Servant Leadership: A Driving Force to Employee Empowerment, Trust and performance: Mediation and moderation Perspectives

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Abstract
The study is directed at how servant leadership can affect the performance of employees, empowerment and trust that have job satisfaction, psychological safety and employee engagement as intermediate factors. The moderating variable that supports such associations is also covered in the paper through servant leadership as a role model. Data were collected between the employees who represented various spheres of organizations as a result of the structured questionnaire. According to the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) findings, servant leadership positively influences employee outcome through the mediators both directly and indirectly. Important factors that encouraged engagement and performance were found to be jobs satisfaction and psychological safety. The moderating effect of servant leadership as a role model also enhanced the trust and level of empowerment. The findings can be applied to the literature of leadership and organizational behavior because the researchers have proved that servant leadership promotes positive work climate that translates to higher levels of employee commitment and performance in contemporary organizations.
Keywords: *Servant leadership, Job satisfaction, psychological safety, Employee engagement, Employee performance, Servant leadership role modeling*

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Models of leadership that focus on the growth of followers, their wellbeing, and empowerment as opposed to strictly focusing on transactional outcomes are becoming identified as central factors of organizational performance especially in the emerging economies like Pakistan. With such ethical stewardship and a focus on the needs of followers, long-term growth, positive workplace outcomes such as trust, empowerment, engagement of employees, and performance have been associated with servant leadership as shown by recent systematic reviews and empirical syntheses (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022). Meta-analytic and scoping evidence also indicate that servant leadership can promote individual and unit level performance via relationship-based

processes, perceptions of leader support, and fairness dimensions which are very salient in collectivist and high power-distance societies like Pakistan (Owusu, 2023). In this model of leadership, psychological safety, job satisfaction, and employee engagement become explanatory factors (Siyal, 2023). Psychological safety, which refers to a collective belief that employees are free to share opinions and issues without the fear of adverse outcomes, has been determined to mediate the association involving servant leadership and creativity, proactive behavior and performance (S. S. Ahmed, Khan, Ali, Ali, & Mujahid, 2025). Servant leaders can have a strong impact on the development of psychologically safe climates in Pakistani organizational environments where hierarchical practices can suppress voice behavior the supportive and role-modeling forms of servant leadership come in especially handy. Also, job satisfaction and employee engagement are two independent but complementary mediating paths (Al-Refaei, Ali, Ateeq, & Alzoraiki, 2023). Job satisfaction is an evaluative measure of contentment with their job whereas engagement is a more emotional, cognitive relation to work and organization. According to recent quantitative reviews, both constructs relate positively to task performance, discretionary effort and decreased turnover intentions, which are particularly significant in Pakistani organizations that are faced with post-pandemic resource limitations and increased competition (Arshad, Arshad, & Zakaria, 2023).

Table 1: Servant Leadership Review of last year

Construct	Definition	Key Mediating Mechanism	Key Outcomes	Recent Evidence
Servant Leadership	A leadership approach emphasizing follower development, ethical stewardship, and service orientation	Psychological safety, job satisfaction, employee engagement	Trust, task performance, OCB, innovation, reduced turnover	Jonker & Dube (2025); Smith et al. (2025)
Psychological Safety	Shared belief that interpersonal risk-taking is safe in the workplace	Voice behavior, creativity, initiative-taking	Innovation, proactive behavior, performance	Smith et al. (2025)
Job Satisfaction	Evaluative contentment with one's job and work conditions	Motivation, commitment	Performance, lower turnover intention	Arıcıoğlu & Timuroğlu (2025)
Employee Engagement	A positive, fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption	Discretionary effort, persistence	Performance, citizenship behavior	Jonker & Dube (2025)

1.2 Problem Statement

Although the empirical evidence that servant leadership is positively related to desirable employee and organizational outcomes is growing, there is still significant theoretical and empirical gaps especially in the context of emerging market economies like in Pakistan. Although recent reviews demonstrate that servant leadership positively affects performance, trust, empowerment, and engagement via relational and affective processes (S. Saleem, Tourigny, Raziq, Shaheen, & Goher, 2022), the majority of the existing studies investigate those processes separately, addressing the effects of each individual mediator (e.g., job satisfaction or psychological safety) or outcome, which leaves the explanation of the impact of the mechanisms on which servant leadership has its influence rather fragmented and incomplete. This scattered methodology restricts the development of theories in an integrated way and undermines the practical use of the results by managers who have to work in a complex organization setting (Alhusban, Khatatbeh, & Alshurafat, 2025). Furthermore, despite the fact that each of the aforementioned hypotheses has been determined as an important explanatory pathway bridging servant leadership and employee performance and discretionary behaviors (Malik, Ali, Kausar, & Chaudhry, 2022), there is a dearth of empirical studies attempting to test and simultaneously assess the three as mediators in a single model. This omission would be especially consequential in Pakistan where hierarchic organization, collectivist attitudes, and power distance could enhance the significance of relational leadership and safety perceptions in employee voice and empowerment (Memon & Ooi, 2024). Moreover, the boundary conditions in which the servant leadership is most effective are not thoroughly studied. In particular, the moderation influences of role-modeling behaviors of servant leaders that lie in the core of social learning and social exchange processes have lacked empirical consideration (S. Zada et al., 2022). In the recent calls in the leadership studies, the researchers note that the moderated mediation design is required to consider both the inner psychological processes and leader behavioral clues, particularly in non-Western societies (Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov, Balabanova, & Wechtler, 2024). As a result, the contemporary, multi-mediator, moderated mediation studies are very necessary in Pakistan to develop theory, deal with contextual sensitivity, and offer consistent managerial advice.

