

IMPACT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEES AND FIRM'S PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF AFFECTIVE AND COGNITIVE TRUST

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Servant leadership style is considered one of the vital element in enhancing employees' and organizational performance. Thereby, the main emphasis of the current study was to empirically analyse the impact of servant leadership on employees' and firm's performance. Moreover, it has also positioned the mediating role of trust namely; cognitive and affective trust, and explore how it influences on the employees' and firm's performance.

Method: For empirical analysis primary quantitative research method comprises of 210 sample size. Information has been collected by using a closed-ended questionnaire from managers and employees in the firms. More so, for statistical analysis, SPSS software has been used comprised of descriptive, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis.

Findings: The results from regression models revealed that servant leadership style has a significant and direct influence on the performance of employees, whereas insignificantly influence on the performance of firm. In addition to this, mediation analysis shows that affective and cognitive trust has a significant and positive influence on the firms' performance and an insignificant influence on the employees' performance.

Keywords: *Servant leadership, employees' performance, affective trust, cognitive trust, trust, firm's performance*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is critical to organisational success, and the importance of leadership cannot be overstated. Several benefits are provided to the company by the good practises of leadership. The servant leadership transforms the ruler from a servant to a follower. Carter & Baghurst (2014) and Liu (2019) argued that researchers are attracted by the SL style in the management field and the outcomes of leadership on the organisation and on the followers. According to Senge (2017), servant leaders are those who want to work and provide their services, and these servants also want to serve first. Suddaby, Ganzin & Minkus (2017) argued about servant leadership that it is not all about the personal qualities of the person, but the perception and interpretation of the leader that the needs and demands of the worker and followers to work with a positive attitude and behaviour. According to Parris & Peachey (2013), servant leadership is ineffective in public organisations when compared to other leadership styles.

Servant leaders generally provide the motivation and followers take inspiration from the leader (Bande et al., 2016). SL create a better work place environment by building a trusty relationship between the leader and employees. Employees should be valued and respected by their leaders for their contributions and efforts in the organisation (Schwarz et al., 2016). tend to improve their performance when they feel valued and respected by the leaders. Brown & Bryant (2015) found that there is a significant role of servant leadership in enhancing the employee's performance.

Research shows that the behaviour of the servant leader affects the performance of the company. A study argued that the supportive leadership style can also improve the performance of an organisation and an employee's performance as well (Chughtai, 2016). A study found that SL has a significant affect on the motivation of the employee and the performance of the organisation (Ding et al., 2012).

Zhu et al. (2013) argued that the study on the mediating role of affective and cognitive trust on an organisation's performance and transformational leadership has been conducted. The research on affective and cognitive trust as a mediator in the relationship of SL, employee and organisational performance is insignificant. The study was conducted to cover the gaps in the research and

identify the role of mediating variables on the affect of SL on the organisation and employee performance.

The purpose of the study is to determine the role of SL in organisational and performance of worker. The research also identified the affect of SL style on company and worker performance and affective and cognitive trust as the mediating factors affecting firm and employee job performance.

Following are the aims and objective of the study:

- To inspect the role of Servant leadership on employees and firm Performance
- To determine the impact of SL on employees and firm's performance.
- To empirically analyse the mediating role of affective and cognitive trust on employees and firm's performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant leadership referred to as style of leadership and principle where a a person engages with people in a managerial or co-worker capacity In order to acquire leadership instead of dominance (Chon & Zoltan, 2019). Servant leadership (SL) focuses on a leader's integrity and commitment to enhancing every employee's positions. The most important characteristic of servant leadership, as emphasised by the scholars, has been that it prioritises the interests of employees over their personal interest. Kindness, creativity, morals, and sincerity seem to be a few of the many positive traits that characterise SL. In servant leadership, leaders are supposed to put others before themselves and have a leadership perspective (Saleem & Adeel, 2020).

Employee performance (EP) could be analysed at the organisational, workgroup, and personal levels. As per the analysis performed by Chiniara & Bentein (2016) their outcomes revealed that SL provides independence and flexibility to employees that contributes in the improved amounts of productivity of their employees. SL are committed that they have an obligation to practice stewardship. In workplace situations, SL approach each employee with dignity and sincerity and trust on them. The employees are provided the chance to perform useful tasks. As per the analysis performed by Jaramillo (2015) found that the employee performance of salespeople and SL were

significantly and favourably correlated. Productivity may be related to leadership whenever the leader's main priority is to assist the members (Sihombing & Rahardjo 2018). Since the actions of the leader have an influence on the achievement of the followers, SL have significant levels of commitment and dedication, which might also help to increase employee's productivity (Harwiki, 2016). Hence, following hypothesis has been developed based on the above literature review analysis.

