

The Influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance with Intrinsic Motivation as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the effect of servant leadership on employee performance with intrinsic motivation as a mediating variable. In an era of increasingly complex business competition, organizations are required to improve human resource performance through the implementation of effective leadership styles. One leadership approach that has received much attention is servant leadership, a leadership style oriented towards service, development, and employee empowerment. Leaders who implement servant leadership tend to provide support, attention, and opportunities for employees to develop, thereby increasing their motivation and performance. This study is based on the assumption that servant leadership not only directly influences employee performance but also indirectly through increasing intrinsic motivation. The research method used is a quantitative approach with descriptive and associative methods. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to employees working in an organization or company. Data analysis techniques were carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationship between variables and the mediating role of intrinsic motivation. The servant leadership variable was measured through indicators of service, empathy, empowerment, and commitment to individual development. Intrinsic motivation is measured based on internal drive, job satisfaction, interest in work, and sense of achievement, while employee performance is measured through work quality, work quantity, punctuality, and work responsibility. The results of the study indicate that servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee intrinsic motivation. In addition, servant leadership also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Intrinsic motivation has been shown to have a positive influence on employee performance and is able to mediate the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance. These findings indicate that the higher the implementation of servant leadership in the organization, the higher the intrinsic motivation felt by employees, thus impacting their performance improvement.*

Keywords: *Employee Performance; Intrinsic Motivation; Mediation; Human Resources; Servant Leadership.*

1. Introduction

Servant leadership places employees as the organization's primary asset and prioritizes the interests of subordinates. Leaders act as servants, focusing on employee development, empowerment, and well-being, thereby creating a supportive, collaborative, and performance-driven work environment. In the context of Professional Companions who play a role in the development and empowerment of village communities, the application of servant leadership is crucial because leaders not only guide but also serve as role models, actively listen, provide moral and emotional support, and facilitate employees' needs to achieve their full potential. This leadership style is believed to increase work motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, as employees feel valued, supported, and given space to develop, which ultimately has a positive impact on increased productivity and performance quality. Several studies have shown that servant leadership has a positive influence on various employee attitudes and work behaviors, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee performance (Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010). Therefore, in this study, servant leadership is an important factor that needs to be studied for its influence on employee performance through intrinsic motivation, considering that organizational success is greatly influenced by the leader's ability to build strong relationships, empower employees, and create a work culture with high integrity.

In addition to leadership style, work motivation also plays a crucial role in influencing performance (Putri, 2024). Motivation is an internal or external drive that motivates a person to achieve predetermined goals (Ena & Djami, 2020). Mangkunegara (2008:65) states that human behavior is influenced by two types of factors: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, often referred to as pure motivation, originates from internal drives within the individual. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation arises from stimuli or influences originating from outside the individual. Highly motivated employees will strive to deliver their best performance, despite facing various obstacles. Conversely, low motivation can lead to decreased productivity, indiscipline, and even potentially problems in completing tasks. Therefore, management needs to ensure that professional support staff maintains sustained work motivation (Yochanan et al., 2024).

Intrinsic motivation is a crucial factor in improving employee performance. Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's internal drive to perform work because it is perceived as interesting, challenging, and personally satisfying (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Employees with high intrinsic motivation tend to demonstrate greater work engagement, higher creativity, and optimal performance because they work not solely for external rewards, but rather for personal awareness and enjoyment in their work.

In the context of village development and empowerment, the presence of Professional Companions (TPP) plays a strategic role in ensuring program implementation aligns with village development and empowerment policies. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their performance is urgent. This research aims to examine in more depth how servant leadership influences employee performance and the extent to which intrinsic motivation can act as a mediating variable in this relationship.

2. Research Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive and associative methods. According to (Sugiyono, 2018), quantitative research is a method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to research a specific population or sample. Data collection uses research instruments, data analysis is quantitative/statistical, with the aim of testing the established hypothesis. The descriptive method is used to analyze and describe the research variables, namely Servant Leadership (X1), Intrinsic Motivation (Y1) and Employee Performance (Y2). Meanwhile, the associative method is used to analyze the relationship and influence between variables. This study attempts to test the direct and indirect influence of the independent variable (Servant Leadership) on the dependent variable (Employee Performance), with Intrinsic Motivation as a mediating variable.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Intrinsic Motivation (H1)

The results of the first hypothesis test indicate that Servant Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Intrinsic Motivation. This finding indicates that the better the implementation of a service-oriented leadership style, the higher the intrinsic motivation of employees in carrying out their work.

