



The influence of servant leadership on job performance: Role employee engagement mediation

Werdi Santoso¹, Siti Nur Azizah²

^{1,2}Master of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Putra Bangsa, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Apr 6, 2025
Revised Apr 13, 2025
Accepted Apr 28, 2025

Keywords:

Employee Engagement;
Job Performance;
Servant Leadership;
Village Apparatus.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the influence of servant leadership on job performance, with employee engagement as a mediating variable, on village officials in Pituruh District, Purworejo Regency. Using a quantitative approach, data were obtained from 120 respondents through questionnaires and analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Square with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results of the study indicate that servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, with a coefficient of 0.667, and that employee engagement has a very positive effect on job performance, with a coefficient of 0.816. However, the direct relationship of servant leadership to job performance is not significant, with a value of -0.121. Therefore, it is proven that employee engagement fully mediates the effect of servant leadership on job performance. The R-square value for employee engagement of 0.445 and job performance of 0.549 indicates that the model has sufficient explanatory power. These findings indicate that in the context of public organizations such as village governments, servant leadership does not directly improve performance, but rather through increased employee engagement. Therefore, developing a service-focused leadership style and strategies to increase employee engagement is important in efforts to improve the performance of village officials.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY- NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Werdi Santoso,
Master of Management,
Faculty of Economics and Business,
Universitas Putra Bangsa,
Jl. Ronggowarsito No.18, Kecamatan Pejagoan, Kabupaten Kebumen, Jawa Tengah 54361, Indonesia
Email: pemdes36brengkol@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The performance of village officials is very important to determine how well village governance works and meets the needs of the community (Indonesia, 2024). Village apparatuses have many tasks in the context of village autonomy, including government administration and public services. However, the facts on the ground show that the performance of the Pituruh District village apparatus has declined. This is reflected in the low achievement of village fund performance targets and PBB in full. This raises questions about the components that influence performance. Village apparatuses are the spearhead in implementing government programs and ensuring the delivery of public services to the community (Undaan, 2014).

A person's leadership style in human resource management is one of the important factors that can influence employee performance in a company (Liden et al., 2008)(Liden et al., 2014)(Endratno & Agnes, 2019). Servant leadership is one of the leadership approaches that is increasingly popular in public sector organizations (Lee & Hong, 2017)(Pawar, 2017). According to

(Frick, 2004)(Greenhaus et al., 2003), servant leadership is a type of leadership in which service to subordinates is prioritized. Servant leaders refrain from prioritizing self-interest or authority, focusing instead on serving others.

Servant leadership has been shown to improve organizational outcomes through the creation of harmonious relationships, trust, and loyalty within work teams (Eva et al., 2019)(Hunter et al., 2013). In the context of village governance, this approach is crucial as village officials are expected not only to perform administrative responsibilities but also to engage directly with the community. Therefore, the quality of leadership implemented by the village head and other officials has a significant impact on the productivity and efficiency of public services.

However, it is possible that the relationship between job performance and assistant leaders is not always direct. Employee engagement is one factor that can influence this relationship. According to (Javed et al., 2015)(Ramadhani & Soenarto, 2023)(Nurdini & Firmansyah, 2022)(Dahliyanti et al., 2023), employee engagement is a psychological condition when someone fully directs their physical, cognitive, and emotional selves to their responsibilities as an employee. Engaged employees show enthusiasm, dedication, and a strong desire to give their best for the company (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Without comparing other leadership styles like transformational or transactional leadership, it's harder to understand how servant leadership works in the village bureaucracy. Each style motivates employees differently. Transformational leadership inspires with a vision, while transactional leadership uses rewards and punishments. Without this comparison, the study might miss key insights on how leadership affects employee engagement and performance.

