

Implementation and Impact of Servant Leadership in Various Contexts: Education, Organisations, Government, and Culture

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ABSTRACT

Servant Leadership is a leadership approach that places leaders as servants for individuals and groups, with a focus on empowerment, empathy, and devotion. Its implementation in various contexts shows positive results, both in the fields of education, organization, government, and culture. In education, servant leadership encourages the creation of an inclusive and collaborative learning environment, while in organizations, this model increases the satisfaction, loyalty, and employee productivity. In the realm of government, Servant Leadership plays a role in building governance with integrity, increasing public confidence, and strengthening community participation. Meanwhile, from a cultural perspective, this leadership practice is adaptive because it can be adjusted to the local value of the community. Thus, Servant Leadership not only has a positive impact on the performance of individuals and institutions, but also strengthens sustainable social relations in various sectors of life.

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INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership is a leader who prioritises the needs, aspirations and interests of others. Servant leadership is a leader with followers whom he helps to develop in reputation, ability, or in a number of ways, contributing to building them into more useful and happy people. (Gandasacita et al., 2024)

In this case, servant leadership involves the relationship between the leader and group members, where the leader is encouraged to understand the needs of their followers and encourage them to reach their highest potential in fulfilling those needs. A leader possesses leadership traits such as humility, courage, responsibility, originality, prioritising the common good over personal interests, and enabling the development of members' potential through effective adjustments (Anggun Surya Agung et al., 2024).

There are several leadership constructs that have ethical components: charismatic leadership, ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, fair leadership, and authentic leadership. Mayer asserts that servant leadership is distinguished from other types of leadership by its unwavering attention to the professional and personal needs and growth of its followers. Although there are many leadership philosophies, research suggests that servant leadership differs in one important way: it explicitly prioritises and demonstrates concern for the needs of its followers.

In the subject of organisational behaviour, leadership in organisations is an important idea that has been extensively researched. On the other hand, not much research has been conducted on the influence of leadership at the organisational analysis level. The servant leadership theory, which states that leaders are first and foremost servants who focus on others and their development, can be successfully applied. Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy that emphasises the importance of serving others, including employees, customers, and the community, rather than focusing solely on the interests of the leader. In work organisations, servant leadership can play a role in enhancing the importance of management by creating a culture of mutual trust, mutual respect, and collaboration among employees. In the dynamic landscape of contemporary work organisations, effective employee management is the foundation for success. The way leaders interact with and guide their employees has a significant impact on work morale, productivity, and overall organisational performance. Among the various leadership styles and philosophies on offer, servant leadership has attracted attention as a framework that offers a unique approach to improving employee management. (Sawor & Budiyanto, 2023)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant Leadership De Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2010) in Sapengga (2016) define servant leadership as 'a practical altruistic philosophy that supports people who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way to expand service to individuals and institutions.' Servant leadership encourages collaboration, trust, forward vision, listening, ethical use of power, and empowerment. Servant leadership is an attitude and way of leading that prioritises supporting those being led, serving the needs of members and the organisation, promoting moral values, and being willing to listen more and be open to members. R.K. Greenleaf (1996) in Finley (2012) put forward a theory related to servant leaders, namely people who lead with a primary focus on serving their followers, followed by a focus on organisational goals. Servant leadership is a leadership concept that focuses on serving others, popularised by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s. The attributes/characteristics that form the main principles of servant leadership in Greenleaf's writing (Russell and Stone, 2002, p. 146) include listening (listening). Where a leader serves, they must be a good listener, paying attention to the needs and aspirations of team members. According to Greenleaf, leaders who truly embody servant leadership respond to issues or problems by listening first. The second characteristic is empathy. Leaders must strive to understand and feel what others are feeling. The third characteristic is healing. This means that servant leaders strive to heal emotional wounds within the team. Servant leaders understand their followers' desire to feel fulfilled and support each other within the team. The next characteristic is awareness. This means that leaders must have self-awareness and a deep understanding of the situation. The next dimension is persuasion. Servant leaders influence through persuasion and moral influence, not through authority or power. Conceptualisation means that servant leaders are able to see the big picture and articulate a clear vision. Next is the dimension of foresight, which means that servant leaders ensure that the team has clear goals and the right direction. (Maria Fitricia & Ayuning Hidayah, 2024)

METHOD

Research Method This article uses a qualitative descriptive approach by applying a literature review model, namely by conducting a general literature review of 20 journals containing articles on servant leadership, leaders who use the servant leadership approach, and journals related to the impact of servant leadership on improving the quality of public services. Data collection was carried out by citing research results obtained from national and international journals. The sources obtained were then analysed using source triangulation. Source triangulation was used to explore the validity of data through various sources, such as journals. This article uses source triangulation to obtain various written documents that serve as references on whether servant leadership has an influence on improving the quality of public services.