The relationship between the indicators in each variable can be explained. The dimension of compassion, reflected in the leader's attention and concern for employee needs, can foster feelings of appreciation and acceptance in the workplace. This fosters job satisfaction because employees experience a humanistic and supportive work environment. When leaders demonstrate empathy and concern, employees work not only to fulfill their obligations but also for the psychological comfort they experience in carrying out their duties.

Empowerment indicators, manifested through trust, involvement in decision-making, and opportunities to develop personal potential, correlate with increased employee responsibility. Empowered employees tend to have an internal drive to complete their work independently and optimally because they feel they have a real role and contribution to the organization.

Furthermore, a clear and inspiring vision provides direction and meaning to the work they do. When employees understand the organization's long-term goals, they view the work itself as valuable and meaningful, rather than merely routine. This strengthens intrinsic motivation because work is perceived as contributing to a larger purpose.

Indicators of humility, demonstrated through openness to input, acknowledging subordinates' contributions, and not asserting power, create working relationships of equality and mutual respect. This attitude strengthens employees' confidence in carrying out their duties and increases job satisfaction because they feel their contributions are recognized.

Finally, the dimension of trust built by leaders through consistency, integrity, and openness can create a sense of security at work. An environment based on trust encourages employees to demonstrate greater responsibility and enjoy the work itself without fear or undue pressure.

Thus, the stronger the application of the values of compassion, empowerment, vision, humility, and trust in leadership, the higher the intrinsic motivation of employees, which is reflected in job satisfaction, responsibility, and appreciation for the work itself.

Theoretically, these results align with Greenleaf's (1977) concept of Servant Leadership, which emphasizes that leaders act as servants to their subordinates by prioritizing empathy, caring, and individual development. This type of leadership can create a work environment that supports the fulfillment of employees' psychological needs.

In line with Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation increases when individuals feel autonomy, competence, and connectedness in their work environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Therefore, Servant Leadership plays a crucial role in fostering employees' internal drive to perform optimally.

The results of this study support previous studies which state that Servant Leadership has a significant influence on increasing employee intrinsic motivation.

3.2. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance (H2)

The results of the second hypothesis test indicate that Servant Leadership has no direct effect on Employee Performance. This finding indicates that the implementation of service-oriented leadership does not automatically result in improved performance without other supporting factors.

Conceptually, servant leadership indicators such as compassion and humility emphasize interpersonal relationships and the creation of a harmonious work environment. While these

two aspects can foster psychological well-being, they don't directly drive improvements in work quality or quantity unless accompanied by internal motivation or a structured work system.

Similarly, while trust built by leaders can foster a sense of security at work, this sense of security doesn't necessarily directly impact the timely or effective completion of tasks. Trust serves more as the foundation of working relationships, while achieving performance requires target management, oversight, and clear work standards.

In the vision indicator, even though leaders have provided direction and goals for the organization, understanding the vision doesn't necessarily translate directly into increased work commitment and independence in carrying out tasks. Optimal performance requires a process of internalizing values and motivation that doesn't happen instantly.

While empowerment indicators are indeed related to the granting of authority and opportunities for development, without individual competency readiness and internal motivational drive, empowerment does not necessarily result in higher work output. In other words, empowerment provides opportunities, but improved performance depends on how those opportunities are utilized.

Thus, the results of this study indicate that servant leadership plays a greater role in forming positive psychological conditions and work relationships, but to produce improvements in quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, independence, and work commitment, mediation mechanisms are needed such as intrinsic motivation or other factors that are able to translate leadership values into productive work behavior.

Theoretically, employee performance is influenced by various factors, both internal and external, such as ability, motivation, and work environment conditions (Mangkunegara, 2017). Leadership, in this case, functions as a supportive contextual factor, but is not necessarily the primary determinant of performance.

The results of this study are in line with the view that the influence of leadership on performance is often indirect and requires intervening variables, such as motivation or job satisfaction, to have a significant impact.