H1= SL has a significant impact on Employees' Performance.

The foundation of SL is the belief that managers should put services to the collective interest first. SL is crucial for a firm's productivity since that kind of leadership puts the needs of the firm ahead. Since it promotes a supportive culture at which employees feel recognised and valued (Chon & Zoltan, 2019). It can encourage companies in creating healthier work environments that promote high levels of employee commitment and satisfaction. SL may boost organisational productivity (Huang & Wan, 2016). Moreover, Karatepe & Kim (2019) revealed that SL boosts members' commitment, confidence, and performance, all of which assist in improving firm productivity. Investigations have revealed that the commitment and faith of employees as well as the productivity of the firm were all influenced by SL actions. According to the investigation performed by Chughtai (2016), shows that a SL style boosts firm productivity as well as the loyalty and commitment of workforce. The following hypothesis has been created depending on the above literature review analysis.

H2= SL has a significant impact on Firm's Performance.

As per the investigation conducted by Saleem & Adeel (2020) shows that both affective and cognitive trust have an impact on how employees perceive their manager's behaviours. SL encourage the empowerment and progress of their subordinates, through demonstrating sincerity, stewardship, credibility, and guidance. (Ling, 2017). Furthermore, SL focuses on wellbeing of others and develops a feeling of togetherness, through minimising adverse individual disputes (Van den Heuvel & van Assen, 2015). Affective trust is brought on by a higher psychological reaction, including greater emotional relationships and senses of responsibility (Miao et al., 2014). These associations reach far above economic trade and in return the employees attempt to respond

by presenting favourable workplace behaviours, which in turns leads to favourable employee productivity. Chan & Mak (2014) found a significant mediating influence among affective trust and group productivity. Zhu (2013) discovered that affective trust effectively mediated the association among leadership and subordinate performance on the job while examining transformative leadership. Hence, the following hypothesis has been developed based on the above literature review analysis.

H3= AT mediate the significant positive relationship between Employees' Performance and SL.

The purpose of SL is to improve the employees' attitudes, feeling of belonging, and firm productivity (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Through acting with sincerity, modesty, honesty, and dependability, SL enable their employees feel safe and secured, which improves the productivity of the firm. In addition to establishing the framework for affective trust, this setting also encourages cognitive trust in employees. A leader's meaningful acts might promote effective teamwork and a high level of worker relationships, and leader credibility can contribute in creating a cultural workplace where employees feel comfortable and enhance firm productivity (Saleem & Adeel, 2020). When SL are successful in creating strong connections with their employees by developing cognitive and affective trust, it contributes increased firm productivity (Zargar & Farmanesh, 2019). Furthermore, in the particular scenario of affective trust, the investigation performed by Huang & Wan (2016) employing 210 dyadic datasets revealed that extra-role characteristics including work engagement are associated to affective trust in the leader and increase firm performance. Zhu et al. (2013) reported a favourable mediated influence among leadership and affective organisational commitments, while researching the mediated influence of affective trust on company productivity. Following hypothesis has been developed based on the empirical findings of previous researches.

H4= AT mediate the significant positive relationship between Firm's Performance and SL.

Cognitive trust is capable of affecting employee productivity because it is more important in procedures that are task-related (Saleem & Adeel, 2020). The realistic assessment of the leaders' qualities, including such competency, expertise, and dependability, by the employees is the foundation of cognitive trust, which is constructive in type. A firm's stewardship, a SL serves in a similar capacity (Kim & Shin, 2019). SL also serve as a motivator for them to progress and improve, in order to better assist subordinates in their improvement (Hussain & Mir, 2017).

Cognitive trust is significantly correlated with in-role actions of workers because it allows workers to concentrate their abilities on "work goals achievement" (Saleem & Adeel, 2020) whenever the leader demonstrates competency, honesty, expertise, and dependability. As the investigation performed by found the beneficial effects of cognitive trust on employees working performance. furthermore, research performed by Zhu and Akhtar (2014), who revealed that cognitive trust acted as a favourable mediator between a leader's leadership style specifically, transformative leadership the work productivity of employees. However, Saleem & Adeel (2020) indicated that cognitive trust had an unfavourable mediating effect on the association among transformative leaders and employees' employee productivity. Moreover, Zhu et al. (2013) also discovered a beneficial mediating effects through cognitive trust among teamwork productivity and transformative leadership, it did not take place in SL. Hence, the following hypothesis has been developed.

