IMPACT OF PERCEIVED SERVANT LEADERSHIP STYLE ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, JOB SATISFACTION AND ABSENTEEISM: EVIDENCE FROM SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Social organizations are now perpetually seen as the third sector of society in Pakistan, where their numbers have proliferated considerably. The reasons attributed to this predicament are the failure of the state apparatus and business to provide an effective development mechanism at the grass-roots level. In most developing countries, such as Pakistan, the government struggles to address the abundance of social issues present at hand. The role of social organizations in such circumstances is not only paramount but also immensely valued. Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership and its impact, however, social organizations have not been given due consideration in this regard, as they are overlooked due to not being centered on profit maximization. Social organizations, if managed appropriately, can be an advantageous source of capacity building for a nation. Social organizations in Pakistan are working on crucial issues prevalent throughout the country, i.e., education, health, employment, hunger, old age, human rights, women's rights, poverty, etc. This study examines the impact of perceived servant leadership styles on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and absenteeism in social organizations in Pakistan. Primary data was collected and analyzed using software called SPSS. It is concluded that servant leadership is a good predictor of the variables understudied. It has a substantial positive relation with organizational commitment and job satisfaction, while it is adversely related to absenteeism.

Keywords: Social Organizations; Perceived Servant Leadership Styles; Organizational Commitment; Job Satisfaction; Absenteeism.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the process of influencing people to achieve common goals (Northouse, 2019). Leadership exists not only in determining organizational goals and objectives but also in achieving them by inspiring organizational members (Tsai, 2011). It is still debated whether leaders are different from managers and what similarities and differences exist between the two (Northouse, 2019), however, leadership styles do affect work performance (Dastane, 2020). Leadership is always considered as a topic of discussion by various researchers (Northouse, 2019), as they are the source of satisfaction for organizational members (Babalola, 2016). Extensive research has been conducted on it and various theories and styles have been presented by scholars. Leaders are the ones who help groups achieve their goals and objectives. Therefore, it is necessary to have effective leaders irrespective of organizations and its nature of work. The private sector gives due importance to the leaders and their leadership styles, and their success as well as profit are also dependent on them.

In the majority of emerging nations like Pakistan, a considerable number of services are offered by non-profit and non-government social welfare organizations. These organizations are performing in areas where the government is unable to invest due to insufficient resources or having priorities otherwise engaged (Dilshad & Bashir, 2013). Most of the researchers in this field of study, have given importance to leadership perspectives with reference to business organizations while social organizations have been ignored. It is important to note that the evaluation of leadership and the employees working in social organizations isn't to be forsaken, as they are an integral part of this subject of study and are having the same relevance as those working in the corporate sector. The management practices, HR functions, and culture of nonprofit, non-government, and social organizations are different from those of public and private organizations, so they should be studied separately (Girei, 2015).

Social organizations have been seen to usually follow an informal style of management as they believe in activism rather than professionalism. Such organizations are also overlooked by researchers due to the same reason (Dilshad and Bashir, 2013). As social organizations work for the wellbeing of society and servant leaders work for the wellbeing of their followers, this study attempts to ascertain how perceived servant leadership style affects organizational commitment, occupational contentment and absenteeism in social organizations in Pakistan.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To inspect the impact of perceived servant leadership on organizational fidelity.
- To explore the effect of perceived servant leadership on job satisfaction.
- To investigate the influence of perceived servant leadership on absenteeism.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Studies have shown that servant leadership assists organizations and improves followers' well-being. They may enhance organizational performance by ensuring the satisfaction and commitment of followers. However, no empirical data is available on the effectiveness of servant leadership in social organizations. It is also argued that organizational leaders should not always follow the same style as per the demands and needs of the situation. Therefore, there is a need to study and explore the impact of servant leadership on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and absenteeism.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the association of servant leadership style with organizational commitment?

- What is the association of servant leadership style with job satisfaction?

- What is the association of servant leadership style with absenteeism?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

$H1_a$: Organizational commitment has a significant relationship with servant leadership in social organizations of Pakistan.

$H2_a$: Job satisfaction has a significant relationship with servant leadership in social organizations of Pakistan.

