

# ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS ARE MEDIATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to observe the relationship between servant leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance. In addition, this research also aims to observe variables servant leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance. Empirical studies to test the servant leadership model can be done in the environment of nonprofit organizations and profits. Several studies that have been studied about the success of servant leadership have been achieved in nonprofit companies; therefore, the results of this study can be researched eligible for adoption by profit companies. This research is included in qualitative descriptive research, which explains the relationship between servant leadership to organizational commitment, and employee performance. The results of this study showed that servant leadership has relevance to organizational commitment, and employee performance. In addition, the results of this study showed that organizational commitment can mediate the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance.

**Keywords:** servant leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance.



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In the last decade, Indonesia has entered the era of globalization dubbed competition age and the information age. It makes every company should be able to survive in a very turbulent and uncertain environment. Companies that do not have competitiveness will be left out by the market which means the company has no advantage. Companies that do not have an advantage then the company has no reason to

remain survive in the competitive market for the long term. International competitiveness is dynamic and based on innovation as has been written by Porter (1990), "A body of research first published in *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* has begun to address these". Competitiveness is related to the competitive and creative advantages of the members of the organization, it is because the members of the organization are the human resources that exist within the company which is one of the key in improving competitiveness.

Employee performance is an important aspect for the company to support the organization in achieving its goals. Based on the opinions expressed by Moran and Brightman (2000), that employee

performance can create better competitiveness for the company. Employee performance creates a competitive advantage for the company so that it can more quickly achieve the goal.

The organization's performance is related to leadership, this is stated by Neely, et al. (2001), the leadership of a leader is necessary for the organization to achieve success for the organization. Trigpen, et al. (2012) suggest that leader competence, leader behavior, leadership traits, leadership style, and leadership approach are the components of leadership that have an effect on employee performance. Cohen (1993), and Randall and Cote (1991), stated that employees are an important aspect in the success of a corporate leadership style. That opinion implies that leadership owned by a leader in the company has a big role to drive employees to produce better performance. Leadership that can drive employees to work well in accordance with the ways that the company expected work can improve employee performance.

Yukl, et al. (2002), suggests that a large number of empirical research on effective leadership to identify behavioral types that enhance individual and collective performance. Servant leadership is a leadership style that has a lot of support from researchers for assessment such as those done by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), Hale and Field's (2007), and Van Dierendonck (2011). Servant leadership is an ethical, practical, and has a meaningful way of supporting a life that is led (Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership has been practiced and recommended on the 100 best companies in America based on Fortunes January 2000 (Olesia, 2013). Based on these empirical and practical experiences, it shows that servant leadership is important to be applied to the company. Servant leadership still needs to be reassessed in order to contribute to leadership development for the company.

Servant leadership places the interests of those who are led before the interests of the leadership, emphasizing personal development, and empowerment of the people who are led (Greenleaf, 1977). Laub (2004) argues that servant leadership requires a change of mindset, a paradigm shift that sees leaders, and followers different from other competing

leadership minds, as servant leadership emphasizes the interests of the people they lead. Northouse (2007) noted that servant leadership has a social responsibility to care for the weak and recognizes them as part of equal stakeholders in the organization. Servant leadership is essentially a leadership style that is oriented towards the interests of the people who are led by giving recognition and effort to develop them to complete the job well in order to achieve organizational goals.

Leadership and performance reviews have been conducted by Linjuan and Stacks (2013), the results show that leadership style positively influences employee perceptions in the organization's reputation, not only directly but indirectly, through employee empowerment. Winston and Fields (2015), Chan and Wai-ming (2014), Retmono (2013), Krisna and Kripa (2012), and Melchar and Bosco (2010), suggest that servant leadership can have an impact on performance. However, Rocco (2016) has found that servant leadership does not necessarily result in an increase in employee performance. The opposite finding about the effects of servant leadership in some situations, servant leadership is likely to be limiting rather than empowering followers and undermining their organizational commitment. In fact, followers can become dependent on the servant leadership figure, thus becoming unwilling to adopt proactive behaviors to meet organizational examples. Similarly with Lisbijanto and Budiyanto (2014), the result of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) shows that servant leadership has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction, but has not significantly affected the organization's performance. Dierendonck, et al. (2009), consolidated theoretical framework for effectively synthesize antecedents, attributes, and outcomes of servant leadership have poor results. In research on achieving high performance through servant leadership shows that servant leadership has no impact on performance.