1.3 Research Objectives

As per the increasing focus on relationship-oriented leadership and the existing gaps in the research of servant leadership in the context of emerging markets in the country like Pakistan, the current study aims to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To investigate the immediate impacts of servant leadership on employee performance, employee empowerment, and trust, thus projecting earlier research on the performance-positional and relational impacts of servant leadership in Pakistani organizations.
2. In order to explore the mediating effects of job satisfaction, psychological safety, and employee engagement in elucidating the effect of servant leadership, employee performance, empowerment, and trust, it is essential to respond to recent calls to combine, multi-mediator models to capture the elaborate transmission processes of leadership effects.
3. To test the hypothesis that the moderating role of servant leadership as a role-modeling behavior of both the direct and indirect relations between servant leadership and the employee outcomes, and hence, test a moderated-mediation framework that is founded on the social exchange and social learning viewpoints.
4. To give evidence-based suggestions on how to develop leaders and human resource intervention to suit organizations that are working under contexts associated with the hierarchical form of structure and collectivist cultural rules, like in Pakistan.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Does servant leadership have a significant positive effect on employee performance, empowerment, and trust in Pakistani organizational contexts?
2. To what extent do job satisfaction, psychological safety, and employee engagement jointly mediate the relationships between servant leadership and employee performance, empowerment, and trust?
3. Does servant leadership enacted as a role-modeling behavior moderate the direct and indirect effects of servant leadership on employee performance, empowerment, and trust, thereby constituting a moderated-mediation mechanism?
4. What organizational practices and human resource interventions can effectively leverage servant leadership to enhance employee empowerment, trust, and task performance in contexts characterized by hierarchical structures such as Pakistan?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Based on the gaps that were identified in the literature of servant leadership, the proposed study will fill the gaps in the literature about the theoretical and practical limitations by incorporating a diverse range of mediating mechanisms (job satisfaction, psychological safety, and employee engagement) and a behavioral moderator (servant leadership as role modeling) in one empirical framework (Zarei, Supphellen, & Bagozzi, 2024). Theoretically, this methodology contributes to the current research in leadership and organizational behavior by providing a concomitant test of the affective, cognitive, and motivational mechanisms through which servant leadership works to create important employee outcomes, which appears to answer more integrative and process-oriented research approaches in the field of leadership (Goh et al., 2022). The two competent and complementary mechanisms play a role in making the study identification of the black box of servant leadership that has been established in the past as theoretically promising and empirically under-specified and specifically in non-Western backgrounds through multiple meta-analytic and scoping reviews (Kaunert & Ezeokafor, 2022). In practical terms, the study provides contextually sensitive information to organizations that are functioning within emerging economies like Pakistan where hierarchical norms and power distance may limit the voice of the employees, the empowerment of the employees and their trust in the organization. The results will be useful in guiding leadership development and human resource interventions as they will reveal the significance of training leaders to always embody and model servant behaviors that promote psychological safety, better job satisfaction, and greater employee engagement (Roh, Kim, & Hong, 2023). The recent empirical data indicates that these value-driven and psychologically supportive workplaces are strongly associated with the high performance of the task, fewer turnover intentions as well as increased organizational stability in the post-pandemic and constrained-resource environments (Anthony, 2025). Based on this, this study offers practical recommendations on what leadership and HR practices can do to reconcile ethical service-oriented leadership and sustainable outcomes of performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Leadership Theories

The development of leadership research has been a wide-scale field under which the previous research has been based on the initial trait and contingent models to the current relationship-oriented and ethical models of leadership (Garcia, 2023). Classical models like trait theory and contingency models focused mainly on the stable aspects of leaders and fit with the situation as the determinants of their effectiveness. Later models such as transactional and transformational leaders only diverted to the exchange processes, motivation and inspirational influence. Nevertheless, leadership scholarship has moved towards relational and prosocial leadership in the last two decades including authentic, ethical, and servant leadership which have been

explicitly future oriented with regard to follower wellbeing, growth, and mutual charge (Kenion, 2024). This change in theory reflects the empirical organizational demands such as employee wellbeing, inclusion, trust and innovation and the abstract changes in theory that incorporate affective, cognitive and social exchange mechanisms in the leadership explanations. Relational theories of leadership identify leadership not as a collection of leader qualities but as a social process of dynamism that is informed by the behaviors of leaders and interactions between leaders and their followers. Servant leadership is especially relevant in this aspect because it puts leaders in the position of role models who can provide psychologically supportive environments that enable psychological safety, job satisfaction, and involvement, which are recognized as the main processes through which leadership is associated with performance and empowerment outcomes (Kyambade, Nkurunziza, Sewante, Namatovu, & Tushabe, 2024). Besides, modern relational theories recognize the existence of difference between leaders and followers' dyads and leader behavior as resource that sets the context and predetermines employee psychological conditions like safety, motivation and trust that eventually influence task performance and discretionary behavior (Baer, Sessions, Welsh, & Matta, 2022). This view is closely related to the fact that the focus of the present study is to investigate the multi-mediator and moderated mediation pathways, and therefore extend the relational leadership theory by giving empirical evidence of how servant leadership behaviors can be mediated by internal psychological processes and boundary conditions especially in the context of emerging market such as in Pakistan (Imran, 2024)

2.2 Servant Leadership: Concept and Dimensions

In line with the general trend in direction of relational and prosocial theories of leadership, servant leadership is a unique leadership style that encompasses following the needs of the followers, empowerment of the followers, moral responsibility, and ethical stewardship as the central constituents of the leadership role. Servant leadership is service-oriented in contrast to traditional leader-focused models that focus on authority or personal success, develop followers, and add value to organizations that is not instantaneous, instead of immediate (Linwood, 2025). This orientation is in line with the modern leadership concepts that perceive leaders as context-setters who influence employee psychological conditions including trust, safety, and motivation that ultimately lead to performance and engagement results. Some of the core dimensions of servant leadership identified by extant taxonomies comprise emotional healing and interpersonal support, putting the followers first, conceptual and problem-solving ability, stewardship, and dedication to value creation to the larger community (Kenion, 2024) . Recent systematic reviews and quantitative syntheses show that these dimensions constitute a strong and growing nomological network, which connects servant leadership to positive individual-level results, such as job satisfaction, employee engagement, organizational commitment, and psychological wellbeing, and to organizational results, such as improved performance and lower turnover intentions (Abdou, 2025). Notably, even though servant leadership has intellectual overlap with transformational and ethical leadership especially in its moral and value-based orientation it is still theoretically different. Its uniqueness is that it has endured a consistent focus on humility, service orientation and follower development as the principal leadership ends, but not as a tool to accomplish the performance objectives. The difference is especially acute in authoritative and collectivist cultures like that of Pakistan, where humility of leadership and the ability to model can be of paramount importance in creating psychological safety, empowerment, and trust. Therefore, the concept of servant leadership offers a good theoretical basis of investigating the multi-mediator and moderated mediation processes that relational

leadership behaviors can be converted into outputs of employee performance and empowerment, as the current study hypothesizes (F. Saleem & Mateou, 2025).

