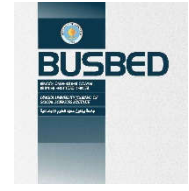


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## THE ROLE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND JOB SATISFACTION: EVIDENCE FROM HEALTHCARE ORGANISATIONS IN TURKEY

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### ABSTRACT

Servant leadership is one of the efficient leadership models that is linked to an array of positive work outcomes. Yet, potential impact of this model on work motivation and job satisfaction is overlooked within the literature. Thus, this study aimed to evaluate the mediator role of employee motivation in the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction with 127 clinical and non-clinical healthcare employees in Turkish organisations. The results of bivariate correlations demonstrated that servant leadership was positively related to employee motivation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, results of mediation analysis revealed that work motivation mediated the relationship between servant leadership and the employee job satisfaction. Findings were discussed.

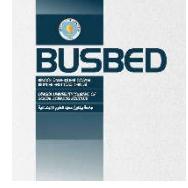
**Keywords:** Servant leadership, work motivation, job satisfaction, mediation, healthcare workers


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## HİZMETKAR LİDERLİĞİN ÇALIŞAN MOTİVASYONU VE İŞ TATMİNİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ROLÜ: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SAĞLIK KURUMLARINDAN ELDE EDİLEN VERİLER

Ufuk BARMANPEK<sup>1</sup>


### ÖZ

Hizmetkâr liderlik, bir dizi olumlu iş sonucuyla bağlantılı etkili liderlik modellerinden biridir. Yine de bu modelin iş motivasyonu ve iş tatmini üzerindeki potansiyel etkisi literatürde göz ardı edilmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma Türk kuruluşlarında 127 klinik ve klinik dışı sağlık çalışanı ile hizmetkâr liderlik ile iş doyumu arasındaki ilişkide çalışan motivasyonunun aracı rolünü değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. İki değişkenli korelasyonların sonuçları, hizmetkâr liderliğin çalışan motivasyonu ve iş tatmini ile pozitif yönde ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca arabuluculuk analizi sonuçları, iş motivasyonunun hizmetkâr liderliği ile çalışanın iş tatmini arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular tartışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hizmetkar Liderlik, Çalışan Motivasyonu, İş Tatmini, Aracılık, Sağlık Çalışanları

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## 1. Introduction

Leadership is one of the important concepts in psychology literature that impacts an array of organizational outcomes. As it is a vital concept, 21st century witnessed the proposition of different leadership approaches along the traditional models such as autocratic and charismatic leadership. One of these recent approaches was proposed as *servant leadership* by Greenleaf (1970) and suggested to support employees with personal and professional improvements (Yukl, 2010; Page & Wong, 2000). Servant leadership conveys understanding the need of employees and serving them to contribute their achievements via the fulfillment of their needs. Moreover, this approach primes the diversity among the employees which in turn results in individual and organizational success (Vinod & Sudhakar, 2011).

As noted, servant leadership is one of the effective approaches for supporting, motivating, and encouraging employees through leading and serving them. Thus, servant leadership facilitates effective individual and team based accomplishments by improvement of the employee satisfaction (Smith & Lindsay, 2007). In this regard, Taylor and colleagues (2007) argued that servant leadership contributes to organizations in three main manners. First of all, employees working with employers with servant leadership skills may become prospective efficient leaders in the future organisations. Second, servant leadership provides a motivating atmosphere to be more productive for the employees due to the reduced bureaucratic controls. Finally, servant leadership enhances to an organisations' culture via priming diversity and success of employees rather than focus on the satisfaction of leaders.

As theoretical research suggested, servant leadership is crucial in terms of contributing to the various types of positive work outcomes. In support, empirical studies also documented that servant leadership is positively associated with affective commitment and work engagement (Aboramadan et al., 2020), service quality (Qiu et al., 2020), employee flourishing (Giolito et al., 2020), employee creativity (Yang et al., 2019) and thriving at work (Wang et al., 2019) while negatively associated with turnover intentions (Huning et al., 2020), hindrance stress and emotional exhaustion (Wu et al., 2020), employee deviance (Paesen et al., 2019) and employees' antisocial behaviours in work environment (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018).

