

Uncovering the Link Between Servant Leadership and Loyalty: a Prisma-Based Systematic Review

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Abstract

In the context of modern organizations, leadership and employee loyalty are interrelated factors that significantly impact optimal performance. This systematic review examines the relationship between servant leadership (SL) and employee loyalty, highlighting how SL prioritizes employee well-being compared to traditional power-oriented leadership models. The study identifies that effective servant leadership fosters a supportive environment, enhances individual growth, and ultimately contributes to improved organizational performance. Employee loyalty, characterized by commitment and emotional attachment to the organization, plays a crucial role in maintaining stability and efficiency within the company. This review synthesizes existing literature to explore how servant leadership can concretely influence employee loyalty through mechanisms such as empowerment and job satisfaction. The findings suggest that while employee satisfaction serves as a mediator in this relationship, other factors also play significant roles. This research aims to provide deeper insights into how servant leadership can cultivate stronger loyalty in the workplace, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance.

Keywords: Employee Loyalty, Job Satisfaction, Servant Leadership



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INTRODUCTION

In the modern organizational world, leadership and employee loyalty have become two key interrelated factors in achieving optimal performance. One leadership approach that has gained increasing attention is servant leadership (SL). Effective leadership significantly impacts various aspects, including job satisfaction, team performance, and employee loyalty and commitment to the organization (Getnet & Fujie, 2024). Unlike traditional leadership models that tend to be power-oriented (Langhof & Güldenberg, 2020), servant leadership prioritizes the interests of others (Hasanuddin et al., 2021; Dami et al., 2022).

The importance of servant leadership lies in the leader's focus on prioritizing employee interests and well-being (Rahal & Farmanesh, 2022; Saleem et al., 2020). By prioritizing employee well-being, leaders can create a supportive environment, encourage individual growth, and contribute to overall performance improvement (Zada et al., 2023). Leadership has high potential to enhance future employee loyalty (Maksim & Śliwicki, 2025).

Employee loyalty encompasses commitment, responsibility, and emotional attachment to the organization, playing a crucial role in maintaining organizational stability and efficiency. According to Ford et al. (2023), employee loyalty is a form of allegiance built through words and actions, which they consider a fair return for what the organization provides. Employee loyalty is reflected in their commitment to staying with the company, contributing optimally, and supporting the company's goals and values (Todorović et al., 2024). Loyal employees can create a work environment that fosters productivity and shared success (Kayode, 2023).

High employee loyalty enhances company performance and competitiveness in fulfilling social responsibilities (Rudi et al., 2024; Stojanovic et al., 2020). Increased employee loyalty strengthens relationships within teams and with external parties, fostering innovation and sustainable cooperation, ultimately enhancing the company's sustainability and international market image (Bigliardi & Filippelli, 2022).

However, the relationship between servant leadership and employee loyalty is not yet fully understood. Some previous studies suggest that servant leadership can enhance employee loyalty through empowerment and job satisfaction (Ding et al., 2012; Ritaudin, 2017; Mohzana et al., 2023). Therefore, the relationship between these two concepts requires further study to understand how servant leadership can concretely influence loyalty in organizational environments.

In modern organizational dynamics, leadership plays a crucial role in shaping employee loyalty that has a direct impact on productivity, retention, and a healthy work culture. One leadership approach that is receiving increasing attention is servant leadership, which is a leadership style that places service to subordinates as a top priority. In contrast to conventional leadership styles that focus on authority and control, servant leadership emphasizes the value of empathy, care, empowerment, and personal growth of subordinates. Although various studies have shown a positive relationship between servant leadership and employee loyalty, these results are scattered across different contexts, methodological approaches, and time periods, thus not providing a complete and systematic picture. Therefore, a systematic review is needed to compile, analyze, and synthesize previous research findings in a comprehensive manner. Using a systematic review approach, this research will identify and analyze existing evidence regarding the impact of servant leadership on employee loyalty and explore factors that can