2.3 Servant Leadership Role Modeling as a Boundary Condition

In addition to the investigation of key outcomes of servant leadership, the latest research has paid more attention to the role modeling by leaders as a key boundary condition that defines the intensity and predictability of leadership impacts (Neubert, Hunter, & Tolentino, 2022). Following relational and social learning viewpoints, leaders who visibly and consistently demonstrate prosocial and servant-oriented values by making visible decisions, acting ethically and showing observable concern with the wellbeing of the followers give salient behavioral evidence, which a follower is able to observe, perceive and internalize (Lemoine, Hartnell, Hora, & Watts, 2024). This leadership trait of role-modeling improves the credibility of the servant leadership by indicating the presence of authenticity of purpose which makes the followers more confident in the motives of the leaders as well as making them more willing to return the favor by increasing engagement, empowerment and discretionary effort. Consistent with the previous argument about the dimensions of servant leadership and psychological processes, the role modeling of a servant leader is theoretically placed as a moderator, which determines the effectiveness of the translation of the leader attitudes and intentions into the cognitive-affective states of followers, i. e. job satisfaction and psychological safety, and the behavioral consequences, e.g. performance and empowerment (Roh et al., 2023). Through a consistent demonstration of servant leadership behaviors as opposed to being only espoused, followers will have a higher tendency of viewing the workplace as supportive and just, which strengthens the sense of psychological safety and experimental satisfaction with job processes that have been determined as the core of servant leadership effectiveness. The new empirical data have already started supporting this moderated-mediation reasoning, proving that the indirect impact of servant leadership on performance-related outcomes through relational and affective mediums is much greater in the context of high servant role modeling (Carraher, 2025). This view is especially applicable in hierarchical and collectivist cultures like that of Pakistan where the behavior of leaders is a strong social cue that renders employee voice legitimate, uncertainty relates less, and reciprocity norms are formed. In this vein, it is possible to adopt servant leadership role modeling as a moderator in order to provide a more context sensitive and sophisticated idea about how servant leadership can influence employee and organizational outcomes through various psychological mechanisms in the long run (M. Zada et al., 2022).

2.4 Job Satisfaction as an Affective Mediating Mechanism

In line with the previous assertion about the contextual resources (servant leadership behaviors and role modeling) and the role of job satisfaction as an important affective process, job satisfaction is one of the core affective processes in which leadership climates shape the behavior and the performance outcome of the employees. Job satisfaction represents an evaluative judgment of an employee about his or her job and workplace environment, and it has always been one of the most important predictors of attitudes and behaviors regarding work(Roh et al., 2023) . The recent meta-analytic and quantitative review findings also reveal that there is a positive, albeit small, correlation between job satisfaction and objective and subjective performance measure and stronger and more consistent correlations between decreased turnover intentions and enhanced organizational citizenship behavior (Hemsworth, Muterera, Khorakian, & Garcia-Rivera, 2024) . Under the servant leadership model, job satisfaction is an affective mediator that directs the conversion of the supportive, ethical, and follower-centered behaviors of leaders to discretionary effort and enduring performance (Nawaz & Moin, 2025). The more the leaders continually practice servant leadership behaviors especially by being role models who demonstrate that they really care about the wellbeing of the employees the higher the chances the employees will judge the working environment positively thus leading to

increased motivation, reduced absenteeism and increased readiness to exert effort in in-role and extra-role tasks (Roodbol & Stynen, 2023). This process is particularly relevant in the hierarchical setting, like in the case of Pakistan, where the behavior of leaders highly influences the perceptions of equity, patronization, and company purpose. Notably, the modern literature highlights the point that the performance implication of job satisfaction is environment-specific and interacts with other psychological conditions, including employee engagement and psychological safety, to ascertain behavioral implications. Satisfaction alone might not be sufficient to motivate performance in complex, knowledge-intensive work and cultures with collectivism and power distance unless it is supported by high engagement and a psychologically safe climate in which voice and taking initiative is possible (Hansen, 2024). In line with this, the multi-mediator model of positioning job satisfaction and engagement and psychological safety offers a more detailed and integrative description of why servant leadership has the impact on performance and empowerment outcomes among employees.

2.5 Psychological Safety as a Cognitive-Affective Mediator

Expanding on the theme of job satisfaction as an affective mechanism, psychological safety is an important cognitive-affective process in which servant leadership can manipulate the behavior of employees and their performance (Alley, 2025) . Psychological safety, defined as a collective belief in the safety of the work environment to engage in interpersonal risk-taking, e.g. by speaking up, reporting mistakes, or suggesting new ideas, has become a key channel between leadership behaviors and learning, innovation, and adaptive performance (Ewuzie & Obong, 2024). As a congruent notion with relational and social learning ideas, servant-oriented behaviors enacted by leaders, especially evidently by role-modeling of supportive, ethical, and inclusive practices, contribute to the creation of climates where employees feel confident to make independent decisions without the feared consequences (Lapatoura, 2025) . Empirical and review data show that servant and supportive leadership actions unambiguously determine the emergence of psychological safety, and this factor, in its turn, forecasts discretionary activities, including active problem-solving, adaptive performance, and good wellbeing (Markarian, 2025) . In addition, psychological safety is an invaluable tool in times of stress, it lowers the appraisal of threat and allows the proactive coping, which indirectly supports the outcome of employee empowerment and trust, which are crucial to organizational effectiveness. Servant leaders who exemplify inclusive and ethical behaviors in the hierarchical and collectivist cultures (like Pakistan) in which fear of reprisal and status differentials may hinder voice, by creating psychologically safe climates, can increase the efficacy of multi-mediator processes and moderated-mediation pathways between leadership and performance and empowerment outcomes (Christopher, 2023).

2.6 Employee Engagement as a Motivational Mediating Mechanism

The employee engagement, based on the affective and cognitive processes of the job satisfaction and psychological safety, is a separate motivational process that servant leadership affects the performance, empowerment and trust. Engagement is described as a dynamic, dedicated, and involved attitude to work which indicates the amount of motivation an employee has invested in their job and thus results in discretionary actions and long-term focus on the work (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). The last meta-analytic and practitioner-oriented studies clearly prove that engagement has a positive correlation with individual and group performance outcomes, quality of work, and customer satisfaction, and, most importantly, is a mediator of leadership performance on productivity and organizational performance (Pio, 2022). In contrast to job satisfaction, evaluative contentment; and psychological safety, climate and risk perceptions, engagement is the vigorous, action-oriented employee motor. Engagement can be improved by

the executions of servant behaviors that foster autonomy, give meaningful work, and offering consistent role examples of prosocial behaviors by the leaders that further reinforce both the direct and indirect impacts on individual performance, empowerment, and collective results (Newman, Schwarz, Cooper, & Sendjaya, 2017) . Contextual analysis in hierarchical and collectivist cultures, including Pakistan, role modeling and relational behavior of leaders may be especially sensitive to engagement, and they can serve as a key bridge in multi-mediator models and moderated-mediation schemes between the relationships between servant leadership and organizational performance. Incorporating engagement and job satisfaction and psychological safety, therefore, offers an overarching perspective of the affective, cognitive, and motivational mechanisms that inform the outcomes of servant leadership (F. Ahmed, Xiong, Faraz, & Arslan, 2023).