### 1.1 Work Motivation

Work motivation can be described as the competency to facilitate changing the behavior of individuals to reach the main aim of the organisations (Robbins, 2001). In many cases, work motivation is rooted in the personal views, and beliefs (Latham & Pinder, 2005; Latham, 2012). Essentially, employees differ in sense of ideas, views, and social communication ways, which are known as triggers of the work motivation. Due to the facts, employees are motivated differently in terms of level of motivation and motivational tendencies. Additionally, motivation can be explained as an action that encourages employees in order to have continuous improvements. (Battistelli et al., 2013). Similarly, according to Zheng et al., motivation is experienced when the individuals' needs are fulfilled within the environment and facilitates the organizations to reach their targeted goals (2011). Thus, work motivation occurs within the environment in which employees' needs are fulfilled. In this regard, work motivation appears to be related to leadership styles within the work environment, specifically servant leadership. According to Yukl (2002), servant leadership motivates employees and leaders positively as it empowers them in terms of developing their capabilities, supporting employees' self-control mechanism, focusing on the feelings and spirituality. For instance, Sendjaya and colleagues (2008) suggested that spirituality is one of the aspects of servant leadership that is related to emotions within the workplace and provide employees an environment to be internally motivated. As such, experimental studies also demonstrated that employees' general intrinsic motivation is affected by servant leadership as it focuses on feelings of the workers, which in turn enhances workers' motivation (Avolio et al., 2009).

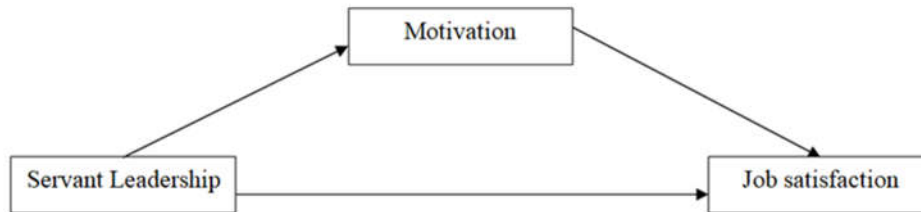
### 1.2 Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p.1304). As the concept is related to positive evaluation of one's job, job satisfaction is linked with important work outcomes including career commitment (Kim et al., 2020), quality of work life and less job stress (Aruldoss et al., 2020), turnover intentions (Lin & Huang, 2021) and the relevant leadership such as transformational leadership (An et al., 2020). One type of leadership suggested to be linked with job satisfaction is surely servant leadership. For instance, Mayer et al. (2008) suggested that servant leadership creates an environment that promotes job satisfaction if each employee is to be treated fairly. Likewise, in sport psychology, several scholars argued that servant leadership contributes to job satisfaction of the athletes in the case of a clear job role (Berbetos et al., 2007). Empirical studies also supported the positive relationship between both of the concepts. For instance, in one of the studies conducted with full-time and part time workers (Thompson, 2003), greater levels of servant leadership was associated with increased levels of job satisfaction in work environment. Taken together, a greater level of servant leadership within the work environment is related to greater levels of job satisfaction for the employees.

### 1.3 Present Study

The main aim of this study was to examine the link between servant leadership and job satisfaction among Turkish employees as mediated by employees' levels of work motivation. It was hypothesised that (a) servant leadership would be positively related to job satisfaction and work motivation and that (b) motivation would mediate the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. As no studies per see explored such potential relationship between the concepts, exploring this, while a niche area in the field, is certainly worth studying.

**Figure 1: Proposed research model**



## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected from 127 participants (47.2 females and 52.8 males; age,  $M=30.61\pm 7.19$  18, from different health care organisations from Turkey. In addition to this, eighty-nine (70.1%) of respondents are clinical staff while thirty-eight of (29.9) them non-clinical staff. Questionnaires were administered online via the Survey Monkey website. Study procedure was approved by Aston University Ethics Board. Data were collected through an online survey webpage, and the consent form to participate in the study was obtained via the first page of the online survey. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, rights to withdraw during or after the involvement, anonymity, confidentiality, storage, and the disposal of the personal information.

### 2.2 Measures

**2.2.1 Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ):** Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) is a 28-item scale that was developed by Liden et al. (2008) on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Turkish form of the scale is yet to be validated so items were translated for the current study. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.90 in present study.

