 2019; Paais & Paatiruhu, 2020). Nonetheless, previous research results show inconsistencies. Pawirosumarto et al. (2017), for instance, found that the dimensions of consistency and adaptability had no effect on performance, while involvement and mission had a positive effect. These varying results indicate that there is space for further research on how organizational culture interacts with other factors in influencing performance and the quality of higher education services.

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

Based on the above conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: Servant leadership affects service quality.

H<sub>2</sub>: Servant leadership affects lecturer performance.

H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational culture affects service quality.

H<sub>4</sub>: Organizational culture affects lecturer performance.

H<sub>5</sub>: Lecturer performance influences service quality.

H<sub>6</sub>: Lecturer performance mediates the influence of servant leadership on service quality.

H<sub>7</sub>: Lecturer performance mediates the influence of organizational culture on service quality.

### 3. Method

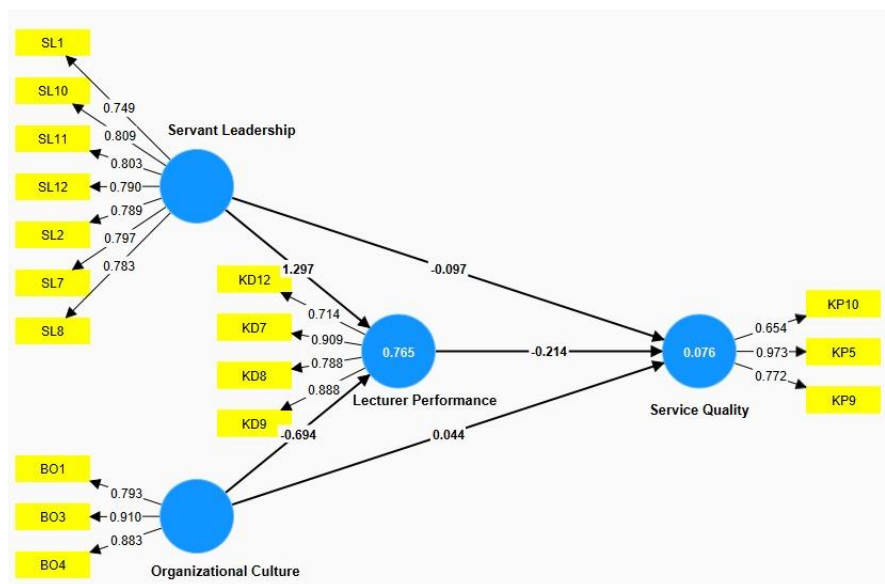
A quantitative approach was employed through a sample of 20 lecturers and 20 students from STIESIA Surabaya. The characteristics of the lecturer respondents included gender, age, highest level of education, position, and length of service, while the student respondents included gender, age, highest level of education, and year of enrolment. Sampling procedure employed probability sampling, a method that ensures each individual with the population has an equal chance of being selected as a sample. Data collection utilized both primary and secondary data, with questionnaires distributed to respondents via Google Forms. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree (SD)", 2 = "disagree (D)", 3 = "undecided (U)", 4 = "agree (A)", and 5 = "strongly agree (SA)". Furthermore, the obtained data were then analyzed using the Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method using SmartPLS version 4.0. The analysis process was divided into two phases: the outer model and the inner model. The outer model evaluated latent variables by testing Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, and Construct Reliability.

Validity testing assessed whether questionnaires items were valid or not using Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity. Convergent Validity was determined by factor loading values (considered valid if  $>0.7$ ) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values above 0.5 indicated validity (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant Validity examined the distinctiveness of constructs using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires the square root of AVE ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) for each construct to exceed its correlation with other construct (Hair et al., 2017). Reliability was examined through Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values. A variable construct was deemed reliable if Cronbach's Alpha is  $> 0.70$  and the composite reliability is  $> 0.70$  (Hair et al., 2017). Composite reliability, ranging between 0 and 1, reflects consistency, with higher values between 0.60 and 0.70 acceptable in exploratory research and 0.70 and 0.90 adequate for advanced research strategy.