strengthen or weaken the relationship. This research is expected to provide deeper insights into how a servant leadership style can foster stronger loyalty in the workplace, thereby contributing to improved overall organizational performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This section discusses the systematic methods used to analyze the impact of servant leadership on employee loyalty and lecturer loyalty in organizations in Indonesia. For the systematic review, researchers used the Preferred Reporting Items and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Haddaway et al., 2022). Through an online platform, articles are connected and together form a roadmap in this SLR. With a systematic approach, this research process involves identifying and evaluating relevant literature, followed by data screening. After the screening stage, data is extracted and synthesized using PRISMA 2020. To expand the research scope, researchers compiled keywords based on literature evaluation, such as servant leadership, loyalty, lecturer loyalty, employee loyalty, organizational loyalty, job satisfaction, organizational climate, to capture the complexity of the main variables. To see the stages of the systematic review can be seen in Figure 1.

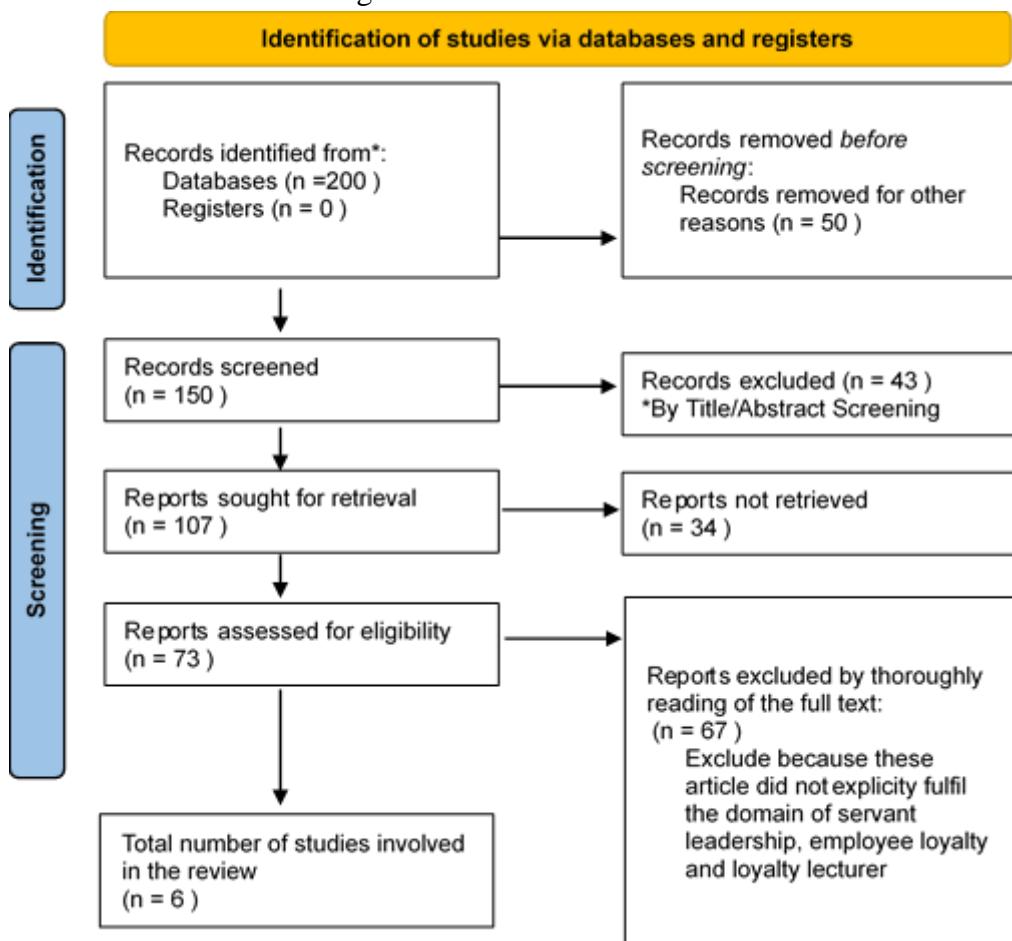


Figure 1. Stages of the systematic review

In this study, researchers conducted data searches by combining keywords individually or in combination in two main databases: ScienceDirect and Google Scholar. From the search results across various databases, 200 articles were found using a publication year filter of 2016-2025. Some articles were eliminated that did not match and did not contain the keywords servant leadership, employee loyalty, and lecturer loyalty during this stage. After reviewing

abstracts and full texts, researchers finally confirmed, verified, and selected 6 most relevant articles for this study. Figure 2 presents the publication distribution based on SINTA ranking from the 6 articles reviewed overall.