H5= CT mediate the significant positive relationship between Employees' Performance and SL.

A comfortable cultural atmosphere and a sense of togetherness at workplace are apparently encouraged by cognitive trust, which represents the employees' faith in the leadership's skills, their capacity to be a leader, assist their work attempts, and assess their working experiences favourably. According to several previous research, cognitive trust boosted employees' desire to work and increase firm performance (Saleem & Adeel, 2020). According to Zhu et al. (2013), the influence of cognitive trust as a mediator among transformative leaders and subordinates were irrelevant. However Huang & Wan (2016) revealed in their analysis that after consideration of the impact of transformative leadership on the performance of employees, SL must not be anticipated

to have significant impact by cognitive trust. Depending on the above literature analysis the following hypothesis has been developed.

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H6: CT mediate the significant positive relationship between Firm’s Performance and SL.

Conceptual Framework

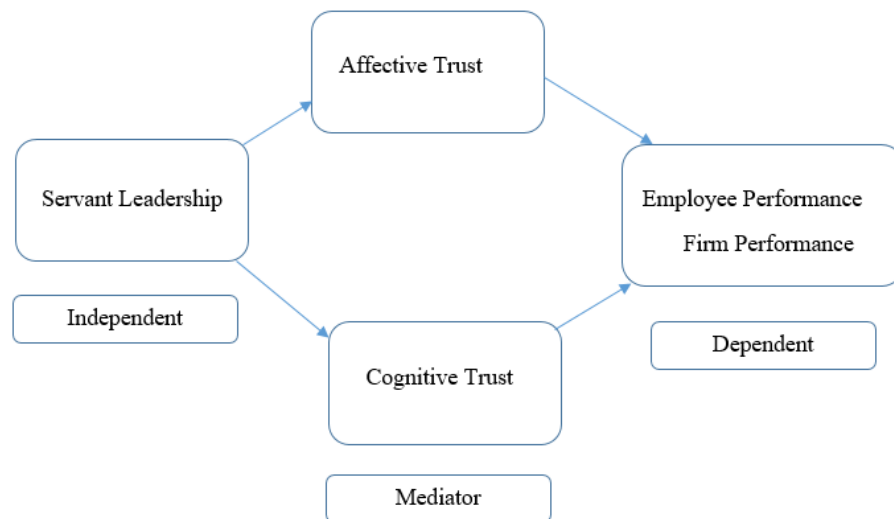


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2021)

METHODOLOGY

The concept "research philosophy" denotes to the basic presumptions that any investigator might adopt to direct their complete study effort (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The positivism philosophy has been adopted by the analyst in the present investigation. Furthermore, positivist philosophy assists the researcher differentiate among observed and subjectivity information contained in publications and only those elements which could be validated by quantitative evidence had been used to develop the literature analysis part. Moreover, the positivist paradigm assisted the investigator overcome personal bias from the data obtained, by focusing objective data which was repeatedly reviewed for reliability and validity.

In the current analysis, the researcher employed a quantitative research design and focused on quantifiable data to uncover the findings (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The quantitative method first used the literatures, in order to set the foundation for the information. This information then

was implemented to construct the study's survey questionnaire. Furthermore, quantitative design also enabled the researcher for adoption of analysis tools from arithmetic and statistical data, which were essential in maintaining the optimum level of authenticity of the data and outcomes. Quantitative approach may reduce societal and psychological personal bias. Research approach classified as the methods employed to undertake an investigation (Azungah, 2018). The investigator selected a deductive approach since the current evaluation has been dependent on a quantitative study design. Hypotheses were created through using a deductive technique, in light of past research as well as the aims and objectives of this analysis.