$H3_a$: Absenteeism has a significant relationship with servant leadership in social organizations of Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Robert Greenleaf, the founder of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership, introduced the theory of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2007). This theory was introduced in the early 1970s (Hardy, 2010). Servant leadership is a leadership approach that places primary emphasis on serving the needs of others. As per Greenleaf's philosophy, "the servant-leader assumes the role of a servant" (Mitau, 2015), thereby establishing an unwavering commitment to serving the needs of others. This begs the question of whether those whom the leader serves are similarly inclined to prioritize service to others. Scholars have lauded the adoption of this servant leadership style as a means of prioritizing stakeholder interests within organizations (Spears and Lawrence, 2002). Servant leaders prioritize service to others, foster collaboration through power-sharing and participatory decision-making, and cultivate a supportive work environment. Additionally, distinguished leaders such as Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, and Gandhi are often cited as exemplary servant leaders, given their remarkable

dedication to serving their followers (Hardy, 2010). These leaders shared a common ethos centered on prioritizing the needs of their followers as their primary responsibility. Servant leaders inspire and foster team-oriented approaches to problem-solving, with an unwavering focus on the needs of their followers, rather than on returns and profits (Thao & Kang, 2020).

Servant leadership has been found to aid companies and enhance the well-being of followers, with the understanding that trust is secondary to acting in the organization's best interests (Setyaningrum, 2017). A servant leader is characterized by their ability to lead their team by fulfilling their needs and demands, regardless of their position within the organizational hierarchy (Keradjaan, 2020). This leadership style prioritizes the goals of people or followers over those of the organization itself (Setyaningrum, 2017). Leaders who adopt a servant leadership style prioritize a people-oriented approach, with a focus on cultivating appreciation and granting autonomy as a means of fostering personal development (Harwiki, 2016). The fundamental dimensions of servant leadership encompass love, humility, selflessness, empowerment for followers, and a grand vision for community development (Girei, 2015). This leadership theory has been demonstrated to yield benefits for both organizations and their members, contributing to their overall well-being (Parris and Peachey, 2013).

Research has revealed that servant leadership is a valuable tool for bolstering personnel's emotional attachment and is strongly linked to organizational commitment (Ozturk, Karatepe, & Okumus, 2021). Specifically, the servant leadership style of management has been shown to have a positive impact on followers in terms of enhancing their organizational commitment (Jacobs, 2019). This leadership style contributes to increasing the level of commitment among organizational members, while simultaneously facilitating effective goal achievement for both leaders and followers (Setyaningrum, Setiawan, Surachman, & Irawanto, 2020). Furthermore, servant leadership has been found to exhibit a robust and positive correlation with organizational commitment (Harwiki, 2016).

Research indicates that the servant leadership style is well-suited for managing employees as it promotes job satisfaction within the organization (Guillaume, Honeycutt, & Savage-Austin, 2013). Furthermore, the incorporation of servant leadership has the potential to enhance organizational performance by increasing intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction among employees (Al-Asadi, Muhammed, Abidi, & Dzenopoljac, 2019). Specifically, the positive impact of servant leadership on employee satisfaction with their leader suggests that this approach may heighten the likelihood of job satisfaction for employees (Duky, 2015). Notably, servant leadership has been found to exhibit a positive association with follower satisfaction

and serves as a strong predictor of employee satisfaction (Hasanuddin, Mustainah, & Buntuang, 2021).