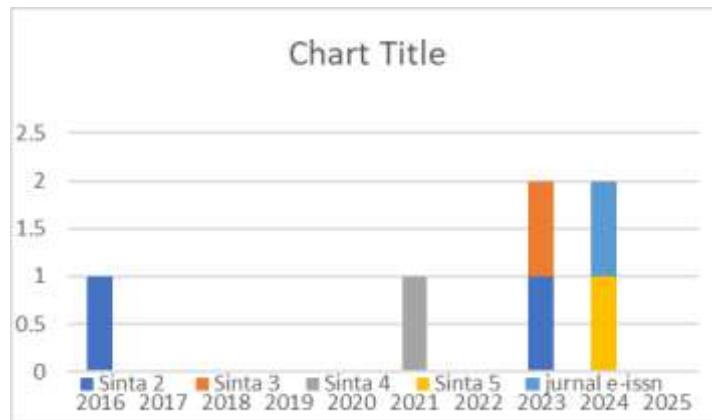


Figure 2. Distribution based on SINTA ranking from the 6 articles reviewed overall

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines how servant leadership affects loyalty, particularly employee loyalty and lecturer loyalty. The study finds that servant leadership positively impacts both employee loyalty and lecturer loyalty. By implementing good servant leadership, employee well-being can be enhanced, and loyalty to the organization can be increased (Handayani et al., 2025). Organizational performance improvement depends on employee loyalty, as employees will better understand and support the organization's vision and goals (Phuong & Vinh, 2020). Findings from previous research also prove that employee loyalty is positively related and influences work success (Brown et al., 2011; Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Darolia et al., 2010; Phuong & Vinh, 2020; Razzaq et al., 2013). By giving trust to employees, a sense of comfort and appreciation in work is created (Mohzana et al., 2023).

On the other hand, employee satisfaction is found to mediate servant leadership and loyalty. Research conducted by Ding et al. (2012) shows that employee satisfaction plays a mediating role, contributing 77% of the total effect of servant leadership on employee loyalty. However, the role of employee satisfaction does not always act as a mediating variable in this relationship. Ritaudin (2017) reveals that employee satisfaction does not mediate between servant leadership style and employee loyalty. This indicates that there are other factors besides employee satisfaction, such as a supportive work environment or high work pressure, that may determine employee loyalty (Astuti et al., 2019; Andinni & Harun, 2024; Apriansyah et al., 2024).

Therefore, to maximize employee loyalty, the role of empowerment must be considered in the relationship between servant leadership and loyalty. By providing empowerment, employees feel acknowledged and responsible within the organization (Fitriyana et al., 2023). As evidence, research conducted by Onsardi et al. (2019) shows that empowerment has a significant positive impact on loyalty. By giving responsibility, authority, and trust to employees, this empowerment not only enhances their performance but also strengthens the loyalty expected by the organization (Mohzana et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Servant leadership has a significant impact on employee loyalty in the workplace. This leadership style focuses on employee interests and well-being, differing from traditional power-oriented models. By creating a supportive work environment, servant leadership encourages individual growth and enhances overall performance. Employee loyalty, which includes commitment, responsibility, and emotional attachment to the organization, is crucial as loyal employees contribute better to company goals and create a productive work atmosphere. In this context, employee satisfaction acts as a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and loyalty, although it does not always serve as a significant link. Empowerment also proves to strengthen this relationship by giving employees responsibility and trust, which enhances their loyalty. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how servant leadership can concretely influence loyalty in organizational environments, including considering other factors that may affect this relationship. Overall, the application of servant leadership has the potential to enhance employee loyalty, which in turn can contribute to overall organizational performance improvement.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Writing - review and editing; Methodology

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Methodology

Author 3: Data curation; Writing - review and editing.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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