**2.2.2 Work Motivation Scale (WMS):** Work Motivation Scale is a 15-item scale that was developed to assess the levels of employee motivation by Deci and Ryan (2000) on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The scale was not validated for Turkish culture so items were translated to be used in the current study. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.84 in present study.

**2.2.3 Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS):** Job Satisfaction Scale was developed to examine the overall job satisfaction of the workers based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) (Brayfield-Rothe, 1951). Items of the scale were translated into Turkish for the current study and the internal consistency reliability alpha of the scale was 0.74.

### 2.3 Explanation of Data Analysis Techniques

In terms of the analyses, skewness and kurtosis values were employed to determine normal distribution. Pearson correlation was used to evaluate the correlations between main study variables, namely, servant leadership, work motivation and job satisfaction. The PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to conduct the mediation analysis (model 4; Hayes, 2013). As several studies pointed out that job satisfaction is affected by various demographic variables including gender, age, thus, such variables were controlled in the mediation model.

## 3. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics including minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation scores, and skewness, and kurtosis statistics were presented in Table 1. In particular, the findings showed that no violations for the normal hypotheses were observed (e.g., skewness from  $-0.19$  to  $-0.81$ , kurtosis from  $-0.98$  to  $0.96$ ) (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995).

**Table 1.**  
*Descriptive statistics for study variables*

	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
Servant Leadership	51	169	108.8	29.4	-0.19	0.22	-0.74	0.43
Motivation	29	74	57.63	8.62	-0.81	0.22	0.96	0.43
Satisfaction	5	25	17.43	4.02	-0.69	0.22	0.38	0.43
Performance	9	25	18.94	4.96	-0.48	0.22	-0.98	0.43

Pearson Product-Moment correlation analyses were also computed between the variables and results demonstrated that servant leadership was positively correlated with work motivation, and job satisfaction, coefficients ranging between  $r = .20$  and  $r = .33$ .

**Table 2.**  
*Bivariate Correlations between Main Study Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1					
2. Age	-.24**	1				
3. Type of Job	-.31**	.27**	1			
4. Servant Leadership	.04	.00	.10	1		
5. Motivation	-.06	.00	-.09	.20*	1	
6. Satisfaction	-.15	-.02	.03	.33**	.35**	1

Following correlation analyses, preliminary analyses were conducted for the suitability of data for the analyses of regression. According to Kunter et al. (2004), before conducting regression analysis, inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance factors should be tested. The findings confirmed that the VIFs were found less than 5 and the tolerance factors were greater than .2. Therefore, multicollinearity was not a concern for the regression analysis. To investigate the mediation effect of motivation on the relationship between servant leadership and the outcomes of satisfaction and performance, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed.

For the mediation analyses, the mediator role of work motivation in the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction was examined. In Model 1, motivation was entered as dependent variable, servant leadership was entered as an independent variable and descriptive variables were entered as control variables in each regression model. In Model 2 and 3, job satisfaction was entered as dependent variable and servant leadership as independent variable while work motivation was entered as well in Model 3 in order to evaluate its mediator role. Table 3 indicated the findings of mediation analyses. Furthermore, the results of mediation analysis demonstrated that the total effect of servant leadership on job satisfaction was 0.05,  $SE = 0.01$ , ( $p < .001$ ), CI [0.02, 0.06]. Likewise, the direct effect of servant leadership on job satisfaction was still significant, 0.03,  $SE = 0.01$ , CI [0.01, 0.06]. Additionally, there was a significant indirect effect of servant leadership on job satisfaction through work motivation,  $effect = 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , CI [0.01, 0.02].

**Table 3.**  
*Direct Effects of Servant Leadership on Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction*

Model	DV	IV	B	SE	t	95 % CI	
						LL	UL
1	Motivation	Gender	-2.21	1.61	-1.37	-5.40	.97
		Age	-0.33	0.24	-1.38	-.82	.14
		ToJ	-3.01	1.77	-1.69	-.6.52	.49
		SL	.41	0.25	1.62	-0.9	0.91
		Servant L	.06	.02	2.39**	.01	.11
2	Satisfaction	Gender	-1.72	0.71	-2.42*	-3.13	-0.31
		Age	-0.24	0.10	-2.22*	-.45	-.02
		ToJ	-0.54	0.78	-0.69	-.2.09	1.01
		SL	.24	.11	2.14*	.01	.46
		Servant L	.04	.01	4.05***	.02	.06
3	Satisfaction	Gender	-1.45	.69	-2.09	-2.82	-0.08

