

Effect of servant leadership on employee performance with work motivation as an intervening variable

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of servant leadership on work motivation, employee performance, and the mediating role of work motivation. It also assesses the direct impact of work motivation on employee performance. A quantitative causal research design with data from 51 employees at the Medan Syariah Branch of PT Bank SUMUT was used. Questionnaires and interviews were employed for data collection. In order to analyze the data, the PLS (Partial Least Square) method was used to test the four hypotheses proposed. The findings of this study demonstrate that servant leadership (X) positively and significantly influences employee performance (Y), while work motivation (Z) also exerts a significant positive effect on employee performance (Y). Furthermore, servant leadership (X) positively impacts work motivation (Z), which, in turn, mediates the relationship between servant leadership (X) and employee performance (Y) among employees at PT Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly fierce competition in the age of globalization requires each organization to develop skilled human resources in order to achieve the desired targets. Workers are a key element in the progress of an organization (Gustiana, 2022). Employee contributions determine the direction and achievement of company goals. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain and enhance worker execution, both in the context of quantity as well as quality. Performance can be understood as the outcomes of the work, both quality and quantity, attained by workers in performing their responsibilities (Nurhandayani, 2022). The implementation of these tasks is the main reference in performance evaluation. The outcome of this evaluation will lead to a decision whether the employee is performing well or not, so it can be known whether or not the organization's targets are implemented (ine arditia indriya mochtar, 2020).

Performance is the outcome of the quantity as well as quality of work accomplished by workers in accomplishing their tasks in line with the responsibilities assigned to them (Sutrisno et al., 2022). High-quality work outcomes are optimal results that align with the organization's standards and foster the attainment of its goals (Rismawati et al., 2021). Worker performance has an important role for the company because it is the result achieved through the implementation of programs, activities, or policies in an effort to realize company goals in line with the assigned responsibilities and procedures.

The performance of employees is crucial to the company's success, therefore employees are required to be professional, integrity and productive in achieving their work (Mulyadi & Pancasasti, 2021). The level of worker performance is affected by various aspects, including servant leadership and work motivation.

In accordance with (Robbins & Judge, 2015), servant leadership is the type of leadership that emphasizes interests beyond the leader himself, focusing on opportunities to support the development and advancement of his followers. Servant leadership is reflected in an enhanced dedication to serving individuals by adopting a comprehensive method to community, work, various collaborative decision-making processes involving multiple stakeholders.

A service-focused leadership style is one form of leadership that is growing rapidly today and known to be highly relevant to the evolving interactions between managers and employees. Servant leadership style is an emerging approach to leadership that has enthusiasm for the attitude of providing services to others (Ferdinandito & Haryani, 2021). Leaders with this approach tend to emphasize the interests of their followers and treat them as partners in work. This creates a close relationship due to mutually supportive engagement. In organizations, the implementation of servant leadership aims primarily to enhance employee performance.

Servant leadership is an important factor for companies that want to encourage optimal work motivation from their employees. This service-focused leadership style has been shown to enhance worker performance. This is supported by study (Simamora et al., 2019), which shows that full implementation of service-oriented leadership has a positive impact on worker performance. Nevertheless, research (Mukhtarom, 2021) shows different results, where servant leadership has no impact on worker performance. This finding offers an opportunity for further study to confirm these gaps.

Motivation is an internal force that originates from within an individual who appears because he is motivated and driven to perform engage in activities with energy and excitement, sincerity, and happiness, thus producing extraordinary and quality results (Afandi, 2019). Job motivation is a crucial element for employees, because workers who have big motivation are usually more enthusiastic in completing the assigned tasks (Ponco et al., 2021). Motivation is given as a way to improve employee performance to carry out their responsibilities (Setyo Widodo & Yandi, 2022). Motivation focuses on how to direct strength and potential to achieve a predetermined goal (H. Malayu S.P. Hasibuan, 2016). Employee motivation has the potential to enhance enthusiasm and provide more energy to achieve optimal performance (Agustin & Wijayanti, 2022).

High motivation owned by employees needs to be maintained so that their performance remains in accordance with organizational standards. Research by (ine ardita indriya mochtar, 2020) shows that motivation has a substantial implication on worker performance. On the other hand, different results were found in study (Adha et al., 2019), the lack of a significant impact of motivation on worker performance suggests a need for additional research to verify this discrepancy.

