# The Impact of Applying the Servant Leadership Style among Educators in Educational Institutes: A Scoping Review

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Abstract - Leadership style is a critical concern in education amid technological shifts and paradigm changes. Despite extensive industry research, servant leadership remains underutilized in education, despite aligning with business education goals. This scoping review assesses the prevalence of servant leadership among educational leaders, offering insights into its feasibility, benefits, and challenges. Using the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and ERIC databases, the review compiles servant leadership research. Guided by Arksey and O'Malley's methodology, findings emphasize servant leadership's role in enhancing organizational effectiveness. They highlight behaviors as a prevailing theme, revealing limited background understanding. This insight aids educators in adopting effective leadership styles and exploring servant leadership's implications for educational leaders.

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#### 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic education landscape, fueled by the power of information and digital technology, the key to steering educational institutions to excellence lies in embracing responsible leadership. This involves leaders actively engaging in diverse aspects such as fostering student success, supporting educator growth, efficiently managing resources, empowering communities, adhering to policies, driving innovation, and skillfully handling crises. According to Leithwood and Day [1], leadership theory and practice in educational institutions have entered a "golden age" and need to be revitalized to current education landscape. This achievement demonstrates that the existence or lack of educational leadership is the key to success in an educational institution [2], [3]. According to Kotler [4], successful school reform is 70-90 percent dependent on leadership, which demonstrates that the type, quality, and management handled by an effective leader are important variables influencing excellence in an organization [5], [6]. Therefore, the efficacy of natural leaders using an effective leadership style reflects the greatness of educational institutions.

Harrison [7] states that one of the leadership styles that has the potential to help an institution achieve high performance is servant leadership. Servant leadership is described as a leadership style characterized by the observation and behavior of a leader who is concerned with the growth and empowerment of his or her followers while motivating them to become servant leaders themselves [8].

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Yukl [9] describes servant leadership as the skill of 'articulating visions, embodying principles, and creating the atmosphere within which things may be achieved. Servant leadership also entails delivering advantages to an organization by constructing, developing, and involving personnel who are constantly truthful, forward-thinking, and eager to accept their leaders totally [10]. Based on these definitions, servant leadership is capable of achieving an educational institution's goal and vision for long-term greatness through suitable behavior and actions executed by its leaders.

There are five characteristics that may be used to determine if leaders are capable of using servant leadership: (i) altruistic calling; (ii) emotional wisdom; healing; (iii) organizational (iv) stewardship; and (v) persuasive mapping [11]. Since this research focuses on the development of servant leadership styles among leaders in educational institutions, it is critical to recognize the necessity for leaders to possess one of the aspects identified by Barbuto and Wheeler [12]. Based on the work of Turner [13], servant leadership is acknowledged to support wellbeing in higher education teaching through positive emotion, engagement, connections, meaning, and accomplishment. Furthermore, a recent research conducted by Osserand, et al. [12] found that servant leadership has a substantial positive association with teacher engagement. As a result, servant leadership may sustain optimal performance in educational institutions, provided the leader is successful in influencing employees' job needs and job resources effectively.

## 1.1. Servant Leadership and Educators

The imbricate nature of servant leadership and the role of an academic lead to relative ambiguity, thus less focus was given to undertake research on servant leadership among academicians. Previous works show evidence that in the case of educational institutions researchers are prone to explore other leadership styles [14]. However, now academics have begun to appreciate the impact of servant leadership approach on people, teams, and organization [15], [16]. Servant leadership is suggested to decrease human's vulnerabilities by supporting their wellbeing, and achieving organizational excellence [13]. According to Van Dierendonck and Patterson [17], leaders at educational institutions apply servant leadership styles more than leaders in other institutions, due to their expertise in academia of higher learning [18] and their established lecturing practices [19]. Swart, et al. [20] discovered that the servant leadership style used by leaders in private schools was successful due to its autonomous, innovative nature, doing joint activities, and encouraging knowledge sharing with subordinates.

According to Mcquade, et al. [21], there is constant improvement and development in the field of servant leadership, thus making the concept clearer and distinctive. As the elements that classify servant leadership are highly related to the philosophy of instilling knowledge, understanding the importance of servant leadership style in the education sector is therefore important. Yet, no scoping review research has been conducted in the context of research in educational institutions and how the servant leadership style can influence the performance of educational institutions. concentration of studies on other leadership styles in academic institutions [22], [23] presents a gap that motivates this study. Furthermore, the absence of themes on leadership in the academic work requires exploration into servant leadership style to have a comprehensive view on leadership in educational institutions [22], [23].