Previous research on the relationship between servant leadership and performance has shown that the results are inconsistent. Waal and Sivro (2012) stated that empirical research on the relationship between servant leadership and employee perfor-

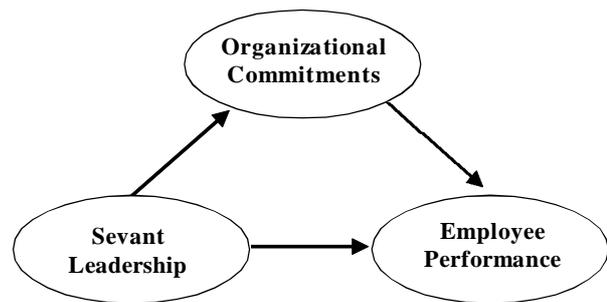
mance is lacking. The limitations of empirical research on the relationship between servant leadership and performance and also inconsistent results, it can be developed a study of the relationship between servant leadership and performance by adding a mediation variable. Sabir, et al. (2011) in Sokoll (2014), modeling provides a link between leadership style, organizational culture, and organizational commitment, also recommends that future research can be done by substituting transactional leadership with leadership styles such as servant leadership. Stogdill (1963) in Sokoll (2014), suggests that servant leadership has a relationship with commitment. The opinions expressed above indicate that it is still necessary to assess the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment.

Some opinions and also empirical studies show that there is a relationship between servant leadership to organizational commitment and performance. Linjuan and Stacks (2013), stated that leadership style positively influences employee perceptions in the organization's reputation, not only directly but indirectly, through employee empowerment. Based on the opinions of Linjuan and Stacks (2013), and empirical research of the relationship between servant leadership to organizational commitment and organizational commitment to performance, it can be argued that servant leadership can have a direct effect on performance. In addition, servant leadership can give an indirect effect through organizational commitment to performance. Based on the explanation it can be stated that the purpose of this study is to explain the relationship between servant leadership with the performance either directly or indirectly through organizational commitment.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Servant leadership is a leadership style that cares and engages employees in decision making. Employee awareness and involvement in decision making can build a subordinate's personal growth to be actively involved in the organization. Employees who feel that getting good attention from leaders can foster attitudes and behaviors to do something that gives support to the organization. This shows that servant leadership is able to grow exist-

ing organizational commitment in subordinates and also improve the work of employees. Organizational commitment is the attitude and behavior of employees to be actively involved to assist the organization in achieving its goals. The existence of attitudes and behaviors that help the organization, then employees are willing to run a good job for the work given the organization. The willingness of employees to work in earnest can provide better results from the work that has been done. It shows that organizational commitment owned by employees is able to produce better performance. Based on the framework of the relationship between servant leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance, a conceptual framework can be drawn up in the figure below (Figure 1).



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

### METHOD

In this article, a review of the direct relationship of servant leadership to performance and indirectly through organizational commitment uses a literature study approach. This technique is used for the purpose of disclosing various theories and studies relevant to the research problem that is done as a reference material in the discussion of research results. The steps undertaken in this literature study are as follows (Cone and Foster (1993) and University of Melbourne Library (2012)):

1. Collect literary materials in both theories and related research results.
2. Grouping topics relevant to the topics covered.
3. Compare the literature materials that have been grouped.

4. Conducting data analysis
5. Write the findings of the topic of the problem.

## DISCUSSIONS

### Relationship between servant leadership and Employee Performance

Leader is an individual who can influence the members of group or organization and encourage the group or organization to achieve its objectives. Good leaders grow through a never-ending process of self-learning, education, training and experience, Jago (1982). Leaders create a culture or habit of empowering their subordinates by providing guidance and training (Spencer, 1994). Leadership is the key to success of leaders within a company (Gosling et al., 2009; Ivanova and Ivanov, 2011). Flexible and adaptive leadership changes one's behavior in the right way as situational changes including flexible, adaptable, agile, and versatile (Kaiser et al., 2008; Pulakos et al., 2000). Effective and successful leadership depends on the leader's ability to change his followers' behavior, influence, inspire, and mobilize his followers toward organizational goals, Yukl (2006). Leadership is the relationship between a person affecting the behavior or actions of others and those who are so influenced (Greenleaf, 1977; Mullins, 2005; Laub, 1999; Stone et al., 2003).

