

# The Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Effect of Job Empowerment

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction, and whether job empowerment will affect job satisfaction. Using the Army aviation unit subordinates as sample and 350 questionnaires were distributed. There were 321 effective questionnaires collected. After conducting data analysis, it was found that servant leadership had positive effect on job satisfaction, supervisors' job empowerment had positive effect on job satisfaction, and servant leadership had positive effect on job satisfaction through work empowerment. Finally, this study discusses about the relation of job satisfaction, and the initial research result of the work empowerment to influence the integration of job satisfaction. In the future, this study hopes to contribute in the leading behavior of Chinese organizations. Based on the results of this study, research limitations and future research was explained in the research process.

**Keywords:** *Servant Leadership, Job Empowerment, Job Satisfaction*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The competitiveness of an organization's subordinates is an internal core. With the changes of time and the environment, the cadres, employees, and leaders may want to explore the way to success and the different aspects of leadership theory that emerges. As long as it is the organizations or the leaders in the type of leading, each aspect will be explored by researchers.

"The leader" is an indispensable role in the organization and the most important key player in the organization. For the organization, when it comes to carrying out important tasks, "people" is the cornerstone. Therefore, the quality of the members and the attitude of the work will determine whether the organization and the atmosphere can exert the maximum effectiveness and enhance the overall effectiveness of combat. This purpose of this study was mainly to observe the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction with the mediating effect of job empowerment.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the association between servant leadership, job satisfaction, and job empowerment, that consists of three sections. The first is servant leadership. The second is job satisfaction, and the third is job empowerment.

### 2.1 Servant Leadership

The servant leader hopes that the subordinates will improve for their own interests and regard the development of the followers as their own goals. It is not just a mean to reach the leader's or organizational goals. In addition, the servant leadership is assumed to serve the subordinates and avoid the way of treating subordinates inconsistently, as this would violate the basic moral of the concept.

Servant leadership stands out from other theory (LMX, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999) from leadership and the members of leadership exchange. These two structures have some similarities, such as: emphasizing the priority of leader-follower development and enhancing the relationship between leaders and subordinates. The servant leadership is helping people to improve and promote subordinates' empowerment on job which is the most important task of servant leadership. The hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> can be developed as follow:

H<sub>1</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on job empowerment

### 2.2 Job Satisfaction

(Xu Shijun, 1977) Job satisfaction is the employee's feelings about their work, and Porter and Lawler (1968) had the same theory: the level of job satisfaction depends on the value of difference between the reality and expected job satisfaction. It means that if the difference is much smaller;

then the level of job satisfaction is higher. On contrary, the level of job satisfaction is lower. (Xu Yujia, 2017) mentioned that job satisfaction refers to the employee's reaction or feeling to about their job and other aspects. Satisfaction is based on the difference between the acquisitions of employee's reality and expected, and those two aspects are negatively correlated. According to Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967), the satisfaction questionnaire is divided into two aspects: internal satisfaction and external satisfaction. The internal satisfaction refers to the individual pair and has five factors: the independence, variability, stability, innovation, sense of safety, and the opportunity of showing ability, authority, moral of work, social status brought by job, and external satisfaction refers to the individual's job satisfaction about promotion and salary for the current job, income and appreciation, technical guidance at work, organizational policies and their implementation methods, and the interaction of subordinates. (Su-Lan Pan, 2006) stated that job satisfaction has 5 factors: self-improving, the interaction with society, knowledge, the characteristic of job, and organization's atmosphere. According to the 5 factors above, we learn that a good characteristic of job will bring the other factors, and then promote subordinates' job satisfaction. The second hypotheses can be developed as follows:

- H<sub>2</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on job satisfaction.
- H<sub>2.1</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction.
- H<sub>2.2</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction.

### 2.3 Job Empowerment

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) proposed job empowerment including four cognitive models, which are influence, ability, meaning, and choice. Job empowerment increases employee's internal motivation. Supervisors encourage subordinates to build active cooperation and trust when subordinates make decisions. The influence is about the difference between subordinates' behavior and complete job-related goals. Meaning refers to the target of job which is the value of the subordinates. It is measured by the individual and thoughts or criteria (Thomas and Velthouse,

1990). The choice is the individual's behavior that is based on own decision and he / she has the opportunity to make own decisions. The subordinates who are empowered have clearly recognized that they have the ability to execute and complete the job and have satisfaction on the job. The third hypotheses can be developed as follows:

- H<sub>3</sub>: Job empowerment has positive and significant impact on job satisfaction
- H<sub>3.1</sub>: Job empowerment has positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction
- H<sub>3.2</sub>: Job empowerment has positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction

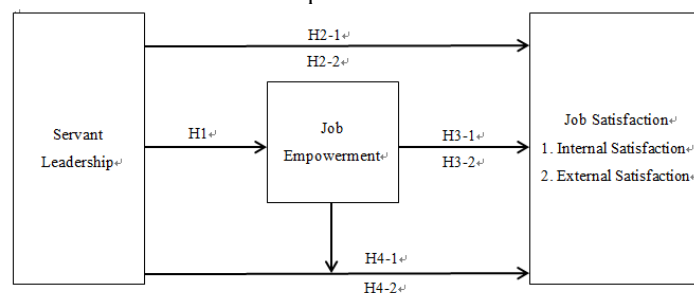
Empowerment originated from community psychology, mental health, and social work's literature in the 1970s and 1980s (Solomon, 1976 & Rappaport, 1981). (Lightfoot, 1985) said that the empowerment is about power and results. It refers to people who have the opportunity of autonomy, responsibility, freedom of choice, and professional authority. The party of management psychology interprets the empowerment, which means to encourage people who have the ability or promote people who have self-improving ability. They could take the initiative, continue to perform tasks, remove obstacles, and achieve organizational goals. The key of authorization empowerment is to improve employee's self-efficacy as well as the management and organizational effectiveness. (Conger, 1989, Kanter, 1993, Bowen, Lawler III, 1992 & Laschinger, 1996). The fourth hypothesis can be developed as follows:

- H<sub>4</sub>: Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on job satisfaction through job empowerment
- H<sub>4.1</sub>: Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on internal job satisfaction through job empowerment.
- H<sub>4.2</sub>: Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on external job satisfaction through job empowerment.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

### 3.1 Research Structure

**Figure 1**  
Conceptual Framework



### 3.2 Measurements

#### 3.2.1 Servant Leadership

The preparation of this questionnaire was based on Ehrhart (2004), Ehrhart, M. G. (2004), Ehrhart (1998). The servant leadership behavior scale was compiled into the first draft of the questionnaire based on the object's answer, and then the servant leadership was measured.

#### 3.2.2 Job Satisfaction

The measuring scale was based on Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1967) Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. This study used a short questionnaire scale, and job satisfaction was divided into two aspects: internal satisfaction and external satisfaction.

#### 3.2.3 Job Empowerment

The measuring scale was based on Spreitzer (1995). The total of 6 questions were then compiled into the first draft

of the questionnaire based on the object's answer. The scale was used to test the degree of job empowerment in the organization.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Pearson Correlation

The servant leadership had positive correlation with job empowerment at middle level ( $p < .01$ ) and the R-value was between .40 to .69. The servant leadership had positive correlation with the internal job satisfaction at lower level ( $p < .01$ ) and the R-value was between .10 to .39. The servant leadership had positive correlation with the external job satisfaction at middle level ( $p < .01$ ) and the R-value was between .40 to .69. Meanwhile, job empowerment had positive correlation with internal job satisfaction at lower level ( $p < .01$ ) and the R-value was between .10 to .39. Job empowerment had positive correlation with external job satisfaction at lower level ( $p < .01$ ) and the R-value was between .10 to .39. The correlation matrix can be seen in Table 4-1 as follow:

**Table 4-1**  
Correlation Matrix

Variable	External Job Satisfaction	Internal Job Satisfaction	Servant Leadership	Job Empowerment
External Job Satisfaction	1			
Internal Job Satisfaction	.000	1		
Servant Leadership	.673***	.352***	1	
Job Empowerment	.394***	.376***	.438***	1

\*\*\*:  $p < 0.01$

Source: Data Analysis

## 4.2 Regression Analysis Results

### 4.2.1 Servant Leadership and Job Empowerment

The hypothesis 1 was developed to prove the impact of servant leadership on job empowerment. The F-value was 75.425,  $R^2$  was 0.192 and Adjusted  $R^2$  was 0.189. It means that the variation in job empowerment could be explained by the variation in servant leadership as much as 18.9%. The regression coefficient of servant leadership was 0.438 and t-statistics was 8.685. This result shows that servant leadership had positive and significant impact on job empowerment. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_1$ : Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on job empowerment).

### 4.2.2 Servant Leadership and Internal Job Satisfaction

The hypothesis 2-1 was developed to prove the impact of servant leadership on internal job satisfaction. The F-value was 44.942,  $R^2$  was 0.124 and Adjusted- $R^2$  was 0.121. It means that the variation in internal job satisfaction could be explained by the variation in servant leadership as much as 12.1%. The regression coefficient of servant leadership was 0.352 and t-statistics was 6.704. This result shows that servant leadership had positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_{2-1}$ : Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction).

### 4.2.3 Servant Leadership and External Job Satisfaction

The hypothesis 2-2 was developed to prove the impact of servant leadership and external job satisfaction. The F-value was 263.531,  $R^2$  was 0.453 and Adjusted- $R^2$  was 0.451. It means that the variation in external job satisfaction could be explained by the variation in servant leadership as much as 45.1%. The regression coefficient of servant leadership was 0.673 and t-statistics was 16.234. This result shows that servant leadership had positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_{2.2}$ : Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction).