Since the main purpose of this research is to empirically analyse the effects of servant leadership on employees and the firm's performance, and how it influenced by the mediating role of dimensional trust (affective and cognitive trust). However, for the purpose of this primary quantitative research method has been chosen for data collection. Information has been gathered from 210 participants, comprising employees and HR managers in different firms through using a closed-ended questionnaire. The justification for using this research method, as it helps the researcher in collecting accurate and up-to-date information. More so, regarding data collection convenience sampling was opted for simplicity. Further, for statistical analysis, descriptive analysis was used to evaluate the features of the variables. In addition, correlation and regression were also used to analyse the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Lastly, mediation analysis was utilised to analyse the mediating influence of cognitive and affective trust on the relationship between strategic leadership and employees/firm's performance.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Servant Leadership	210	.0000	4.000	1.3095	.943
Affective Trust	210	.0000	4.000	1.616	.993
Cognitive Trust	210	.000	4.000	1.590	1.0394

Employees' Performance	210	.0000	4.000	1.469	.994
Firm's Performance	210	.000	4.000	1.224	.7977
Valid N (listwise)	210				

Descriptive statistics is considered as one of the most essential tool for statistical analysis that indicate about the mean, observation, standard deviations, and minimum or maximum values of the variables based on the 5 point Likert scale. From the above table, it is noteworthy that mean value of SL is found to be 1.309, and its standard value is .943. It implies that average number of respondents agree, and it is expected to remain towards agree. On contrary, mean value of affective and cognitive trust are identifies as 1.616 and 1.590, respectively, and its standard values are .993 and 1.039, which suggested that average respondents are inclined toward neutral and expected to deviate toward agree. In addition, employees' and firm's performance are inclined toward agree, as mean values us 1.469 and 1.224 respectively, and it is expected to remain towards agree.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 - Correlation Analysis

		Servant Leadership	Affective Trust	Cognitive Trust	Employees' Performance	Firm's Performance
Servant Leadership	Pearson	1	.961**	.949**	.965**	.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
Affective Trust	Pearson	.961**	1	.987**	.981**	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
Cognitive Trust	Pearson	.949**	.987**	1	.968**	.747**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
Employees' Performance	Pearson	.965**	.981**	.968**	1	.753**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
Firm's Performance	Pearson	.725**	.745**	.747**	.753**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	210	210	210	210	210

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis is used to identify the association among variables involving in the current study. From the above table, referring to the employees' performance, employees' performance has a direct and strong association with servant leadership, effective trust, and cognitive trust, as coefficient values are found to be .965, .981, and .968 respectively. Moreover, firm's performance is also positively and strongly related with servant leadership, effective trust, and cognitive trust, as coefficient values are found to be .725, .745, and .747 respectively.

Regression Analysis Model 1

Table 3 - Regression Analysis – Employees' Performance

a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	***-0.069	0.025		-2.744	0.007
	Servant Leadership	***0.310	0.046	0.294	6.670	0.000
	Affective Trust	***0.729	0.086	0.728	8.465	0.000
	Cognitive Trust	-0.028	0.073	-0.030	-0.389	0.697

F	2154.710	R-Squared	0.969
Sig	0.000	Adjusted R-Squared	0.969

10% Significant = *; 5% Significant = **; 1% Significant = ***

The above table 3, indicate about the influence of servant leadership, and trust on the employees' performance. SL and affective trust have a positive and significant influence on the employees' performance, as coefficient values is 0.310 and 0.729 respectively, and P values are found to be less than 0.01. On the other hand, coefficient value of cognitive trust is -0.028, but it has insignificant influence on the employees' performance. Moreover, the above table also indicate about the value of R and adjusted R squares is 0.969 and 0.969 respectively. Thus, it implies that 96.9% variance in the dependent variable is due to the variance in the explanatory variables, and the current model is 96.9% is fit for analysis.

Regression Analysis Model 2

Table 4 - Regression Analysis – Firm's Performance

a. Dependent Variable: Firm's Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	***0.302	0.076		3.989	0.000
	Servant Leadership	0.098	0.140	0.115	0.695	0.488
	Affective Trust	0.131	0.260	0.163	0.502	0.616
	Cognitive Trust	*0.366	0.219	0.477	1.671	0.096
F		87.910	R-Squared			0.561
Sig		0.000	Adjusted R-Squared			0.555

10% Significant = *; 5% Significant = **; 1% Significant = ***

The above table 4, indicate about the impact of SL and trust on the firm's performance. It can be seen that all variables have a direct influence on the firm's performance, as coefficient values are

found to be positive. But it is also noteworthy that only cognitive trust has a significant influence on the performance of the firm, as P value is found to be $0.096 < 0.1$. Thus, it can be said that cognitive trust is vital element to enhance the firm's performance. More so, the value of R and adjusted R squared are found to be 0.561 and 0.555 respectively which implies that 56.1% variance in the dependent variable is due to the variance in the explanatory variables, and model is 55.5% is fit for analysis.