Leadership establishes and directs all employees of the organization, such as developing a better understanding of effective leaders for future development, Gupta et al. (2005). Basically, successful leadership is a leadership that is able to adapt and be flexible with the existing conditions, influence employee behavior, and drive employees to support the organization in achieving its goals. The new leadership model focuses more on service and care for employees than on the existing control systems of organization Bhindi and Duigna (1997). The ideal leader is described as a person who uses one's power, as well as influences and motivates employees to realize the organizational goals, thereby making the organization's vision into reality (Van Dierendonck et al., 2009). Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a proper leadership style is required for an organization; the leadership style of a

leader must be able to influence the behavior of others in accordance with his desire and expectation in a certain circumstance. The style of leadership is a summary of how a leader performs his leadership function and how he is seen by those he seeks to lead or those who may be watching him from the outside, Gellerman (2003).

Nowadays, the focus of leadership is shifting from traditional or transactional leadership that develops into transformational leadership, which gives more emphasis on vision, future, and charisma; it focuses on its followers. Nahiyah (2015) stated that some of the world's productive thinkers and writers on leadership have also long predicted that serving leadership will be a leadership paradigm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Those who have read and reviewed the leadership that serves and give praise include: Bennis (1989), Block (1993), and Spears (1998). Zohar (1997) even thought further ahead and said that leadership that serves essentially is quantum thinking and quantum leadership. This suggests that servant leadership in the present and the future is able to overcome the problems faced by the organization and drive its employees to have higher productivity.

Servant leadership emphasizes the ability of a leader in providing services; the services provided can give a positive impact to the members of organization without any fear or reluctance. Senjaya (1997) stated that servant leadership does not merely provide public service to get results; the behavior in providing service is also the result. According to Spears (2004), servant leadership becomes a model that seeks to involve others in decision-making process based on ethics and caring behavior, enhances personal development of employees, and at the same time raises awareness of improving the quality of life of the organization; therefore, leaders can be trusted by their subordinates. The results of the research which was conducted by Spears is reinforced by the research of Banutu (2004) and Joseph and Winston (2005) suggest that leader is placing the unity and interests of followers above his own interests; they show empathy, concern about their followers, and grow the trust of their followers. Servant leadership is committed to serving employ-

ees, customers and society; this “service” goes beyond the ego of leaders (Liden et al., 2008). Servant leadership is a theory that includes both altruistic behavior and helping each others; it is not because it is a pressure or obligation, but because it is purely voluntary (Dennis and Bocarnea, 2005).

Essentially, servant leadership is a leadership which is oriented to subordinates/ employees to eliminate fear so as to build a good person to create a better life quality of organization. Molyneaux (2003) suggests that servant leadership is not a leadership with by passive employees, but it is a “controlled and conscious personal power and sharing”. Duff (2013) and Birkenmeier et al. (2003) suggest that a leader serves beyond personal self-interest and inspires others to meet the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of others for the benefit of the organization. Jaramillo et al. (2009) argue that leadership has the highest management commitment to employees. Servant leadership has a high attachment to subordinates/ employees to meet their physical, spiritual and emotional needs for the benefit of the organization.

The relationship between servant leadership and employee performance has been studied by previous researchers. Winston and Fields (2015) assessed and measured the important behavior of servant leadership; the results indicate that servant leadership has a relationship with performance. Chan and Wai-ming (2014) examined the impact of servant leadership on trust, attitudes and employees; the results show that servant leadership has a positive impact on employee performance. Retmono (2013) studied the effect of servant leadership and organizational culture on organizational commitment and employee performance; the research findings show that servant leadership has an influence on employee performance. Krisna and Kripa (2012) studied the impact of servant leadership on employee empowerment; the research finds that servant leadership has an impact on employee performance. Waal and Sivro (2012) studied the relationship of servant leadership and the organizational performance and organizational framework; the results show that servant leadership is able to give effect to employee performance.

Melchar and Bosco, (2010) examined high performance achieved through servant leadership; the research findings indicate that servant leadership is able to influence employee performance. The results of previous studies have shown that there is a relationship between servant leadership and employee performance. Servant leadership is basically a leader oriented to subordinates/ employee to provide services and concerns, so as to form a suitable person for the organization in finishing the job given well. Servant leadership makes employees can do the job with no fear, so that employees can work in accordance with the expected organization.