Effective leadership has been shown to play a crucial role in employee absenteeism, and the adoption of a servant leadership approach can help mitigate this issue in organizations (Buzeti, 2022). Notably, servant leadership has been found to be linked to absenteeism, with the mediation of other behavioral outcomes, making it a potentially beneficial strategy for organizations (Ozturk et al., 2021). Additionally, the association of servant leadership with positive organizational outcomes is well-established, with its implementation being linked to a reduction in turnover intentions and absenteeism by promoting acceptable employee behavior (Ahmed et al., 2017).
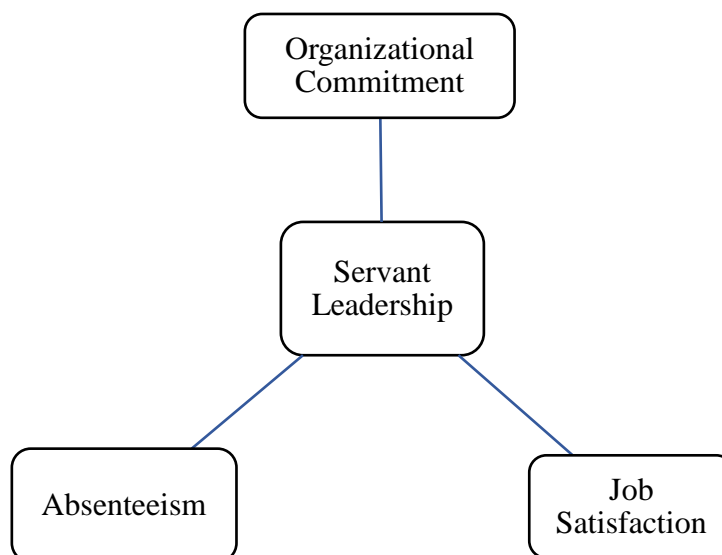
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The diagram presented above depicts servant leadership as an independent variable, whereas organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and absenteeism are identified as dependent variables. As per the extant literature (Hasanah, 2023; Ozturk et al., 2021; Raajalakshmi & Gnanasekaran, 2021; Setyaningrum & Setyaningrum, 2017; Uktutias et al., 2022; Vrcelj et al., 2022), the eexistinng research suggests a positive correlation between servant leadership and both organizational commitment and job satisfaction, while a negative correlation exists between servant leadership and absenteeism.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs quantitative research methodology, as it offers a comprehensive understanding of the variables under investigation. Specifically, a survey method was utilized

to gather data from 395 participants located in Pakistan. To collect the data, a questionnaire consisting of 16 items pertaining to the study variables was used. Some of the items were adapted from previous studies, while others were newly developed. Items related to servant leadership were adopted from (Alkhasawneh, 2019; Northouse, 2019) while items of job satisfaction, absenteeism and organizational commitment were adopted from (Bashir et al., 2019; Bonds, 2017; Dilshad & Bashir, 2013) with some minor modification. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pretest was administered to the first 25 participants. The population of the study was comprised of all employees of social organizations in Pakistan. Given the absence of a sample frame and the difficulty in constructing one, a non-probability convenience sampling approach was employed to elicit responses from the predetermined sample size. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS 20, and a simple regression model was employed to examine the impact of the variables.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Age * Gender

| | | Gender | | Total |
		Male	Female	
Age	Under 25	51	44	95
	25 – 34	94	83	177
	34 – 44	103	12	115
	45 – 54	2	2	4
	55 and above	0	4	4
	Total	250	145	395

Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the study respondents concerning gender and age. The table indicates that nearly 63% of the participants are male, while the remaining 37% are female. A significant proportion of the respondents, accounting for approximately 59%, belong to the age category ranging from 25 to 44 years old.

Reliability Statistics

A pre-test was conducted after collecting data from the initial 25 respondents to check the reliability of the instrument.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics for Servant Leadership

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.904	4

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics of four items used for the variable servant leadership. The alpha coefficient value for four items is 0.904, which is greater than 0.65. It shows the high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics for Job Satisfaction

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.833	4

Table 3 shows the reliability statistics of four items used for variable job satisfaction. The alpha coefficient value for four items is 0.833, which is greater than 0.65. It shows high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Table 4. Reliability Statistics for Organizational Commitment

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.937	4

Table 4 shows the reliability statistics of four items used for variable organizational commitment. The alpha coefficient value for four items is 0.937, which is greater than 0.65. It shows high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Table 5. Reliability Statistics for Absenteeism

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.837	4

Table 5 shows the reliability statistics of four items used for variable absenteeism. The alpha coefficient value for four items is 0.837, which is greater than 0.65. It shows the high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Correlation Analysis

Table 6. Correlations

		Servant Leadership	Organizational Commitment	Job Satisfaction	Absenteeism
Servant Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.774	.666	-.230
	Sig.		.000	.000	.000
	N	395	395	395	395
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.774	1	.613	-.322
	Sig.	.000		.000	.000
	N	395	395	395	395
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.666	.613	1	.206
	Sig.	.000	.000		.000
	N	395	395	395	395
Absenteeism	Pearson Correlation	-.230	-.322	.206	1
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	
	N	395	395	395	395

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 presents the correlation matrix of the variables examined in this study. The findings indicate a noteworthy degree of correlation among all the variables at a statistically significant level of 0.01. Specifically, servant leadership, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction exhibit a positive correlation, whereas absenteeism is negatively correlated with all other variables investigated in this study.