Based on this background, this study aims to empirically test the effect of servant leadership on job performance with employee engagement as a mediating variable. This study focuses on village officials in Pituruh District, who have a strategic role in public services at the village level, as well as provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of human resources in the village government sector.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a quantitative approach was used together with a survey. This study involved village officials in Pituruh District, Purworejo Regency, totaling 120 respondents. The purposive sampling method used the criteria of employees who had worked for at least one year. To prevent social bias due to hierarchical relationships, the questionnaires were completed anonymously and without interference from supervisors. Respondents were informed that their answers would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. The distribution and collection of questionnaires were also done without the presence of leaders; so that respondents could answer freely and honestly.

The tool used is a questionnaire created based on a five-point Likert scale that measures three main variables: servant leadership, employee engagement, and job performance. The construction for each of these variables is adjusted to previous studies, namely (Liden et al., 2015)(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)(Koopmans et al., 2014).

To ensure the purposive sampling approach represents all village officials from different positions, several steps were taken. First, the various positions in the village administration were categorized, ensuring that all levels, such as the head of village, secretary, section heads, and staff, were included in the sample. Second, a proportional method was used to select participants, reflecting the size of each group in the village bureaucracy. Participants were chosen from different departments to capture a variety of perspectives. This ensured a balanced and inclusive sample.

SmartPLS 4.0 application was used to analyze data using the structural equation modeling method with partial least squares (SEM-PLS). Construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were tested first. After that, hypothesis testing was carried out directly and indirectly using bootstrapping.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the analysis using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) show a comprehensive picture of the relationship between Servant

Leadership, Employee Engagement, and Job Performance in the context of village officials in Pituruh District. The analysis process begins with an evaluation of the outer model to test the validity and reliability of the construct, followed by an evaluation of the inner model to test the strength of the relationship between latent variables.

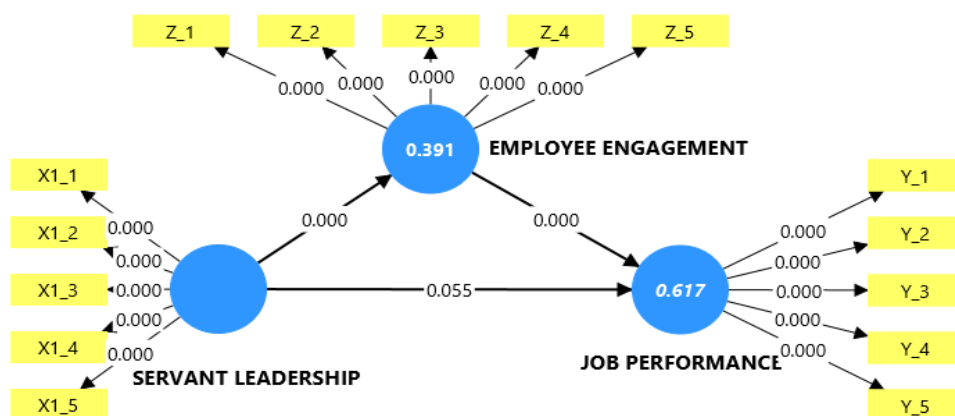


Figure 1 . Bootstrapping test results

The evaluation of the outer model shows that all indicators in the Servant Leadership, Employee Engagement, and Job Performance constructs have outer loading values above 0.70, which means that these indicators are valid in representing each construct. For example, indicator X1_3 in the Servant Leadership construct has a loading value of 0.829, Z2 and Z1 in the Employee Engagement construct have values of 0.904 and 0.861, respectively, while indicators Y_3 and Y_4 in the Job Performance construct show values of 0.848 and 0.821. With AVE exceeding 0.50 and Composite Reliability above 0.80, it can be concluded that the constructs in this model meet the requirements of convergent validity and internal reliability.

At the inner model stage, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value for the Employee Engagement variable is 0.391, which means that 39.1% of the variability in employee engagement can be explained by Servant Leadership. Meanwhile, Job Performance has an R^2 value of 0.617, which shows that the combination of Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement can explain 61.7% of the variation in employee performance. This R^2 value shows that the model has a fairly strong explanatory power, especially in explaining the performance of village apparatus employees.