3.3. The Influence of Intrinsic Motivation on Employee Performance (H3)

The results of the third hypothesis test indicate that intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This suggests that employees with strong internal drives tend to perform better.

By analyzing the relationships between indicators in each variable, it can be explained that job satisfaction reflects feelings of joy and pride in the work they do. Employees who feel satisfied with their jobs tend to strive for better quality work because they put attention and dedication into each task. This satisfaction also encourages consistency in work, which in turn increases the quantity of output produced.

Furthermore, the responsibility indicator demonstrates an internal drive to complete tasks optimally without constant supervision. Employees with a strong sense of responsibility strive to meet targets on time, work effectively, and demonstrate a high level of independence in completing their work. This internal drive drives employees to work not only to fulfill formal obligations but also to achieve the highest standards possible.

The job indicators themselves relate to the extent to which employees perceive their work as meaningful and challenging. When work is perceived as part of self-actualization, employees demonstrate a stronger commitment to work. They tend to be fully engaged in the work process, maintain consistent performance, and strive to maintain the quality and effectiveness of task execution.

Thus, the higher the intrinsic motivation reflected in job satisfaction, sense of responsibility, and appreciation for the work itself, the better the employee's performance will be, as shown through quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, independence, and work commitment.

This finding aligns with the Self-Determination theory proposed by Ryan & Deci (2000), which states that intrinsic motivation is a drive that originates within an individual due to a sense of interest, enjoyment, and satisfaction with the work itself. When individuals work based on their own will and awareness, rather than external pressure or rewards, they tend to demonstrate more optimal engagement, commitment, and performance. Therefore, the higher an employee's intrinsic motivation, the higher their resulting performance level.

Intrinsically motivated individuals will work more diligently because the work itself provides satisfaction. Thus, intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in improving the quality and quantity of employee output.

3.4. The Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Mediating the Effect of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance (H4)

The results of the fourth hypothesis test indicate that intrinsic motivation significantly mediates the influence of servant leadership on employee performance. This indicates that service-oriented leadership values do not directly improve performance, but rather first create internal motivation within employees, which is then reflected in improved performance.

The dimensions of compassion and humility demonstrated by leaders through attention, empathy, and respect for subordinates create a sense of comfort and appreciation in the work environment. This fosters job satisfaction, encouraging employees to produce better quality work and maintain their commitment to assigned tasks.

Furthermore, the empowerment and trust provided by leaders foster a sense of responsibility in employees. When employees feel trusted and given space to develop, they tend to demonstrate independence, work more effectively, and strive to complete tasks on time without constant direction.

Meanwhile, a clear and inspiring vision helps employees see the work itself as valuable and serving a broader purpose. This understanding of the organization's direction strengthens work engagement, resulting in increased output and consistent performance.

Thus, the influence of servant leadership on work quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, independence, and commitment occurs through increased job satisfaction, responsibility, and appreciation for the work itself. This means that intrinsic motivation becomes a psychological mechanism that translates servant leadership values into productive work behavior.

This finding is in line with the framework of thought developed in the previous chapter, which states that leadership plays a role as an organizational stimulus that is able to shape the psychological condition of employees before impacting work behavior and performance (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

With high intrinsic motivation, the values of service, caring, and empowerment implemented by leaders can translate into productive work behavior. This confirms that intrinsic motivation is a crucial mechanism bridging the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance.

4. Conclusion

Servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee intrinsic motivation. This finding indicates that servant leadership practices can foster employees' internal drive at work, such as a sense of responsibility, meaning in work, and inner satisfaction. A supportive and participatory work environment motivates employees not solely due to external factors, but rather through internal awareness and will. Servant leadership does not directly affect employee performance. This indicates that service-oriented leadership has not been able to directly improve employee performance. Thus, improving the quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, independence, and commitment of work does not occur automatically only through the application of servant leadership values, but requires other supporting factors. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

Employees with high intrinsic motivation tend to show better performance, both in terms of quality and consistency of work. Internal drive makes employees work with full dedication, perseverance, and commitment to the tasks they are assigned. Intrinsic motivation has been shown to mediate the influence of servant leadership on employee performance. This means that servant leadership not only has a direct impact on improving employee performance, but also has an indirect impact through increasing intrinsic motivation. Thus, intrinsic motivation acts as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance.

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