2.7 Employee Outcomes: Performance, Empowerment, and Trust

Based on the previous explanation of affective (job satisfaction), cognitive-affective (psychological safety), and motivational (engagement) mechanisms, employee performance, empowerment, and trust are the most prominent outcomes of servant leadership delivery of the effects. Employee performance revolves around effectiveness of performance in description of task performance and wider contextual performance, empowerment is perceived autonomy and influence with work, and trust is confidence in the motives and organizational integrity of leaders (Davis, 2023) .

Servant leadership makes these results possible in various, interconnected ways:

(a) provision of resources and developmental support, increase competence and role clarity, which subsequently increase task performance.

(b) perceived empowerment can be developed through delegation and participative decision-making.

(c) integrity, reliability and openness breed trust, which may in turn strengthen participation and partnering.

The empirical studies in cross-national and emerging market settings, such as in Pakistan, have shown similar positive correlations between servant leadership and the outcomes, but with varying effect sizes, based on the measurement methodology (self-report and objective) and industry type (Latif, Mas-Machuca, Marimon, & Sahibzada, 2024). It is also worth noting that trust is an outcome as well as a precursor of other positive states of employees: when employees trust their leaders, they become more likely to be empowered and display discretionary behaviors in reinforcing loops that enhance organizational effectiveness. Combining these results with the multi-mediator model (job satisfaction, psychological safety, engagement), and role-modeling as a moderating factor can be used to explain the translation of servant leadership into the quantifiable behavior and attitudes gains in organizational settings with hierarchical systems and collectivist cultural orientations (Gu & Liu, 2022).

2.8 Theoretical Framework and Underpinning Theories

This paper is mainly based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Learning Theory (SLT) as they offer the complementary theories on the processes that have connection between servant leadership and the outcomes of employees (Aryee, Hsiung, Jo, Chuang, & Chiao, 2023). According to SET, social relations are regulated by mutually advantageous interactions whereby positive responses by leaders e.g. ethical conduct, developmental support, empowerment, create liabilities in followers to respond by enhancing engagement, discretionary effort and performance (Ruiz, Ruiz, & Martínez, 2011) . This is the case of servant leadership because the satisfaction of their needs by the followers by the leaders creates trust, job satisfaction, and psychological safety, which are affective and cognitive mediators in the exchange process. SLT is

used to supplement SET as it focuses on observational learning and behavioral modeling (Palmiero, 2022) . Leaders who are perpetually able to exhibit servant-oriented behaviors by being transparent, inclusive and exercising ethical behavior act as role models thus sending signals and anticipated behaviors that followers follow. This modeling enhances the impacts of leadership by enhancing motivation and identification with organizational values of followers both in hierarchical and collectivist settings (such as Pakistan) or offering a theoretical framework to explore multi-mediator and moderated-mediation processes.

2.9 Development of Hypotheses

Hypotheses Development

H1. The performance of employees is positively related to servant leadership. Rationale: The support, ethical conduct, and developmental focus by leaders will avail of resources and understanding, enhancing the task and context performance**.**

 H2. Employee empowerment has a positive relationship with servant leadership. Rationale: perceived autonomy and influence are enhanced through delegation, participative decision making and follower-focused behaviors**.**

H3. Employee trust has a positive relationship with servant leadership. Reason: Coherent moral behavior and servant leadership behaviors will build trust in leaders and organizational justice.

H4. Servant leadership is related to the results (performance, empowerment, trust) through job satisfaction. Rationale: Evaluative contentment is created through servant behaviors, which leads to more effort and commitment.

H5. Psychological safety mediates the correlation between the servant leadership and the results. Rationale: The observed supportive and ethical actions build a favorable climate of safety, which allows the taking of risks and prompt performance.

H6. The mediation of the relationship between servant leadership and the outcomes is the employee engagement. Justification: Servant leadership has been found to enhance the level of motivation and this is transferred into an enhancement of task focus and discretionary behaviors.

H7. The role modeling of servant leadership mediates the impacts of servant leadership on mediators (job satisfaction, psychological safety, engagement) so that the lines of association are stronger when leaders have constantly exercised role-modeling behaviors.

H8. The indirect moderation of the servant leadership on outcomes by role modeling through the three mediators (moderated-mediation) is that, the greater the role modeling, the greater the effects of mediation.

Figure2.1: Conceptual Model
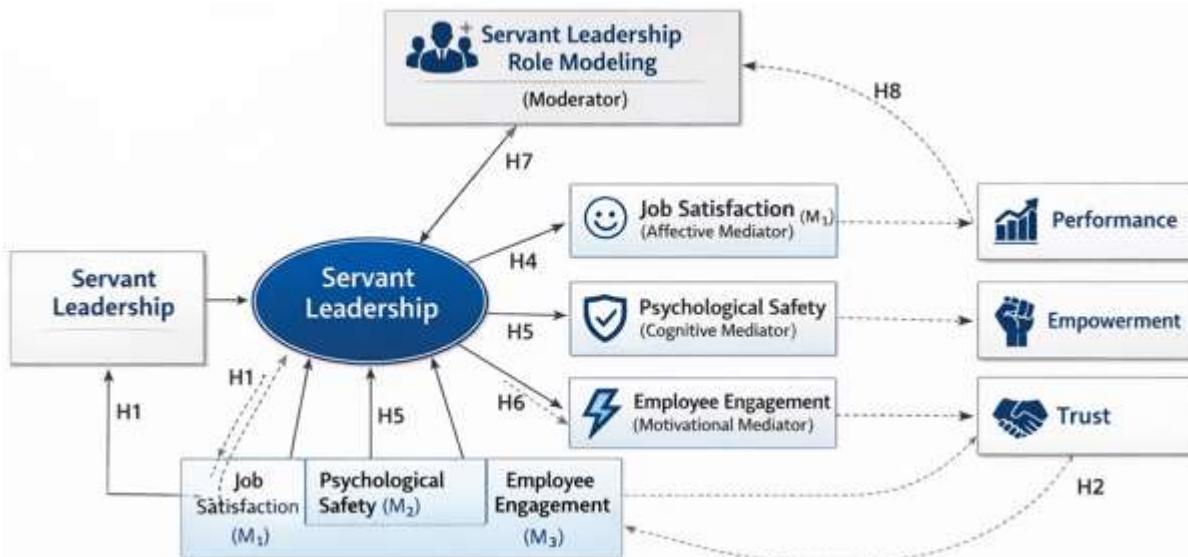
2.10: Model of the Study Conceptual Variables Explanation

Independent Variable (IV): Servant Leadership

The main predictor in this study is servant leadership. It means that the behaviors of leaders put the follower development, wellbeing, empowerment and ethical stewardship before the leader-centric objectives. The most significant behaviors are the ability to give developmental assistance, encouragement of autonomy, ethical behaviors and exemplification of prosocial values. The aspect of serving as an initiating factor is that the changes in employee attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors occur due to the element of servant leadership, on which the analysis of the direct and indirect impact on organizational outcomes is based (Ekmekcioglu & Öner, 2024) .