Researchers chose Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office as the research object. It's a leading financial organization in North Sumatra that follows sharia principles. The bank has one main branch and five sub-branches.

Based on interviews with multiple branch and sub-branch managers, as well as section heads, it has been determined that employee performance has not yet attained the desired level. This is due to the accumulation of work that occurs every day due to a lack of commitment in completing tasks thoroughly.

Besides conducting interviews with the branch head and a number of sub-branch managers of Bank SUMUT Syariah Medan, researchers also interviewed a number of employees. They stated that the decrease in performance was caused by the many targets given to them, which were not fully achieved. As a result, the work carried out in the following period became less than optimal. This phenomenon reflects employee performance that has not been maximized. The inability to fully realize the target is caused by several aspects, for example, the leadership approach implemented by the branch manager which does not support employee motivation to work optimally.

In addition to phenomena related to employee performance, there are also phenomena related to the application of servant leadership in Bank SUMUT Syariah Medan. Based on the results of a pre-survey of workers, a problem was identified in the implementation of servant leadership in the environment of Bank SUMUT Syariah Medan, namely that the implementation of servant leadership at Bank SUMUT Syariah Branch Office Medan has not been maximized, because there are

employees who feel that leaders do not communicate well with subordinates, so workers feel that they are not cared to or listened for properly. Therefore, it is important to examine whether this suboptimal application of servant leadership contributes to less than optimal employee performance.

Regarding the issue of employee performance not improving properly, a pre-survey of employees of Bank SUMUT Syariah Medan about worker work motivation was conducted. Based on the results of the pre-survey of employees, the problem of low work motivation of employees of Bank SUMUT Syariah Branch Office Medan was identified, so further research needs to be done to find out whether this low work motivation is the cause of not optimal worker performance. Based on the context previously described, the researcher is keen on carrying out a study titled "**The Effect of Work Environment and Servant leadership on Employee Performance Through Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable**".

2. METHOD

This study employs an approach that is quantitative in nature utilizing a survey technique, namely through a questionnaire, where data is taken from a sample that represents the population, both large and small in scope. This research was carried out at Bank Sumut Syariah Medan. This study involved a total of 51 respondents, all of whom were workers of PT Bank SUMUT Syariah Branch Office Medan. The process of gathering data method was fully conducted by means of interviews as well as questionnaire distribution. Data analysis approach applied in this study is Partial Least Square, is used for testing the four hypotheses that have been formulated. In the Partial Least Square approach, the methods of analysis applied are as follows:

2.1 Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model) (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model is conducted to verify that the instruments used in the measurement satisfy the validity and reliability standards. In this analysis, The connection between their indicators and latent variables is clearly defined. Assessment of the measurement model includes several kinds of tests, namely: (1) Discriminant validity, (2) Validity test, (3) Construct validity and Reliability (Juliandi, 2018).

2.2 Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

The analysis of the structural model, also known as substantive theory, inner relation, or structural model, is employed to describe the connection among latent variables according to substantive theory. In this analysis, Two types of tests are conducted, namely (1) F-square; (2) R-square; and (3) hypothesis testing which includes (a) indirect effect, (b) total effect, and (c) direct effect (Juliandi, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Effect of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance

Tabel 1. Path Coefficients

Konstruk	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Servant Leadership -> Employee Performance	0,246	0,255	0,111	2,218	0,027

Source: Processed Data Results from SmartPLS 3 (2023)

The findings from the path analysis demonstrate that servant leadership significantly influences employee performance. The t-count of 2.218 exceeds the critical t-value of 2.011 and the significance level of 0.027, indicating a substantial and positive impact. This suggests that servant leadership effectively enhances employee performance at the Medan Syariah Branch of Bank SUMUT. Gains from this study align with the study run by (Muhtasom et al., 2017) it was inferred that the implementation of servant leadership positively and significantly affects worker performance. As the data obtained by distributing questionnaires, it is possible inferred that the realization of servant leadership in the organization has been operating well. This can be observed from most respondents who stated that the leadership succeeded in creating a comfortable working atmosphere, was able to communicate tasks and identify problems clearly and measurably to employees, had a long-term vision, always listened to criticisms, opinions, and recommendations from workers, and gave trust to workers to carry out the responsibilities given.