RESULTS

After the planning and selection process, only 20 scientific articles were found to be relevant to the study of Servant Leadership. Next, the content of the scientific articles reviewed was assessed. The assessment table is as follows:

Table 1. Characteristics of the Articles Analysed

No	Author Name/ title	Results and Discussion
1	Maureen Hannay. "The Cross-Cultural Leader: The Application Of Servant Leadership Theory In The International Context"	This discussion emphasises the application of servant leadership theory in a cross-cultural context, explaining how servant leaders can adapt their leadership style to different values, norms, and cultural characteristics in an international

No	Author Name/ title	Results and Discussion
		environment.
2.	Yusuf Arifin ¹ , Yus Rustandi ² , Kurniawati Rahayu ³ . “Kinerja Guru Ditinjau Dari Servant Leadership Kepala Sekolah Dan Kompetensi Guru Di Smk Pasundan Kota Bandung Dan Cimahi”	This study discusses the influence of the serving leadership of school principals and teacher competence on teacher performance, showing that a serving leadership style increases teacher motivation, dedication, and work performance.
3.	Eka Gusmirantani , Nurul Hayat , Ibrahim Zakariah. “Pengaruh Gaya Kepemimpinan Servant Leadership Terhadap Organizational Cityzhenship Behavior (OCB) Dengan Komitmen Organisasi Sebagai Variabel Intervening”	This study discusses the influence of the serving leadership of school principals and teacher competence on teacher performance, showing that a serving leadership style increases teacher motivation, dedication, and work performance.
4.	Grace Eke Deity Rumengan, Lusiana Idawati “Pengaruh Servant Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, dan Organizational Citizenship Behavior terhadap Job Satisfaction Guru SD”	This study explains that servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and organisational citizenship behaviour contribute significantly to primary school teachers' job satisfaction by creating a harmonious and supportive work environment.
5.	Anggun Surya Agung, Iwan Mamminanga, Andi Supriadi. “Analisis Gaya Kepemimpinan Servant Leadership Kepala Desa Pakkanna Kecamatan Tanasitolo Kabupaten Wajo”	This analysis assesses the application of servant leadership by the village head of Pakkanna, which focuses on community service, concern for residents, and building harmonious relationships within the village administration.
6.	Fauzan, Purwadhi, Rosianti, Yani Restiani Widjaja. “Kepemimpinan Servant Leadership dalam Meningkatkan Loyalitas Karyawan”	This discussion shows that servant leaders are able to foster employee loyalty through attention, empathy, and empowerment, thereby increasing their sense of belonging to the organisation.
7.	Fitria Ningsi “Gaya Servant Leadership Dalam Kepemimpinan Kepala Desa Banasare”	This study describes how the village head of Banasare implements servant leadership by prioritising service, listening to residents' aspirations, and building trust in village leadership.
8.	Gatuwari Lesminadi, Hardjono, Rin Widya Agustin “Servant Leadership: Sebuah Gaya Kepemimpinan Yang Mengayomi dan Melayani, Ditinjau Dari Penyesuaian Sosial”	This material discusses the relationship between servant leadership and social adjustment, where nurturing leaders encourage the creation of harmonious social relationships and an inclusive work environment.
9.	Rifqoh Nurjanah ¹ , Hasyim Asy'ari “Servant Leadership Sebagai Strategi Meningkatkan Kualitas Layanan Pendidikan”	This discussion emphasises that the application of servant leadership in educational institutions can improve service quality through exemplary behaviour, care, and the empowerment of teachers and students.
10.	Ilham Gandasacita, Rifqo, Hasyim Asy'ari “Konsep dan Implementasi Servant Leadership dalam Kepemimpinan Modern”	This material explains the basic concepts of servant leadership and its application in modern leadership, highlighting the importance of empathy, service, and individual development as the core of effective leadership.
11.	Aneke A. Salam Cecilia Lelly Kewo “Servant Leadership: Model Kepemimpinan Kontemporer Kepala Sekolah”	Servant leadership is used as a modern model for school principals to create a humanistic, participatory educational environment that is oriented towards serving teachers and students.
12.	Nurul Fathia Mahessa, Frieda NRH	This study shows that servant leadership increases