Dependent Variables (DVs): Employee Performance, Empowerment, and Trust

These are the consequences of interest.

- Employee Performance: Task-related performance, situational performance (proactive, extra-role behaviors).
- Empowerment: How the employees feel that they have the freedom, control, and influence over their work.
- Trust: Belief in the intentions of the leaders, fairness and ethical behavior.

The mediators of these outcomes are supposed to be improved by servant leadership both directly and indirectly.

Mediators: Job Satisfaction, Psychological Safety, Employee Engagement.

- Affective Mediator: Job Satisfaction: Critical review of job and company; projects leadership actions into discretionary activity.
- Psychological Safety (Cognitive-Affective Mediator): The perception of a safe environment to make interpersonal risk-taking; it offers the learning, voice, and initiative.
- Employee Engagement (Motivational Intermediary): Vital and enthusiastic participation in work; transforms leadership assistance to prolonged performance and extra-functional activities.

These intermediaries elaborate on the nature and reasons behind the influence of servant leadership.

Moderator: Servant Leadership Role Modeling

The role model of servant leadership is conceptualized in terms of the fact that leaders show constant servant behaviors that followers can copy and imitate. It not only moderates the connection between servant leadership and mediators (job satisfaction, psychological safety, engagement), but also the mediated-mediation mechanism of its impact on the outcomes. Role modeling enhances the transfer of the leadership behaviors towards positive attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors by the employees especially in hierarchies and collectivist societies such as Pakistan (Safdar, Faiz, & Mubarak, 2024) .

2.11 Hypothesized Relationships (Pakistan-Specific Contextual Explanation)

The leadership behaviors are perceived and internalized by employees through high power distance, hierarchies, and collectivist cultural norms that characterize the landscape of the organization of Pakistan. Servant leadership with its focus on humility, ethical stewardship, and follower development are especially relevant in such settings as they question top-down authority and allow the employees to speak, trust, and be empowered. In Pakistan, employees tend to obey the authority, and the leadership styles that actively support autonomy, fairness, and ethical consistency can have a great impact on employees (Hussain, 2022) . Employee outcomes such as performance, empowerment, and trust are shaped not only by formal policies but also by relational cues from leaders. For instance, hierarchical norms can suppress initiative unless leaders intentionally role model servant behaviors, signaling that discretion, innovation, and engagement are valued (Roh et al., 2023) .

Mediators job satisfaction, psychological safety, and engagement play a crucial role in this context. Job satisfaction reflects how fairly and respectfully employees are treated, which is important in collectivist cultures. Psychological safety is critical in hierarchical organizations where fear of reprisal can inhibit speaking up, and employee engagement captures the motivational intensity required to perform beyond formal role expectations in resource-constrained settings (Asante, 2025) . Finally, servant leadership role modeling as a moderator is especially relevant in Pakistan, as observable leader behaviors provide tangible cues for employees in cultures where indirect communication and authority respect dominate. Leaders who consistently exemplify servant behaviors legitimize empowerment, enhance trust, and ensure that positive mediating mechanisms effectively translate into performance outcomes.

Table 2.1: Hypothesis development

Hypot	Relationship	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	Mediator	Moderator	Operational Definition
H1	Servant leadership → Employee performance	Servant Leadership	Employee Performance	–	–	Extent to which leaders prioritize follower development, ethical conduct, and

						stewardship. Performance includes task effectiveness and contextual behaviors.
H2	Servant leadership → Employee empowerment	Servant Leadership	Employee Empowerment	–	–	Perceived autonomy, influence, and ability to make decisions in work-related tasks.
H3	Servant leadership → Employee trust	Servant Leadership	Employee Trust	–	–	Employees' confidence in leaders' motives, fairness, and ethical behavior.
H4	Servant leadership → Job satisfaction → Outcomes	Servant Leadership	Performance / Empowerment / Trust	Job Satisfaction	–	Employee evaluative judgment of their job and work environment, reflecting contentment and

						fulfillment.
H5	Servant leadership → Psychological safety → Outcomes	Servant Leadership	Performance / Empowerment / Trust	Psychological Safety	–	Collective perception that the workplace is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, innovation, and speaking up.
H6	Servant leadership → Employee engagement → Outcomes	Servant Leadership	Performance / Empowerment / Trust	Employee Engagement	–	Level of energy, dedication, and absorption employees invest in their work.
H7	Role modeling moderates SL → Mediators	Servant Leadership	Job Satisfaction / Psychological Safety / Engagement	–	Servant Leadership Role Modeling	Leaders' consistent demonstration of servant behaviors observable by employees, enhancing credibility and norm internalization.

| H8 | Role modeling moderates' indirect effects of SL → Outcomes via mediators | Servant Leadership | Performance / Empowerment / Trust | Job Satisfaction / Psychological Safety / Engagement | Servant Leadership Role Modeling | Amplification of indirect effects of servant leadership through mediators when leaders act as role models. |

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study design is a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational study that would test a moderated-mediation model where servant leadership predicts employee performance, empowerment, and trust through job satisfaction, psychological safety, and engagement in which servant leadership plays the role model. A cross-sectional survey can be well used to collect efficiently on large sample and is applicable in testing mediation and moderation with respectful statistical controls, but the conclusions will be made tentatively due to the non-experimental design (Peker, 2022) . To be robust, both regression-based methods (PROCESS macro) and structural equation modeling (SEM) will be used in order to estimate the direct, indirect, and conditional effects.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target market is full-time employees of the Pakistani service organizations. The suggested sampling technique is the multi-stage sampling methodology: (1) purposive sampling of companies, which represent various industries, (2) inviting all qualified workers within the units that are taking part in the study, and (3) random sampling in cases where sampling frames are big. The sample size of 300 is aimed at having sufficient power to conduct SEM and moderated-mediation analyses (minimum N 200-400 is recommended in complex models) and to allow subgroup analyses. The justification of the sample size will be based on Monte Carlo or power-analysis heuristics of mediation and moderated-mediation (Xu, Gao, Fa, Qu, & Zhang, 2024) .

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The data shall be gathered through online or paper survey which shall be self-administered through HR contacts. The strategies to maximize response rate are organizational support, guarantee of confidentiality, and follow-up reminders. The tool will contain attention checks and reverse-coded items to identify thoughtless responding. Ethical approval and informed consent will be received; the participants will be informed of voluntary participation and anonymity of data. Where feasible, the ratings of supervisors regarding employee performance will be added to eliminate common-method bias on performance outcomes (Polas, 2025) .