### **Relationship between servant leadership and Organizational Commitment**

Servant leadership model, as proposed by Greenleaf (1977), is a leadership model that empowers employees to participate in the work. Servant leadership prioritizes subordinates/ employees over the leader (Greenleaf, 1977). According to Russell and Stone (2002), servant leaders who provide public service are serving subordinates, aiming at meeting the needs of others. Basically, servant leadership serves and meets the needs of subordinates to participate in carrying out the work to meet the objectives of organization. Servant leaders strive to provide get the priority of organization and focus on employees rather than organizational goals (Stone et al., 2004). Servant leaders allow more freedom for employees to train their own skill to remain consistent with the quality and fulfillment of subordinate needs, Russell and Stone (2002). Servant leadership has a future to do on an ongoing basis to avoid organizational failure, Senge et al, (1995). Servant leadership has great potential to be developed by organizations to prevent failure.

Servant leadership also has an association with organizational commitment; this is stated by some researchers as follows: Sokoll (2014) states that servant leadership has a significant impact on employee commitment; Harwiki (2013) states that servant leadership has a significant influence on organizational commitment; and Ramli and Desa (2013) state that servant leadership has a significant effect on affective commitment. Those findings indicate

that servant leadership can give an impact to employee performance. The statements of writers and researchers on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment show that servant leadership has an influence on employee commitment. Servant leadership can make employees comfortable in working in the organization, so as to make employees loyal and help the organization in achieving its goals seriously. Servant leadership implemented by the leaders of the organization can lead the employees to help and support the organization in carrying out its operational process as well as possible. This shows that servant leadership can affect the organizational commitment.

### **Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Employee Performance**

In general, commitment can be interpreted as a statement of will or a promise to do something that has been decided faithfully. According to Bobby (2008), commitment is a loyal promise and strong determination to do something responsibly. Employee behavior can be seen from the attitude of employees who are committed to the company through their expression, action and results. According to Robbins (2007), attitude is evaluative statement or judgment concerning object, people or events, which means that attitude is a statement about a person's judgment of objects, people or events. Vandenberghe and Bentein, (2009) stated that the relationship between employee commitment and the management can reduce employee turnover. Becker et al. (1996) in "Foci and bases of employee commitment: implications for job performance" argue that the focus and basis of employee commitment is an implication for job performance.

The relationship of organizational commitment and employee performance has been studied by the researchers. Brown et al. (2011) conducted a research on performance at workplace, employee commitment, and loyalty; the research findings indicate that organizational commitment influences the performance of employees. Tolentino (2013) studied the relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance; the research findings indicate that organizational commitment has a

relationship with employee performance. Memari (2013) studied the impact of the organization on the performance of bank employees; the research findings indicate that organizational commitment has a significant effect on employee performance. Naveed (2014) studied the impact of organizational commitment on employee performance and job satisfaction; this study found that organizational commitment has an effect on employee performance and job satisfaction.

Previous studies conducted by Brown et al. (2011), Tolentino (2013), Memari (2013), and Naveed (2014) suggest that organizational commitment as a whole is capable of affecting organizational performance. Organizational commitment is a dedication given by employees to the organization. Dedication is shown through the intention of employees to do the job diligently. It makes the employees able do the job well and show higher performance. Commitment is believed to be the driving force behind one's success in his job. Someone who has done a good job will always try to finish the job even if there are obstacles; they keep trying to finish the job. Organizational commitment of employees can give a positive impact on employee performance.

### **CONCLUSION**

Servant leadership is an appropriate leadership model to apply to current and future organizations. Servant leadership is able to provide great flexibility to employees to work, this is due to the leadership can meet the physical needs, spiritual, emotional, and create a more conducive organizational life quality. The implementation of servant leadership in organizations is able to mobilize employees to follow and work voluntarily without fear. The existence of a conducive working atmosphere in the organization is able to encourage employees to produce high performance.

Servant leadership in addition to directly generate employee performance is also able to build organizational commitment for employees. Better quality of the organization life that capable to raising attitudes and behaviors of employees to have loyalty and strong adherence to support the organi-

zation in achieving its goals. This situation shows that servant leadership is able to build organizational commitment for employees. Employees who have organizational commitment demonstrated by the existence of loyalty and strong adherence to support the organization in achieving its goals can move employees to do the job with full responsibility. Work done with full responsibility can provide higher employee benefits. This shows that the organizational commitment possessed by employees is able to provide high work results.

The results of this study indicate that organizational commitment in addition to directly impacting employee performance can also mediate the relationship between organizational leadership and employee performance.

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