Age	-0.19	0.11	-1.88	-.40	.01
ToJ	-0.17	0.76	-0.22	-.1.68	1.34
SL	0.18	0.10	1.73	-0.02	0.41
Servant L	0.03	0.01	3.42**	0.02	0.06
Motivation	0.12	0.04	3.19	0.04	0.20

Note. DV= Dependent variable IV= Independent variable SE=Standard Error CI=Confidence Intervals LL=Lower Limit UL=Upper Limit.  $p^* < .05$ ,  $p^{**} < .01$ ,  $p^{***} < .001$

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Current study hypothesized that (a) servant leadership would be positively related to job satisfaction and work motivation and that (b) work motivation would mediate the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

Findings of the current study demonstrated that a greater level of servant leadership within the work environment is associated with greater levels of employee motivation and job satisfaction and such findings are compatible with the literature. Although no empirical study investigated such relationship, Yukl (2002) argued that servant leadership enhances motivation of the employees through empowering individuals in terms of their capabilities. Additionally, servant leaders contribute to their workers by giving them the opportunity to represent their personal abilities, allow them to improve themselves, and in turn, motivate their employees. Contrary to work motivation, literature documents an array of empirical studies supporting the positive relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. For instance, Mayer et al. (2008) found similar results to the present study and they argued that servant leadership is remarkably related to the overall job satisfaction of employees through creating a fair environment for each employee (2008). In a similar study conducted with Filipino researches, servant leadership was found positively related to employee satisfaction (West et al., 2009). In support, studies with healthcare workers also points out the strong association between the constructs. According to Jenkins and Steward's study (2011), there is a significant relationship between servant leadership and individual job satisfaction when managers of nurses are oriented effectively in the organisations. As the empirical and theoretical work highlights, implementation of servant leadership leads to increased job satisfaction in the long run when the leaders and managers have adequate information about servant leadership. Thompson also found similar results with the present study that there was a significant relationship, when the organisation is servant leader-led for full-time workers. In terms of hourly paid employees, similar results were found. (2003). On the other hand, there was no significance between servant leadership and job satisfaction of employees because when the research was implemented in different organisations, in which whether they are servant-led, and no differences were found regarding to job satisfaction score. However, only significance was found, when the job is so complex and it results in higher satisfaction, and performance (Judge et al., 2001). Taken together, findings of the current study and previous study indicated that an increased level of servant leadership in the work environment is associated with enhances levels of work motivation and employee satisfaction of the job.

Additionally, work motivation mediated the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. This finding speaks that servant leadership directly contributes to increased levels of job satisfaction. Addition to this path, servant leadership impacts in greater levels of work motivation, which in turn, contributes to greater levels of job satisfaction. No study exists to support the findings of the current study. However, theoretical support implies that servant leadership improves job effectivity of employees, creates a beneficial environment for both employees and organisations, which may impact the employee motivation and in turn, employee satisfaction. Thus, the present study can be applied and taken the initiative empirical study in the future.

##### 4.1 Limitations and Implications

Even though this study provided comprehensive results, some limitations exist for a number of reasons. First of all, cross-sectional nature of the study might restrict the generalizability of the results. Further studies should aim experimental and longitudinal designs in order to inference causality of the constructs. Second, the study could recruit the limited number of participants and only drew partakes from healthcare organizations. Although the sample size was adequate in terms of conducting the mediation analyses, future studies might reach a larger sample from diverse organizations in order to improve the generalizability of the results.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the findings of the study are notable and offer some implications. For instance, leaders should be trained in terms of servant leadership in order to bring an efficient perspective to work environments as servant leadership style has a strong impact on employees' satisfaction, and motivation and it might also lead to favourable outcomes for both organisations and employees. Based on these recommendations, servant leadership perspective can help employees through meeting their needs and minimise the lack of motivation, and satisfaction of the employees.

## 4.2 Conclusion

In the present study, the extent of various effects of servant leadership on basic employee motivation and employee satisfaction was investigated. First of all, in Turkish health care organisations, the findings showed that increased levels of servant leadership is associated with enhanced levels of employee motivation and job satisfaction. Second, work motivation mediated the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

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