Regression Analysis

A simple regression model was administered to check the hypothesis of the study.

Hypothesis H1$_a$: *Organizational commitment has significant relationship with servant leadership in social organizations of Pakistan.*

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

Independent Variable	Coefficient	T	Sig
Constant	1.176	10.621	.000
Servant Leadership	.748	24.883	.000
R^2		.611	

Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment

The findings of the regression model are presented in Table 7. The results indicate that a one-unit increase in servant leadership will lead to an increase in organizational commitment by 0.748 units. The relationship between the independent variable (Servant Leadership) and dependent variable (Organizational Commitment) is statistically significant at the 1% significance level, thus affirming that Servant Leadership is a valuable predictor of organizational commitment. This model accounts for 61.1% of the variation in the dependent variable. Based on these results, the null hypothesis is refuted.

Hypothesis H2a: *Job satisfaction has significant relationship with servant leadership in social organizations of Pakistan.*

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing

Independent Variable	Coefficient	T	Sig
Constant	.869	6.814	.000
Servant Leadership	.758	21.909	.000
R^2		.549	

Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

The findings of the regression analysis are presented in Table 8, which reveals that a one-unit increment in servant leadership results in a 0.758 unit increase in organizational commitment. At the 1% level of significance, the statistical relationship between the independent variable, i.e., Servant Leadership, and the dependent variable, i.e., Job Satisfaction, is deemed significant. Therefore, Servant Leadership is an effective predictor of job satisfaction. The model demonstrates a noteworthy explanatory power of 54.9% with regard to the variance in the dependent variable. Based on these results, the null hypothesis is invalidated.

Hypothesis H3a: *Absenteeism has significant relationship with servant leadership in social organizations of Pakistan.*

Table 9. Hypothesis Testing

Independent Variable	Coefficient	T	Sig
Constant	3.667	23.774	.000
Servant Leadership	-.337	-8.058	.000
R^2		.141	

Dependent Variable: Absenteeism

The outcome of the regression model is depicted in Table 9, indicating that a unit increase in the servant leadership variable will lead to a reduction of 0.337 units in absenteeism. Moreover,

the independent variable (i.e., Servant Leadership) is significantly associated with the dependent variable (i.e., Absenteeism) at a 1% level of significance, signifying that Servant Leadership holds predictive value for Absenteeism. This model can account for 14.1% of the variability in the dependent variable. In light of these observations, the null hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the impact of servant leadership on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and absenteeism. The outcomes of the analysis reveal that servant leadership serves as a robust predictor of the aforementioned variables. Specifically, servant leadership exhibits a positive correlation with both organizational commitment and job satisfaction, whereas it displays a negative association with absenteeism. Servant leadership and organizational commitment were found to also found to be significantly positively related with job satisfaction by (Hasanah, 2023) the validation of results of servant leadership and organizational commitment also found in the study of (Setyaningrum & Setyaningrum, 2017). As such, organizations and managers can derive substantial benefits from integrating the servant leadership approach into their work settings. By doing so, managers can address the critical issue of absenteeism while simultaneously elevating the satisfaction and commitment levels of their subordinates. Servant leadership is a suitable style in reducing absenteeism and increasing organizational commitment and employee job satisfaction. By concentrating on the needs of personnel and empowering them to take ownership of their work, servant leaders make a constructive and optimistic work environment that promotes faithfulness, devotion, loyalty and engagement among organizational members. The emphasis on relationship, cooperation, and empathy in this leadership style also supports to shape durable relationships between leaders and subordinates, which in turn leads to better results, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in the organization. Largely, incorporating a servant leadership style can be an influential tool for leaders considering creating a more constructive and productive environment in organizations.

FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH

The present study focused on the evaluation of servant leadership within the domain of social organizations in Pakistan. Further research endeavors could be undertaken to examine the effectiveness and relationship of servant leadership in business organizations. Additionally, a comparative investigation could be conducted to scrutinize the efficacy of servant leadership across social and business organizations.

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