The Inner Model was used to measure the strength and significance of the relationship between latent variables using  $R^2$ , path coefficient, and path significance tests.  $R^2$  value of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicated substantial, moderate, and weak models, respectively. The significance of path was determined using bootstrapping, which calculates path coefficients and standard errors. A relationship was considered significance when the p-value was below the predefined threshold of 0.05.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The results of Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) is presented in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2. Standard Loading Factor Inner and Outer Model**  
**Source: PLS analysis results**

Based on Figure 2 above, it appears that the cross-loading results are greater than 0.5, so no indicators need to be removed. This means that these indicators are valid for explaining each latent variable, namely servant leadership (SL), organizational culture (OC), lecturer performance (LP), and service quality (SQ). The AVE values of servant leadership (SL) of 0.622, organizational culture (OC) of 0.745, lecturer performance (LP) of 0.686, and service quality (SQ) of 0.657 indicate that all variables have AVE values  $> 0.5$ . This indicates that these variables have good convergent validity, as latent variables are able to account for more than half of the variance of their indicators. Referring to Table 2, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds the correlation values with other/latent variables located at the top position above them, confirming that all indicators have met the Discriminant Validity criteria.

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)**

|                             | Organizational<br>Culture<br>(OC) | Lecturer<br>Performance<br>(LP) | Service<br>Quality<br>(SQ) | Servant<br>Leadership<br>(SL) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Organizational Culture (OC) | <b>0.863</b>                      |                                 |                            |                               |
| Lecturer Performance (LP)   | 0.314                             | <b>0.829</b>                    |                            |                               |
| Service Quality (SQ)        | -0.099                            | -0.274                          | <b>0.811</b>               |                               |
| Servant Leadership (SL)     | 0.777                             | 0.758                           | -0.226                     | <b>0.789</b>                  |

**Source: PLS analysis results**

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability values, as presented in Table 3 for each variable, are greater than 0.7. This means that all variables have good reliability.

**Table 3. Internal Consistency Reliability**

|                             | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Organizational Culture (OC) | 0.884            | 0.912                 |
| Lecturer Performance (LP)   | 0.891            | 0.925                 |
| Service Quality (SQ)        | 0.858            | 0.848                 |
| Servant Leadership (SL)     | 0.880            | 0.909                 |

**Source: PLS analysis results**

The  $R^2$  value of the Service Quality (SQ) variable is 0.076, meaning that only 7.6% of its variance is accounted for the independent variables included in the model, while the remaining variation is explained by factors outside the model. This suggest that the correlation between the Service Quality (SQ) variable and the independent variables is relatively weak. In contrast, the  $R^2$  value for Lecturer Performance (LP) is 0.765, indicating that 76.5% of its variance is explained by the independent variables, with the remainder influenced by external factors. This means that there is a strong relationship between the Lecturer Performance (LP) variable and the independent variables.

Hypothesis testing was carried out both partially and simultaneously. A relationship was deemed statistically when the t-value exceeded the t-table. The results of the direct effect hypothesis test are summarized as follows:

Servant Leadership → Service Quality: path coefficient of -0.097;  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  0.089 (<1.96); p-value = 0.929. These results indicate that Servant Leadership has no significant effect on Service Quality. Consequently, the first hypothesis, which states that Servant Leadership affects Service Quality, is rejected. One possible explanation is that the effectiveness of Servant Leadership may depend on the presence of supportive mechanisms, such as reward systems or a collaborative organizational culture, without which it may fail to translate into improved service outcomes (Eva et al., 2019).

Servant Leadership → Lecturer Performance: path coefficient of 1.297;  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  = 5.401 (>1.96); p-value = 0.000. These results indicate that Servant Leadership has a significant positive effect on Lecturer Performance of 1.297. The second hypothesis, which states that Servant Leadership affects Lecturer Performance, is accepted. This means that the better the Servant Leadership, the higher the Lecturer Performance. These results are in line with the studies by Supriyanto (2017), Keradjaan et al. (2020), Firmansyah and Hersona (2021), Kosasih et al. (2024), and Amtu (2024), which state that good Servant Leadership can create a supportive work climate, increase lecturers' responsibility, and boost lecturers' enthusiasm in completing their tasks, thereby improving Lecturer Performance.

Organizational Culture → Service Quality: path coefficient of 0.044;  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  = 0.063 (<1.96); p-value = 0.950. These results indicate that Organizational Culture does not have a significant effect on Service Quality. The third hypothesis, which states that Organizational Culture affects Service Quality, is rejected. This finding shows inconsistency with the theory that Organizational Culture is an important component in bringing good values that impact organizational progress, creating a positive organizational environment, and encouraging employee commitment to provide optimal service (Paais and Paatiruhu, 2020). This can occur if employees do not have a strong sense of belonging and are dissatisfied with the organizational culture, resulting in a lack of commitment to work better and improve service quality.