### 4.2.4 Job Empowerment and Internal Job Satisfaction

The hypothesis 3-1 was developed to prove the impact of job empowerment on internal job satisfaction. The F - value was 52.393,  $R^2$  was 0.141 and Adjusted- $R^2$  was 0.138. It means that the variation in internal job satisfaction could be explained by the variation in job empowerment as much as 13.8%. The regression coefficient of job empowerment was 0.376 and t-statistics was 7.238. This result shows that job empowerment had positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_{3.1}$ : Job empowerment has positive and significantly impact on internal job satisfaction).

**Table 4-2**  
Statistical Test Results

Variable	Job Empowerment	Internal Job Satisfaction	External Job Satisfaction	Internal Job Satisfaction
	Model 1	Model 2-1	Model 2-2	Model 3-1
Servant Leadership	0.438*** (8.685)	0.352*** (6.704)	0.673*** (16.234)	
Job Empowerment				0.376*** (7.238)
N	321	321	321	321
$R^2$	0.192	0.124	0.453	0.141
Adjusted- $R^2$	0.189	0.121	0.451	0.138
F-value	75.425***	44.942***	263.531***	52.393***
(P)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)

Source: Data Analysis

### 4.2.5 Job Empowerment and External Job Satisfaction

The hypothesis 3-2 was developed to prove the impact of job empowerment on external job satisfaction. The F-value was 58.793,  $R^2$  was 0.156 and Adjusted- $R^2$  was 0.153. It means that the variation in external job satisfaction could be explained by the variation in job empowerment as much as 15.3%. The regression coefficient of job empowerment was 0.394 and t-statistics was 7.668. This result shows that job empowerment had positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_{3.2}$ : Job empowerment had positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction).

### 4.2.6 Servant Leadership and Internal Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Effect of Job Empowerment

According to the table 4-3, the model 4-1 provided the result: F-value = 35.592,  $R^2$  = 0.183 and Adjusted- $R^2$  = 0.178. It means that the variation in internal job satisfaction could be explained by the variation in servant leadership and job empowerment as much as 17.8%. Thus, it proved the effectiveness of job empowerment as a mediator in the

impact of servant leadership on internal job satisfaction. The regression coefficient of job empowerment was 0.122 and servant leadership was 0.620. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), job empowerment is the mediator between servant leadership and internal job satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_{4.1}$ : Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on internal job satisfaction through job empowerment).

### 4.2.7 Servant Leadership and External Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Effect of Job Empowerment

According to the table 4-3, the model 4-2 provided the result: F-value = 137.832,  $R^2$  = 0.465, and Adjusted- $R^2$  was 0.462. It means that the variation in external job satisfaction could be explained by the variation in servant leadership and job empowerment as much as 46.2%. Thus, it proved the effectiveness of job empowerment as a mediator in the impact of servant leadership on external job satisfaction. The regression coefficient of job empowerment was 0.271 and servant leadership was 0.233. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), job empowerment is the mediator between servant leadership and external job satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted ( $H_{4.2}$ : Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on external job satisfaction through job empowerment).

**Table 4-3**  
Statistical Test Results

Variable	External Job Satisfaction	Internal Job Satisfaction	External Job Satisfaction
	Model 3-2	Model 4-1	Model 4-2
Servant Leadership		0.620*** (13.568)	0.233*** (4.128)
Job Empowerment	0.394*** (7.668)	.122*** (2.662)	.271*** (4.808)
N	321	321	321
R <sup>2</sup>	0.156	0.183	0.465
Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	0.153	0.178	0.462
F-value	58.793***	35.592***	137.832***
(P)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)

Source: Data Analysis

## 5. CLOSING SECTION

### 5.1 Conclusions

Based on data analysis results, there were 10 accepted hypotheses as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on job empowerment

H<sub>2</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on job satisfaction

H<sub>2.1</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction

H<sub>2.2</sub>: Servant leadership has positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction

H<sub>3</sub>: Job empowerment has positive and significant impact on job satisfaction

H<sub>3.1</sub>: Job empowerment has positive and significant impact on internal job satisfaction

H<sub>3.2</sub>: Job empowerment has positive and significant impact on external job satisfaction

H<sub>4</sub>: Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on job satisfaction through job empowerment

H<sub>4.1</sub>: Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on internal job satisfaction through job empowerment

H<sub>4.2</sub>: Servant leadership has an indirectly positive impact on external job satisfaction through job empowerment.

### 5.2 Research Limitation

Due to the limitation of people and time, the object ended with the personnel of the Army, and only for the purpose of universal investigation and research. It was impossible to infer the military of other units. The staffs could only be used as the starting for the servant leadership. If a study wants to expand the scope in the future, it is recommended to across other units. In addition, this study was aware of the servant leadership behavior from the perspective of

members, and could not fully understand the interaction between supervisors and subordinates.

In the future, relevant research is recommended to include higher-level supervisors in the sample, so that the interaction between supervisors and subordinates can be better understood.

### 5.3 Theoretical Recommendations

This study used a questionnaire survey to conduct the research. Subjects may influence the objectivity of the response due to psychological factors, so they were answering in a way that could be impossible to know the trueness of the test as well as the reliability and validity of this research. It is recommended that the subsequent research can be in qualitative method including more in-depth understanding about the real research situations.

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