Mediation Analysis Model 1

Table 5 - Direct Effect of Servant Leadership on Employees' Performance

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0.3097	0.0464	6.6704	0.000	0.2181	0.4012

Table 6 - Indirect Effect of Servant Leadership on Employees' Performance

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total	0.7078	0.0568	0.5917	0.8186
Cognitive Trust	-0.0295	0.1007	-0.2327	0.1652
Affective Trust	0.7373	0.1041	0.5476	0.9619

Mediation analysis has also been utilised to determine the mediating effect of cognitive trust and affective trust. The first table indicate about the direct effect and second about indirect effect. It is observed that SL has a direct and significant impact on the employees' performance, as coefficient value is 0.307, and $P = 0.000 < 0.05$. While considering the indirect effect, it can be seen that cognitive trust mediate the significant and negatively influence on the relationship between employees' performance and servant leadership. Whereas, affective trust has a negative but insignificant mediating influence on the employees' performance and servant leadership.

Mediation Analysis Model 2

Table 7 - Direct Effect of Servant Leadership on Firm's Performance

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0.0976	0.1403	0.6954	0.4876	-0.179	0.3742

Table 8 - Indirect Effect of Servant Leadership on Firm's Performance

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total	0.5151	0.1339	0.2535	0.784
Cognitive Trust	0.383	0.2092	-0.0438	0.7788
Affective Trust	0.1321	0.2457	-0.3319	0.621

Referring to the direct effect of servant leadership, it can be seen that servant leadership has a direct but insignificant influence on the performance of the firm, as coefficient value is 0.0976, and $P = 0.487 > 0.1$. While considering the indirect effect, it can be seen that both CT and AT has a mediating and direct influence on the firm's performance and servant leadership.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the research was to analyse the influence of SL on firm's and employees' performance. Likely, by reviewing a literature it has been found that servant leadership provides guidance and direction to the employees which positively contributed to the performance of the employees and organisation as well (Chughtai, 2016; Huang & Wan, 2016; Chon & Zoltan, 2019). Similarly, findings from the statistical analysis have also revealed that SL has a direct impact on the employees' performance. Further, current research has also considered the mediating role of trust (i.e. cognitive and affective trust) on firm's and employees' performance. As in most of the studies (Miao et al., 2014; Heuvel & Assen, 2015; Ling, 2017), it has been evident that affective and cognitive trust is brought a higher psychological reaction and emotional relationships among employees which positively contributed to the employees' performance. Similarly, findings are also linked with the previous studies, as it has been found that cognitive and affective trust

strongly mediate the positive relationship between employees' performance and servant leadership. In contrast, findings also revealed that cognitive and affective trust insignificantly mediate the positive relationship between a firm's performance and servant leadership. However, in the current study six main hypothesis were developed that have been accepted or rejected based on the statistical findings in the current research, as follow:

Table 9 - Hypothesis Summary

	Hypothesis Statement	Accepted/Rejected
H1	SL has a significant impact on Employees' Performance.	Accepted
H2	SL has a significant impact on Firm's Performance.	Rejected
H3	AT mediate the significant positive relationship between Employees' Performance and SL.	Rejected
H4	AT mediate the significant positive relationship between Firm's Performance and SL.	Accepted
H5	CT mediate the significant positive relationship between Employees' Performance and SL.	Rejected
H6	CT mediate the significant positive relationship between Firm's Performance and SL.	Accepted

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to analyse the impact of SL on employees' and firm's performance. However, for the purpose of this primary quantitative research method was used through using a closed-ended questionnaire. Through, regression analysis it was revealed that SL style has a significant and positive influence on the employees' performance, whereas insignificant influence on the firm's performance. Similarly, by reviewing the literature it has also been found that the SL style positively contributed to the employees' motivation and organisational performance. Further, cognitive and affective trust has also been positioned to analyse its influence on SL and employees' and firm's performance. Results show that CT and AT mediate the significant positive relationship between SL and a firm's performance. In contrast, there is an insignificant influence of cognitive and affective trust between SL and employees' performance.

Since the current research is based on statistical findings, a further interview-based approach can also be used for in-depth and detailed information. In addition to this, current research is limited to the dimensional trust (cognitive and affective trust), challenges, and other factors can also be included in the current research to further expound on the impact of SL on employees' and firm's performance.

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