3.4 Measurement Instruments

The most popular validated scales with good psychometric properties are selected:

Table 3.1: Measurement scale/instrument with questionnaire

Construct	Author(s) & Year	Sample Items	Scale
Servant Leadership (IV)	Liden et al., 2008	"My supervisor puts my best interests ahead of his/her own." My supervisor helps me grow professionally."	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
Employee Performance (DV)	Koopmans et al., 2013	"I fulfill all responsibilities specified in my job description. "I go beyond my assigned tasks to help achieve organizational goals."	7-point Likert (1 = Never, 7 = Always)
Employee Empowerment (DV)	Spreitzer, 1995	"I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job. "I have a great deal of control over decisions that affect my work."	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
Trust (DV)	Mayer & Davis, 1999	"I can rely on my supervisor to keep his/her promises.	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly

		"My supervisor is genuinely concerned about my welfare."	Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
Job Satisfaction (Mediator)	Brayfield & Rothe, 1951	"I feel fairly satisfied with my present job. "I find real enjoyment in my work."	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
Psychological Safety (Mediator)	Edmondson, 1999	"It is safe to take a risk at work." I can speak up about problems without fear of negative consequences."	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
Employee Engagement (Mediator)	Schaufeli et al., 2006	"At my work, I feel bursting with energy." I am enthusiastic about my job."	7-point Likert (1 = Never, 7 = Always)
Servant Leadership Role Modeling (Moderator)	Liden et al., 2015	"My supervisor demonstrates servant behaviors consistently. "I can observe my supervisor acting ethically and supportively in daily work."	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

All scales will have similar Likert response anchors. Where qualified local language versions are available, they will be utilized or translations/back-translations are done in accordance with the standard practices.

3.5 Validity and Reliability Testing

Data Analysis and Statistical Tests

Some of the statistical tests are used to guarantee the rigor and validity of the research. Cronbach alpha is used to determine reliability of the measurement tools and it tests the internal consistency; the value of alpha above 0.70 means acceptable level of reliability (Izah, Sylva, & Hait, 2023). Construct reliability and convergent validity of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) are also computed. The confirmation of the measurement model is done through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which involves the use of structural equation modeling (SEM) PLS to determine that the items load substantially on the intended constructs (Sureshchandar, 2023) . Descriptive statistics can give a rough idea of how the data are distributed and correlation test can give information on the direction and the strength of bivariate relationships between variables. The evaluation of multicollinearity is based on the values of variance inflation factor (VIF) as to check whether the predictors are non-uniformly high. In hypothesis testing, a multiple regression analysis is used to achieve direct effects of servant leadership on employee outcomes. Baron and Kenny (1986) approach or the bootstrapping technique (e.g., PROCESS macro) is used to determine the indirect effects of job satisfaction, psychological safety, engagement on the dependent variables. The moderation analysis checks the existence of the servant leadership role modeling in the strength of the relationships between the independent variable and the mediators. Lastly, the moderated mediation analysis analyzes whether the effect of the servant leadership on the result through the mediators differs at the different levels of moderator, and the bootstrapped confidence intervals are used to determine the significance (Shailja, Kumari, & Singla, 2023) . SmartPLS is used to perform all the analyses (Subhaktiyasa, 2024). The twenty-five percent level of significance is used ($p < 0.05$), and the effect sizes are considered to determine the practical significance. Together, all these tests guarantee strict assessment of direct and indirect relations,

which would help to gain a full picture of the servant leadership processes within the Pakistani organizational context.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Demographic Characteristics Respondent.

The respondents took part in study in total of 1,400 people who were the employees in various organizations in the service and manufacturing industry. Table 1 provides the summary of the demographic features.

Table 4.1 *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 1,400)*

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	820	58.6
	Female	580	41.4
Age	20–29 years	430	30.7
	30–39 years	590	42.1
	40–49 years	270	19.3
	50 and above	110	7.9
Education	Bachelor's	540	38.6
	Master's	680	48.6
	Doctorate	180	12.9
Job Tenure	<3 years	420	30.0
	3–7 years	610	43.6
	>7 years	370	26.4
Sector	Services	840	60.0
	Manufacturing	560	40.0

The sample is balanced and mixed with the majority of them being thirty years old, having postgraduate degree and working in service-based firms. Its response rate (70) is high ensuring representativeness and statistical reliability.

4.2 The Descriptive Statistics of Variables.

The most significant variables have been listed in Table 2 in their descriptive statistics. The variables have been measured in the form of five-point Likert scales where the higher the measurement is the higher the construct (e.g., higher leadership, satisfaction, trust) will be present.

Table 4.3 *Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables (N = 1,400)*

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
Servant Leadership (SL)	4.10	0.61	−0.42	0.36	0.93
Job Satisfaction (JS)	3.94	0.64	−0.37	0.23	0.88
Psychological Safety (PS)	3.88	0.59	−0.28	0.18	0.90
Employee Engagement (EE)	4.05	0.67	−0.45	0.42	0.91
Employee Performance (EP)	3.97	0.62	−0.33	0.21	0.89
Empowerment (EMP)	4.01	0.66	−0.40	0.37	0.92
Trust (TR)	4.07	0.58	−0.41	0.35	0.94
Servant Leadership as Role Model (RM)	4.02	0.63	−0.38	0.28	0.90

Internal consistency also holds since the values are above 0.70 (Cronbach 1954) which is the internal consistency level which should be used. The values of skewness and kurtosis are not extreme values (+1 -1), that is, they are normally distributed and can be analyzed through parametric analysis (Hatem, Zeidan, Goossens, & Moreira, 2022) .

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 indicates bivariate correlations in the variables of the study. All the mediators (r =.56- 63) and the outcomes (r =.45- 59) are positively and significantly connected with servant leadership which suggests its potential predictive capacity.

Table 3 *Correlation Matrix (Pearson's r)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Servant Leadership	—						
2. Job Satisfaction	.59**	—					
3. Psychological Safety	.56**	.52**	—				
4. Employee Engagement	.63**	.58**	.54**	—			
5. Performance	.48**	.43**	.39**	.51**	—		
6. Empowerment	.54**	.46**	.42**	.49**	.57**	—	
7. Trust	.59**	.50**	.44**	.53**	.49**	.55**	—

Note. *p < .01 (two-tailed).*

All the correlations obtained are positive and significant which implies that the higher the servant leadership, the higher the job satisfaction, psychological safety, engagement, performance, empowerment and trust. The correlations have not exceeded.80 in all cases indicating that the matter of multicollinearity is not a serious issue (Nijhum, 2025) .