Several important findings were made by path analysis with bootstrapping. The first finding shows that Servant Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement with a coefficient of 0.625 and a p-value of 0.000. These results provide empirical evidence that a leadership style that serves directly can increase employee engagement in the work environment. Leaders who apply the principles of servant leadership, such as active listening, empathy, support for subordinate development, and commitment to individual growth, create an organizational climate that values humans as the main subject in the work process. In the context of village government, this is very relevant because village officials not only carry out bureaucratic tasks but also play a service role that is in direct contact with the community. When village officials feel genuine concern from their leaders, they will respond with higher involvement in their work.

This finding is in line with research conducted by (Eva et al., 2019)(Liden et al., 2008), (Pawar, 2017), and (Lee & Hong, 2017), which consistently show that servant leadership has the power to create harmonious relationships, build trust between individuals in a team, and increase employee motivation and work enthusiasm. This leadership style inherently places the interests of subordinates above the personal interests of the leader, thus creating a more humane and conducive work climate for total employee involvement.

Other contextual research findings are reinforced. For example, in their study of the restaurant industry, (Agatha & Go, 2022) found that management practices emphasizing the principles of empowerment and empathy can increase employee emotional and psychological engagement through servant leadership. However, (Dani & Mujanah, 2021) conducted a study of

local government agencies and found that servant leaders encouraged employees to feel valued, cared for, and have room to grow, which in turn increased their loyalty and engagement with the organization. Although the situations differed across the public and private sectors, the pattern of relationships between engagement and servant leadership showed consistency. This suggests that universal servant leadership principles can be applied to a variety of situations, such as village governance, which often faces challenges of rigid bureaucracy and limited resources.

In addition, an important basis for building a productive and collaborative work culture is the relationship between leader dedication and employee engagement. Team members who see servant leaders tend to be more motivated to perform better. In village government, this can be described as a device that cares more about public service, completes administrative tasks faster, and has more collaboration between village institutions. Therefore, reinforcing the village head and village secretary is a strategic step to create good employee engagement and not just leadership style development. Ultimately, this will result in better public service at the village level.

Second, the influence of Employee Engagement on Job Performance is also significant with a very strong coefficient, which is 0.877 (p -value = 0.000). This value indicates a close causal relationship between the level of employee engagement and the improvement of their performance quality. This means that the higher the level of employee engagement in their work—either emotionally, cognitively, or physically—the greater their contribution to the organization. Emotional engagement reflects the extent to which employees feel proud and have an affective bond with their work and workplace. Cognitive engagement shows the level of focus, concentration, and attention given by employees to the tasks they are assigned, and physical engagement relates to the energy and concrete efforts they expend in completing the work.

The results of research (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), which states that work engagement is a good psychological condition characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption, are reinforced by these findings. Engaged employees are usually enthusiastic, enthusiastic, and able to withstand work pressure. In other studies, (Jiatong et al., 2022)(Endratno & Agnes, 2019) (Herwina, 2022) found that employee engagement serves as an important link between leadership and performance outcomes because employees who feel involved will be more responsible for their work results.

This finding is very important for village governance. Village officials are not only required to carry out administrative tasks, but they must also act as public servants, meeting the needs and desires of residents directly. Therefore, the success of village programs such as village fund management, population administration services, local infrastructure redevelopment, and other social activities is highly dependent on high levels of involvement. The more employees are involved in the work process, the more likely they are to work responsibly, respond quickly to community needs, and do their jobs efficiently.

Employee engagement also contributes to the creation of a positive work environment in village government. When employees feel ownership of their work and see how much they contribute to the welfare of the community, they will be more loyal, devoted, and highly motivated. Ultimately, this will create a work culture that focuses on good and sustainable public service. Therefore, to achieve superior institutional performance, increasing employee engagement must be a strategic focus in human resource management in the village government sector.