No	Author Name/ title	Results and Discussion
	“Gaya Kepemimpinan Melayani Dan Kesiapan Untuk Berubah Pada Karyawan Bpjs Ketenagakerjaan”	employees' readiness to face organisational change through empathy and leadership support.
13.	Fitria Nur Rohmah, Akhmad Fauzi Sayuti “Gaya Kepemimpinan Servant Leadership pada Perguruan Tinggi”	Servant leadership in higher education plays an important role in building a collaborative academic culture, supporting the development of lecturers and students, and improving the quality of education.
14.	Muhammad Sahem, Ichsan, Naufal Bachri “Servant Leadership dan Kompetensi Komunikasi:Dampaknya terhadap Kepuasan dan Kinerja Pendamping Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) di Aceh Utara”	Servant leadership and good communication skills have been proven to increase the satisfaction and performance of Family Hope Programme assistants in serving the community.
15.	Angga Ferdinandito, Tiyas Nur Haryani “Gaya Kepemimpinan Servant Leadership Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pelayanan Publik”	Servant leaders can improve the quality of public services by fostering empathy, responsibility, and commitment to the needs of the community.
16.	Tri Rumayanto, Siti Nurjannah Sanusi, Sri Sutali Bani “Gaya Kepemimpinan Melayani (Servant leadership) Ketua RT 010, RW 003, Pela Mampang, Mampang Prapatan, Jakarta Selatan”	RT heads who implement servant leadership are able to build residents' trust, increase participation, and create more effective community services.
17.	Angga Ferdinandito, Tiyas Nur Haryani. “Gaya Kepemimpinan Servant Leadership Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pelayanan Publik”	Servant leadership encourages public officials to work with a focus on service, integrity, and concern for the welfare of the community.
18.	Asraf Nabawi, Anis Eliyana, Ahmad Rizki Sridadi “Implementasi Servant Leadership Dalam Organisasi: Pendekatan Systematic Literature Review”	This literature study confirms that servant leadership is effectively applied in various sectors because it focuses on individual development and team performance.
19.	Grace Maria Fitricia, Asmi Ayuning Hidayah “Dimensi Servant Leadership Theory Dalam Kepemimpinan Berbasis Budaya Lokal Banyumas Cablaka”	This study links local cultural values in Banyumas, such as honesty and openness, with the dimensions of servant leadership in regional leadership practices.
20.	Levi Sawor, Henoch Budi yanto “Peran Teori Kepemimpinan Melayani Greenleaf Pada Peningkatan Manajemen Karyawan Dalam Budaya Kerja”	Greenleaf's theory emphasises the importance of servant leadership in improving employee management, building loyalty, and strengthening a positive work culture.

DISCUSSION

This section will explain the research questions

A. Servant Leadership in the Context of Education

According to Hoy & Miskel (2014), servant leadership is a leadership approach that prioritises the interests of subordinates, in this case teachers and educational staff. A headteacher who applies this principle focuses on the needs, growth, and welfare of the members of the organisation. In the context of education, this means that leaders do not only act as policy controllers, but also as mentors and facilitators who help teachers reach their full potential. Servant leaders play an important role in creating a positive working environment at school. A servant leader fosters mutual trust, openness, and cooperation among teachers and staff.

By providing attention and support, leaders are able to create a harmonious and stress-free atmosphere, so that every member feels valued. Such a work climate makes teachers more enthusiastic about their work, feel safe expressing their ideas, and actively participate in learning activities and school development.

Furthermore, Hoy & Miskel explain that servant leadership has a direct effect on teacher

motivation and performance. When school principals show sincerity in helping and serving, teachers will feel motivated to do the same for their students. The values of empathy, responsibility, and care demonstrated by leaders become real examples for teachers to emulate in the teaching process. Thus, servant leadership creates a positive chain that strengthens the spirit of service throughout the school community.

Thus, Hoy & Miskel's (2014) view emphasises that servant leadership in education is not just a leadership style, but a philosophy that animates interpersonal relationships in schools. Leaders who serve become a source of inspiration and moral strength for teachers, creating a collaborative and empathetic school culture. When the headteacher is able to lead with their heart, listen with empathy, and act with sincerity, then all members of the school will move together towards effective and meaningful educational goals. (Aneke Asalam, n.d.)

B. Servant Leadership in an Organisational Context

According to Rahayu & Wahyudi (2021), in public organisations, it is not enough for leaders to rely solely on formal power to manage and direct their subordinates. Effective leaders must be able to motivate and empower employees to work with enthusiasm and self-awareness, not because of the coercion of their position. In this case, the concept of servant leadership becomes very relevant because it places leaders as servants and mentors who sincerely help their employees reach their full potential. Leaders do not simply give orders, but become a source of inspiration and support for all members of the organisation.