Organizational Culture → Lecturer Performance: path coefficient of -0.694;  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  = 2.356 (>1.96); p-value = 0.018. These results reveal that Organizational Culture exerts a significant negative effect on Lecturer Performance, with a coefficient of 0.694. The fourth hypothesis, which posits an effect of Organizational Culture on Lecturer Performance, is accepted. This means that in higher education institutions, a stronger organizational culture was paradoxically associated with lower lecturer performance, possibly due to rigid bureaucracy, competitiveness, and lack of transparency in promotions, the more inflexible the bureaucracy, the more competitive it is, and the less transparency there is in job promotions, which can reduce lecturer performance. This indicates that management needs to encourage a *reward-oriented* organizational culture to improve performance (Subagyo et al., 2014).

Lecturer Performance → Service Quality: path coefficient of -0.214;  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  = 0.309 (<1.96); p-value = 0.757. These results suggest that Lecturer Performance does not significantly

influence Service Quality. Accordingly, the fifth hypothesis, which states that Lecturer Performance affects Service Quality, is rejected. This finding contrasts with existing theories asserting that good service quality is driven by institutional performance, particularly that of lecturers and educational staff (Along, 2020; Sari et al., 2020). One explanation may lie in the differing emphases of lecturer performance and service quality. Lecturer performance is primarily evaluated through *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* (Three Pillars of Higher Education), encompassing teaching, research and development, and community service, while service quality is assessed through dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Amtu et al., 2023). In addition, the Role Conflict and Workload Theory (Kahn et al., 1964) suggests that lecturers, who often juggle teaching, research, supervision, and administrative duties, may experience competing demands, leading them to prioritize formal academic outputs over direct service-related aspects.

Servant Leadership → Service Quality through Lecturer Performance: path coefficient of -0.278;  $t_{\text{calculated}} = 0.307$  ( $<1.96$ );  $p\text{-value} = 0.759$ . These results indicate that Lecturer Performance does not mediate the relationship between Servant Leadership on Service Quality. Thus, the sixth hypothesis is rejected. In other words, servant leadership attitude has not been able to improve lecturer performance in enhancing service quality. It appears that the performance of STIESIA Surabaya lecturers needs to be improved to be optimal so that service quality can be optimized.

Organizational Culture → Service Quality through Lecturer Performance: path coefficient of 0.149;  $t_{\text{calculated}} = 0.331$  ( $<1.96$ );  $p\text{-value} = 0.741$ . Similarly, Lecturer Performance does not serve as a mediator between Organizational Culture on Service Quality, leading to the rejection of the seventh hypothesis. This means that the organizational culture at STIESIA Surabaya has yet to improve lecturer performance in enhancing service quality. It further indicates that lecturer may not yet fully internalize institutional values, such as comfort, belonging, and commitment, which are essential for enhancing service outcomes.

## 5. Conclusions

This investigation substantiates the proposition that servant leadership has a significant positive effect on lecturer performance. This outcomes aligns with the existing scholarship highlighting the role of servant leadership in cultivating a supportive environment, fostering accountability, and enhancing faculty motivation. However, the study does not find evidence that servant leadership directly or indirectly improve service quality through lecturer performance. This suggests that the impact on service quality dimensions may be constrained if not reinforced by crucial external and contextual factors, such as a collaborative culture or a fair reward system. Conversely, the findings demonstrate that overly bureaucratic, competitive, and inflexible organizational culture exhibits a statistically significant negative effect on lecturer performance. Furthermore, this type of organizational culture does not significantly contribute to service quality, neither directly nor indirectly. Interestingly, lecturer performance itself was not found to be significant predictor of improved service quality, nor was it capable of mediating the relationships between servant leadership or organizational culture and service quality. The  $R^2$  value indicates that the lecturer performance variable can be relatively well explained by the model (76.5%), while service quality is only weakly explained (7.6%), indicating the existence of other factors outside the research model, such as student satisfaction, the effectiveness of the academic information system, curriculum quality, and learning facilities. Methodologically, the SEM-PLS technique proved advantageous for simultaneously testing the hypothesized relationships among the latent variables. Nonetheless, this study is inherently limited by a small sample size ( $N=40$ ) and its restriction to a single institutional

context, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. The primary novel contribution of this research is the empirical identification that a rigid and non-adaptive organizational culture serves to diminish lecturer performance, ultimately correlating with a reduced level of service quality. This study directly addresses the research problem formulated and provides practical implications for higher education management to design a more flexible, transparent, and collaborative organizational culture, as well as outcome-oriented leadership, to improve the quality of higher education services.

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