However, the direct relationship between servant leadership and job performance shows a negative coefficient of -0.164 with a p -value of 0.055. This result is in line with research conducted by (Sihombing et al., 2018), which found that the influence of servant leadership on employee performance is more often indirect than direct. This shows that a service-focused leadership style does not necessarily result in high performance without active employee involvement. Therefore, this study shows that there is full mediation of employee involvement in the relationship between servant leaders and job performance. As shown by (Pawar, 2017), which states that servant leaders have an impact on organizational outcomes when they are combined with full employee involvement in work.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the idea that servant leadership can be an effective method for creating an inclusive and supportive work environment in the public sector, especially in village government environments. However, this success is impossible to achieve without

employee participation. This shows that employee engagement is not simply a result of leadership style; it is a psychological mechanism that must be built systematically and consciously. Research conducted by (Endratno & Agnes, 2019) also emphasizes the importance of engagement as an intervention variable to improve the performance of village officials.

From a practical perspective, these findings offer important outlines for human resource development in village government. Village government should support leadership development that emphasizes empathy, subordinate potential development, and service. Management policies should also include plans to increase employee engagement, such as providing recognition for contributions, involving employees in decision-making, and creating a supportive work environment. Therefore, village heads and other staff are responsible not only as administrative leaders but also as advocates who can improve performance consistently and collectively.

Overall, this study not only successfully shows how variables correlate within a conceptual structure, but also provides a strong contextual understanding of how servant leadership can help improve village apparatus performance by encouraging employees to actively participate. This has a significant impact on efforts to improve the quality of village governance in Indonesia, especially in facing increasingly complex and changing public service challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis using SmartPLS, this study concludes that servant leadership has a positive and significant influence on employee engagement, but does not directly affect job performance. On the contrary, employee engagement is proven to have a very strong positive influence on job performance and fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance.

This shows that in the context of village government, servant leadership is an effective leadership approach in improving employee performance, but its impact is more real when combined with increasing employee engagement. Therefore, managerial strategies that encourage servant leadership and create a work environment that supports employee engagement need to be implemented consistently to produce optimal village apparatus performance.

To integrate servant leadership training with programs that increase village employee engagement, several strategies can be used. First, create a training program that teaches both servant leadership and ways to boost engagement, such as recognizing employee contributions and encouraging open communication. Second, hold regular workshops to help employees apply servant leadership in their daily work. Third, establish mentoring programs where experienced leaders can guide newer employees, helping to build engagement. Finally, set up feedback systems to measure the success of these programs and make improvements where needed.

The practical implications of these findings are the need to strengthen the leadership capacity of village heads through servant leadership training, as well as the formation of a work culture that supports active participation and emotional involvement of employees. Furthermore, this study also provides theoretical contributions to understanding the mediation mechanism of employee engagement in the influence of servant leadership on job performance.

To support policy improvement at the district level, research findings should be shared with relevant authorities to emphasize the role of leadership and employee engagement. These insights can guide the development of training programs on servant leadership, integrated with strategies to boost employee involvement. Policies should be tailored to the actual needs of village officials, and monitored through regular evaluation. This integration can help strengthen village governance and service delivery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all village officials in Pituruh District who participated in this research and parties who provided support during the research process.

REFERENCES

Agatha, SC, & Go, MAB (2022). The Influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance Through Employee Engagement at Shaburi & Kintan Buffet Restaurant Surabaya. *Journal of Hospitality*