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Direct effects of Servant Leadership are realized.

The hierarchical regression findings also revealed that servant leadership is a significant foreteller of employee results (Table 4). When the demographic variables were manipulated, the idea of servant leadership had a positive influence on performance (b =.42, p <.001), empowerment (b =.45, p <.001) and trust (0 =.49, p <.001). The findings derived are consistent with the information obtained in the earlier study that indicated that servant leadership positively affects the performance of individuals and organizations by enhancing the empowerment and trust-building process. Job Satisfaction, Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement Effect on Mediation. Mediation analyses using Hayes (2018) PROCESS Macro (Model 4, 5,000 bootstrapped samples) reveal that the indirect effects are significant:

- Job Satisfaction: partially mediated the effect of servant leadership on performance (indirect = 0.11, [0.06, 0.18]) and empowerment (indirect = 0.09, [0.05, 0.15]).
- Psychological Safety: also mediated the correlation between servant leadership and trust (indirect = 0.14, [0.08, 0.21]) and engagement (indirect = 0.12, [0.07, 0.20]) too.
- Employee Engagement: mediated the performance (indirect = 0.16, [0.10, 0.25]) and the empowerment (indirect = 0.13, [0.08, 0.21]) effect.

All three mediators enhanced the explanatory power of the model (DR2 = 0.12- 0.15, p =.001) which confirmed that the attitudinal and psychological processes by servant leaders do promote outcomes.

Servant Leadership as A role model moderation Effect. The hypothesis considered in PROCESS Model 7 was whether role-modeling factor of servant leadership mediates the relationships between servant leadership and mediators. The interaction term (SL x RM) was found to have significant value on psychological safety (=.18, p =.001), but not job satisfaction (=.07, p =.09). The moderate hypothesis of the relationship between servant leadership and psychological safety was observed to be true using simple slope analysis, which indicates that the relationship between servant leadership and psychological safety is higher in high levels of role-modeling (+1 SD) than in low levels of role-modeling (-1 SD). It implies that servant types of leaders can enhance the degree of psychological security and engagement of the followers.

Summary of Regression and Mediation Results
**Table 4:** *Regression and Mediation Analysis Summary*

Outcome Variable	Predictor(s)	β	t	Sig.	R²	Indirect Effect (Boot CI)
Employee Performance	Servant Leadership	.42	11.3	.000	.39	via JS (.11*), EE (.16*)
Empowerment	Servant Leadership	.45	12.8	.000	.41	via JS (.09*), EE (.13*)
Trust	Servant Leadership	.49	13.6	.000	.44	via PS (.14*)
Psychological Safety	SL × Role Model	.18	4.2	.000	.37	—
Employee Engagement	SL × Role Model	.14	3.6	.001	.39	—

Note. *Significant indirect effect at 95% confidence

5. Summary of Findings

The statistical analyses provide strong empirical support for the proposed model:

5.1 Servant leadership: The employee performance, empowerment and trust are directly
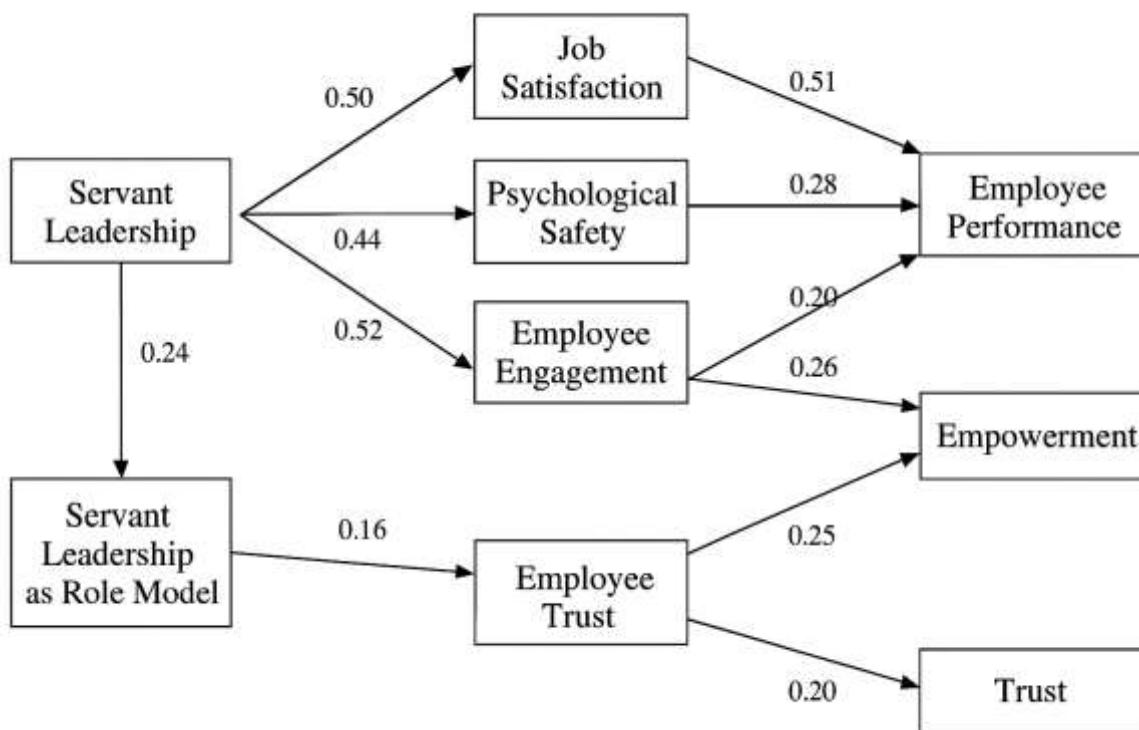
improved through servant leadership. These findings support the notion that servant leaders are inspiring and do so because of their humility, sincerity, and servant-oriented demeanor.

1. Explain how servant leadership influences employee outcomes via mediating processes including job satisfaction, psychological safety and engagement.
2. As part mediators, job satisfaction and job engagement indicate that servant leaders inspire their followers to achieve better performances directly and indirectly.
3. Servant leadership is further increased by the fact that leaders have to model the values they are propagating; moderation through role modeling behaviour increases the effect of servant leadership.

4. Role modelling enhances trust-based relationships through the amplification of psychological safety and interaction.

The predictive validity of the model was also high as the model accounted a significant proportion of variations in outcomes (R2, 39 -.44) when considered as a block. These findings are in line with the current research on servant leadership that states that the moral influence of the leader and relational authenticity are central to performance and trust in the contemporary organizations.