3.2 Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Tabel 2. Path Coefficients

Konstruk	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0,427	0,419	0,155	2,751	0,006

Source: Processed Data Results from SmartPLS 3 (2023)

The acquisition of path analysis testing shows that the work motivation variable has an impact on worker performance, with a tcount value of 2.751 > ttable 2.011 and value of Sig. 0.006 < 0.05. This signifies that work motivation has a significant influence and positive on worker performance at Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office. Gains from this study align with the study run by (Sukiyah et al., 2021), (Sembiring et al., 2021) dan (Jufrizen, 2021) which inferred that work motivation has a significant impact and positive on worker performance.

As the data obtained through the allocation of questionnaires, it is possible inferred that worker work motivation is at a fairly high level. Work motivation encourages workers to have greater loyalty and commitment againts the company, even making them enjoy the work they do more. This certainly contributes to improving employee performance, consequently also has a positive outcome on company performance. Work motivation is a process that directs and encourages workers to utilize their potential as well as abilities in achieving predetermined goals.

3.3 Effect of Servant Leadership on Work Motivation

Tabel 3. Path Coefficients

Konstruk	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Servant Leadership -> Work Motivation	0,608	0,604	0,077	7,888	0,000

Source: Processed Data Results from SmartPLS 3 (2023)

The results of the path analysis test reveal that the servant leadership variable impacts work motivation, as evidenced by a tcount of 7.888, > ttable 2.011, and a Sig. 0.000, < 0.05. These findings corroborate the notion that servant leadership exerts a substantial and positive impact on work motivation within the Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office. The findings of this study are relevant to the study run by (Asvriana et al., 2023) which demonstrated a substantial and positive impact of servant leadership on work motivation.

As the data collected through the spread of questionnaires, it is possible inferred that the implementation of servant leadership in the organization is operating well. A proper and effective leadership system to encourage employee motivation. This will encourage employees to provide better performance and behave proactively in making positive contributions to the organization voluntarily.

3.4 Effect of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance Through Work Motivation

Tabel 4. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Servant Leadership -> Work Motivastion -> Employee Performance	0,260	0,255	0,103	2,537	0,011

Source: Processed Data Results from SmartPLS 3 (2023)

Previously, it was explained that service-oriented leadership has a significant impact and positive impact on worker performance. This finding is relevant to the acquisition of statistical analysis which indicates that leadership has a significant impact and positive impact on worker performance through increased work motivation, with a tcount value of 2.537 > ttable of 2.011 and a Sig. 0.011 < 0.05. Therefore, it is possible inferred that service-oriented leadership contributes positively and significantly to worker performance through employee motivation at Bank SUMUT Branch Office. Therefore, it can be inferred that service-oriented leadership contributes significantly and positively to worker performance through work motivation at Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office.

Servant leadership has the skills to encourage employees to achieve optimal performance. The enhanced the motivation of employees, the bigger the quality of performance that can be obtained. Therefore, leaders who adopt a servant leadership style are able to provide a positive motivational

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drive for workers, which eventually leads to an improvement in their performance. A similar opinion was also expressed by (Hariyono & Andreani, 2020) who revealed that servant leadership provides a significant impact and positive impact on worker performance, with work motivation as a connecting variable.

4. CONCLUSION

As the findings show, it can be inferred that Servant Leadership presents a significant impact and positive impact on employee performance at Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office. This is observed from the tcount value of 2.218 > ttable of 2.011 and the Sig. value of 0.027 < 0.05. In addition, it has also been validated that work motivation to have a substantial outcome and positive implication on worker performance, with a tcount of 2.751 > t table 2.011 as well as a Sig. value of 0.006 < 0.05. Servant Leadership is proven to positively and significantly impact employee work motivation, with a tcount of 7.888 > ttable 2.011 and a Sig. of 0.000 < 0.05. On the other hand, Servant Leadership also has a significant impact and positive impact on worker performance through work motivation, as evidenced by tcount 2.537 > ttable 2.011 and a Sig. value of 0.011 < 0.05. This indirect impact is higher than the direct impact of servant leadership on employee performance which is 0.246. The following recommendations are provided by the researcher based on the explanations presented in this study: Bank SUMUT Medan Syariah Branch Office needs to maintain and improve employee performance through motivation, both from within the employees themselves and from the company, one of which is by implementing an appropriate leadership style such as servant leadership. It is recommended that future research include more independent factors related to employee performance and extend the research period

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