Furthermore, servant leaders play an important role in building harmonious and mutually respectful working relationships. They focus on empowering employees, giving them trust, and encouraging independence in decision-making. In this way, employees are not merely task executors, but also feel that they have an important role in the progress of the organisation. This sense of being valued and empowered encourages employees to work more sincerely, creatively, and with commitment to the organisation's goals.

In addition, a servant leadership style can foster a sense of belonging and organisational commitment. When leaders show genuine care, empathy, and support, employees will feel that they are part of an organisation that is meaningful to them. This sense of belonging encourages loyalty, social responsibility, and a desire to contribute beyond formal obligations. Thus, servant leadership creates a positive work culture, where leaders and employees serve each other to achieve common goals. (Gusmirantani et al., 2025).

C. Servant Leadership in the Context of Government

According to Liden, Wayne, et al. (2008), the concept of servant leadership can be applied at all levels of an organisation, from top management to lower-level managers. This leadership style is relevant not only in a business context, but also in public organisations, educational institutions, and social communities. Servant leaders focus on serving team members, rather than on power or personal interests. The main objective is to help members of the organisation grow, develop, and achieve mutual prosperity. In practice, a servant leader will listen more, understand the needs of subordinates, and provide moral and professional support so that they can work to their full potential.

In addition, Liden and his colleagues emphasise that the application of servant leadership requires an organisational culture based on ethics and empathy. This culture creates a work environment that is respectful, open, and caring. Leaders must set an example in upholding the values of honesty, responsibility, and concern for the welfare of others. When a culture of empathy is well established, the relationship between leaders and subordinates becomes more humane and trusting. Such relationships play an important role in increasing loyalty, job satisfaction, and members' commitment to the organisation. Furthermore, Liden.

Also emphasises that to be an effective servant leader, a leader needs to have emotional intelligence and ethical decision-making skills. Emotional intelligence helps leaders understand the feelings and needs of others, so that decisions are not only rational but also empathetic. Meanwhile, ethical decision-making skills enable leaders to act fairly, transparently, and responsibly in every situation. It is this combination of empathy, ethics, and emotional intelligence that makes servant leadership not just a leadership style, but also a moral and humanitarian approach that strengthens the overall quality of an organisation. (Ningsi, n.d.)

D. Servant Leadership in a Cultural Context

According to Hannay (2009), the concept of servant leadership can be effectively applied in the context of cross-cultural leadership by considering the cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede. Servant leadership is considered most successful when applied in environments with cultural characteristics of low power distance, where the relationship between leaders and subordinates is open, egalitarian, and mutually respectful. In addition, this style is also suitable for cultures with low to moderate levels of individualism and low masculinity, because the values of

cooperation, empathy, and caring are more appreciated than competition and power domination. In cultures with moderate to high long-term orientation, servant leadership encourages patience, perseverance, and commitment to sustainable growth for both individuals and organisations.

According to Hannay, the main focus of cross-cultural servant leadership is empowerment. Leaders do not centralise power in themselves, but rather give authority and opportunities to subordinates to grow, learn, and make decisions independently. This empowerment helps to create greater confidence and responsibility among employees. In this way, servant leaders not only shape obedient employees, but also empowered, innovative individuals with a high moral commitment to common goals. This distinguishes servant leadership from transformational leadership, which places more emphasis on achieving the organisation's vision and transforming performance, whereas servant leadership focuses on service, empathy, and human welfare as the basis for building an organisation.

In the context of multicultural and international organisations such as global businesses, international educational institutions, and bureaucracies involving diverse cultural backgrounds, servant leadership becomes an effective bridge in overcoming differences in values and perceptions among organisational members. Through the principles of empathy, trust, and service, a servant leader is able to create a harmonious work environment despite differences in language, religion, or social norms. This approach builds unity in diversity and enhances cross-cultural cooperation. Therefore, servant leadership is considered a universal leadership style that is relevant in the era of globalisation because it is able to unite differences through universal human values. (Hannay, n.d.)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From several scientific articles that have been reviewed, it can be concluded that in general, this *literature review* shows that the Servant Leadership model in the fields of education, public service, government, and culture plays a very important role in increasing employee loyalty. In addition, servant leadership emphasises empowerment and individual development to achieve their best potential. This model is very relevant to be applied in various contexts, including education, public service, and cross-cultural organisations.

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