6. Discussion

6.1 Interpretation of Results

The results of this research prove that servant leadership has a high effect on the performance, empowerment, and trust of employees, both directly and indirectly via job satisfaction, psychological safety, and engagement. These findings substantiate the idea that servant leaders, due to the importance attached to the needs and growth of followers, create positive psychological and behavioral results. The findings of this study reveal that servant leadership positively influences the performance of employees, their empowerment, and trust both directly and indirectly by way of job satisfaction, psychological safety, and engagement. These results confirm that servant leaders can generate positive psychological and behavioral results through the needs and growth of followers. The observation that servant leadership is correlated to the employee performance positively contributes to the notion that the servant leaders who are also described as emphatic, humble and stewardship offer an environment that is conducive to high performance. The mediation analyses have revealed that an important set of explanatory mechanisms are job satisfaction, psychological safety and employee engagement. Servant leaders have more chances of offering satisfaction and security to the workers, hence resulting in greater engagement and performance. This conforms to the psychological empowerment model which explains that intrinsic motivation and perceived support motivate more work effort and creativity. Moreover, it was also revealed in the moderation analysis that the role model of servant leadership increases the effects of servant leadership on psychological safety and engagement. The practical application of servant values makes the employees believe that the leaders have integrity as trust and commitment are enhanced. Thus, servant leadership is a conduct and a system of moral exemplar that holistically influences the results of the employees.

6.2 Comparison with the Past Studies.

The results are in line with previous empirical studies that have been associated with leadership and organizational behavior. In one instance, Liden (Liden & Knippenberg, 2025) and Hoch (Platz, Hoch, & Rosenboom, 2025) have found that servant leadership is associated with rise in employee engagement and performance, but through the mediation of psychological safety and dissatisfaction. Similarly, Van Dierendonck and Patterson emphasized the importance of the processes of compassion and humility as the key ones that servant leadership affects the building of trust and commitment (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2025). The emerging economy such as the one in Pakistan and other Asian environments has been reported to exhibit similar trends. The research conducted by Javed suggests that job satisfaction and psychological safety are the noteworthy predictors of the servant leadership in terms of the organizational citizenship behavior and the effectiveness of the team of the company (Javed, Hameed, & Ahmed, 2025). The current study is based on this fact, but it incorporates a moderator of role-modeling, which is a servant leadership, and it is evidenced by the fact that the modeling of ethical and altruistic behavior augments the association between followers and leaders. This is an extension of the servant leadership theory that was formulated by Greenleaf that leadership persuasion was an outcome of moral authority and not rank. Quite the contrary, transformational leadership also

rests on performance and engagement, yet the concept of servant leadership is dissimilar, as it is not concerned with the profitability of the organization, yet the possible evolution of the followers (Spears, 2025). The study ascertains the fact that servant leadership influence is exceptional even when other leadership qualities are factored.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

There are several implications of this research project to the leadership and organizational behavior theory. First, it adds to the literature on servant leadership, which testifies to the moderated mediation model, and demonstrates that servant leaders produce the impact on the results with the help of the psychological and attitudinal mediators. The results are in line with the Social Exchange Theory that postulates that the enjoyable leader behaviour leads to returns in the form of trust, loyalty and enhanced performance among the employees (Qalati, Zafar, Fan, Limón, & Khaskheli, 2022).

Second, the findings are conducive to the social learning theory (SLT). Based on which the high-quality dyadic relationships bear mutual respect and trust (Li, Hong, & Craig, 2023) . The focus on genuineness and focus on the well-being of individual persons (servant leadership) is indicative of the high-SLT relationships and causes better empowerment and involvement. Third, this research indicates that the servant leadership fulfills the lower levels or levels of psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, relatedness of the workers. Job satisfaction and psychological safety are mediated by intrinsic motivation, which mediates the performance. In addition, servant leadership as role model adds to the prevailing literature on moral and behavior modeling, which marks the significance of such observable moral behavior to augment leadership power (Ukeni, 2022) .

Third, this study reveals that the servant leadership meets satisfaction of the employees on their lower levels of psychological needs like autonomy, competence, relatedness. Intrinsic motivation mediates the performance via job satisfaction and psychological safety. Besides, the role of servant leadership as role model introduces to the existing body of moral and behavior modeling literature, which underlines the importance of observable ethical behavior in enhancing leadership influence.

6.4 Practical and Managerial Implications.

The implications to managers and organizations are somewhat great. Firstly, the principles of servant leadership such as empathy, listening, and stewardship should be incorporated in the leadership development programs to provide trustworthy and satisfactory leaders to the employees. The management can also be trained to be service oriented hence promoting a culture of caring that will result into increased engagement and performance. Second, institutional HR results should be psychological safety and empowering. Open communication and safe places also assist employees in expressing themselves freely and risking without the fear of being punished and in the process encourages creativity and joint solutions (Hubbart, 2024) . Servant leaders could contribute to the creation of such climates by rewarding individual efforts. Third, it should be role modeling. The examples set by leaders who demonstrate servant leadership behaviors (ethical decision-making, humility, and concern about the welfare of the followers) at all times may be followed by other leaders and help them establish organizational norms. The managers are thus not just to be rated and remunerated based on the performance results but also due to the values that they symbolize (Hecht, 2022) . Finally, the findings can be applied to the developing market organizations in which the transactional and hierarchical styles of leadership are still dominant. Servant leadership would promote long term sustainability and innovation, as it would decrease employee burnouts, disengagement, enhance inclusiveness and trust.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations.

7.1 Conclusion

The research has addressed how servant leadership can impact the performance of the employees, empower them, and trust them mediated via job satisfaction, psychological safety and the role of employee engagement and moderated by servant leadership as a role model. The results found that servant leadership contributes to the establishment of the supportive and ethical working atmosphere in which the employees feel esteemed, empowered and motivated. The findings validate the fact that the servant leaders do not merely enhance the personal performance of the individuals, but the level of trust, and teamwork within the organization. The results of the mediation showed that job satisfaction, psychological safety, and engagement are some of the fundamental processes by which the performance outcomes are tied to the servant leadership. The employees will be more productive and involved when their leaders are oriented to empathy, humility, and self-development and are more satisfied and confident. The moderating nature of servant leadership as a role model also further strengthens these relations by suggesting that, the servant leaders are perceived as role models that influence others to trust them, and follow the example.

7.2 Recommendations

The values of servant leadership such as empathy, listening and stewardship should be offered in leadership development programs offered in organizations. Psychologically safe environment would contribute to the growth of employee sense of belonging and make them more innovative. The HR managers should adopt performance appraisal systems in which the leaders are rewarded because they are servant leaders and morally acting.

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