- Management*, 7 (2), 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.9744/jmp.7.2.63-74>
- Dahliyanti, D., Adriani, Z., Kerja, M., & Pegawai, K. (2023). The Role of Servant Leadership and Work Motivation. *Journal of Applied Management and Finance (Mankeu)*, 12 (01), 143–155.
- Dani, AR, & Mujanah, S. (2021). The Influence of Servant Leadership, Workload and Creativity on the Performance of Employees of the Bangkalan Regency Transportation Service, Madura, with Organizational Commitment as an Intervening Variable. *Media Mahardhika*, 19 (3), 434–445. <https://doi.org/10.29062/mahardika.v19i3.269>
- Endratno, H., & Agnes, T. (2019). The Influence of Work Discipline, Personal Engagement and Servant Leadership on the Performance of Village Apparatus in Banyumas District. *MADIC Journal*, 3 (September), 2014–2017.
- Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant Leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *Leadership Quarterly*, 30(1), 111–132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004>
- Frick, D. M. (2004). Robert K. Greenleaf a life of servant leadership. In *TA - TT - Berrett-Koehler*. <https://doi.org/LK> - <https://worldcat.org/title/249271639>
- Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63(3), 510–531. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(02\)00042-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00042-8)
- Herwina, Y. (2022). The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance: Investigation of Automotive Companies. *International Journal of Management and Business Applied*, 1(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.54099/ijmba.v1i1.97>
- Hunter, E. M., Neubert, M. J., Perry, S. J., Witt, L. A., Penney, L. M., & Weinberger, E. (2013). Servant leaders inspire servant followers: Antecedents and outcomes for employees and the organization. *Leadership Quarterly*, 24(2), 316–331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.12.001>
- Indonesia, PR (2024). Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. *Regulation .Bpk.Go.Id*, 31. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/283617/uu-no-3-tahun-2024>
- Javed, F., Khan, M.R., & Saeed, G. (2015). *University research journal solutions*. 8 (01), 1–16.
- Jiatong, W., Wang, Z., Alam, M., Murad, M., Gul, F., & Gill, S. A. (2022). The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Affective Organizational Commitment and Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13 (April), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.831060>
- Koopmans, L., Buuren, V. H., Van, S., Van Der, A. J. W. De, Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C. M., Hildebrandt, V. H., Van Buuren, S., Van Der Beek, A. J., & De, H. C. (2014). Improving the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire using Rasch analysis. *Journal of Applied Measurement*, 15(2), 160–175. <http://www.jampress.org/abst.htmhttp://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24950534>
- Lee, H. Y., & Hong, A. R. (2017). The Effects of Transformational Leadership and Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment. *The Academic Society of Global Business Administration*, 14(5), 153–182. <https://doi.org/10.38115/asgba.2017.14.5.153>
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Liao, C., & Meuser, J. D. (2014). Servant leadership and serving culture: Influence on individual and unit performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(5), 1434–1452. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.0034>
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Meuser, J. D., Hu, J., Wu, J., & Liao, C. (2015). Servant leadership: Validation of a short form of the SL-28. *Leadership Quarterly*, 26(2), 254–269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2014.12.002>
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2), 161–177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.006>
- Nurdini, A., & Firmansyah, Y. (2022). What is the Impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance at the Mitra Sarana Karya Bandung Savings and Loan Cooperative. *Madani Multidisciplinary Journal*, 2 (1), 477–494. <https://doi.org/10.54259/mudima.v2i1.413>
- Pawar, A. (2017). Quality Work Life and Employee Engagement: Does Servant Leadership Influence Employees Quality Work Life and Employee Engagement: Does Servant Leadership Influence Employee Performance? *Solid State Technology*, 63 (5), 5134–5141. <https://www.academia.edu/>
- Ramadhani, S., & Soenarto, I. (2023). Implementation of Employee Engagement Program to Increase Employee Work Motivation at PT Abc. *Journal of Applied Business Administration*, 5 (2). <https://doi.org/10.7454/jabt.v5i2.1080>
- Schaufeli, W.B., & Bakker, A.B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25 (3), 293–315. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.248>
- Sihombing, S., Astuti, ES, Mussadieq, M., Hamied, D., & Rahardjo, K. (2018). The Effect of Servant

Leadership on Rewards, Organizational Culture, and its Implications on Employee's Performance (Case Study on the Employees of PT. Bank Tabungan Negara (Persero) Tbk. Indonesia). *International Journal of Law and Management-Emerald Insight* , 7 (5), 781–796.

Undaan, K. (2014). Capacity of Village Apparatus in the Implementation of Village Government in Kudus Regency. *Jurnal Bina Praja* , 06 (02), 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.21787/jbp.06.2014.101-116>