Given the importance of servant leadership in educational institutions, this research article conducts a scoping review and presents the findings based on thematic analysis. Using a scoping review approach, this paper highlights the importance of servant leadership in educational institutions that may have been overlooked due to the concentration of leadership research on other leadership styles. Therefore, in order to give an overall perspective of the phenomena, this research article focuses on servant leadership research in the context of educational institutions. The primary goal of this research article is to give a wide-ranging map of topics linked to the influence of servant leadership in the context of educational institutions. The scoping review generates a map of the present status of the servant leadership research and from this mapping, research gaps can be identified for future research. This research article aims to contribute to the literature on servant leadership by identifying the influence of other topics in the area and offering a thorough descriptive analysis of the domain.

This work is structured as follows: Part 1 is the literature review of servant leadership, followed by Part 2 that describes the scoping review procedure, and Part 3 discusses the outcomes. Part 4 will be the conclusion that includes the discussion of limitations, future research recommendations, implications, and conclusions.

# 2. Materials and Method

Scoping review is an ideal approach to uncover the scope of past research especially in examining emerging evidences in order to identify areas for further exploration. Thus, scoping review can strengthen the proposal of the research issues from past evidence, and enrich the knowledge by exploring uncharted areas from the most recent research [24], [25]. Specifically, scoping review assists the researcher in understanding the significance of the idea from several viewpoints, allowing for additional discussions regarding the concept [26], [27], [28], [29]. In contrast to systematic literature review, which necessitates the application of a set of methodological procedures, scoping review can employ a range of techniques [30], [31]. This research article employs the six-step methodology developed by Arksey and O'Malley [24] as explained in the below section:

Steps (1): Identifying the research question to be carried out. The investigation of servant leadership among leaders in educational institutions is the main topic of this research paper. The following research questions are presented in this research so that a wider range of literature may be gathered: Basically the key questions are; what are the effects of the servant leadership style on educational institutions? What are the themes of servant leadership in the context of leaders in educational institutions? What is the nature of the existing scientific literature on servant leadership styles among educators in educational institutions?

Steps (2): Identify past research that is relevant to the objectives of the scoping review. To guarantee a comprehensive review of the available literature, relevant search phrases were used. Three established databases—Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and ERIC—that offer top publications from related disciplines such as leadership, education and organizational management were used for thematic search. As a result, servant leadership practices involving leaders in educational institutions have been gathered utilizing the major themes and search phrases that have been established (Figure 1).

Step 3: Select the articles that are suitable for analysis. For the publications that were taken into consideration for analysis, this scoping review defined particular inclusion and exclusion criteria. Firstly, only publications in the context of education were included. Secondly, only research articles qualified to be included for the scoping review. Therefore, conference papers, book chapters, conference reviews, and books are excluded and removed from the list. Thirdly, only Englishlanguage papers published in 2019 to 2023 are included (Figure 1).

Step (4): Charting the data to be presented. To aid the thematic and comparative analysis, Microsoft Excel is used to illustrate the data in graphical presentation. In order to facilitate understanding of the findings and to answer the research questions, a comprehensive table is presented with information about the author's name, year of publication, studied variables, implications of the research, major themes, and sub- themes.

Step (5): Collating, summarizing, and reporting the data. In order to comprehend and present a strong discussion on the effects of servant leadership among leaders in educational institutions, the findings were reorganized according to the topics, major themes and sub-themes accordingly. Each article is now classified and discussed based on themes and sub-themes that were identified as a consequence of thematic and comparative analysis (Table 1). Figures 2 and 3 present the characteristics of the scientific literature that has been published.

Step (6): Discussion of the results. The outcomes of the research findings are elaborated in the context of the objectives of this paper. As this topic is relatively new among educators, limitations and general suggestions for future studies to intensify research on servant leadership among leaders in educational institutions are discussed. The last step is a conclusion

## 3. Findings

A total of 441 papers were identified from the database search that can be considered for this scoping review research. However, based on the inclusion criteria of empirical papers, papers published in the year of 2019 to 2023, and articles in the subject of education with social scientific status, only 78 publications were found to be qualified. Following adjustment to account for duplicate papers (22 papers) only 56 papers can be used for this study. From these 56 articles, further examination in the context of the objectives of this scoping review, 42 article publications were determined to be unrelated. Finally, only 14 articles utilising quantitative techniques were chosen based on the reporting items indicated for the thematic review since they were found to be more relevant and fit with the research aims, as shown in Figure 1 [32].

Basically, the primary criteria that have been established serve as the basis for choosing the articles for this scoping review procedure. Firstly, given the readily available sources and databases, this analysis exclusively chooses journal papers and excludes other publications. For instance, the WoS database includes over 760 million references dating back to numerous fields [33]. Second, this review exclusively selects papers with quantitative research techniques since it is acknowledged that for research in education, quantitative method is generally superior above other research methodologies [34]. Third, the publication of empirical articles and publications must be written in English.

The employment of an intermediary language for researchers led to the selection of English, while the absence of systematisation and openness, as is customary in proceedings, led to the selection of empirical research [35].

Lastly, empirical publications must be published within the last five years. Research demonstrating maturity and greater quality, particularly in the scoping review led to the selection of specific subjects that were conducted within the last five years [36].

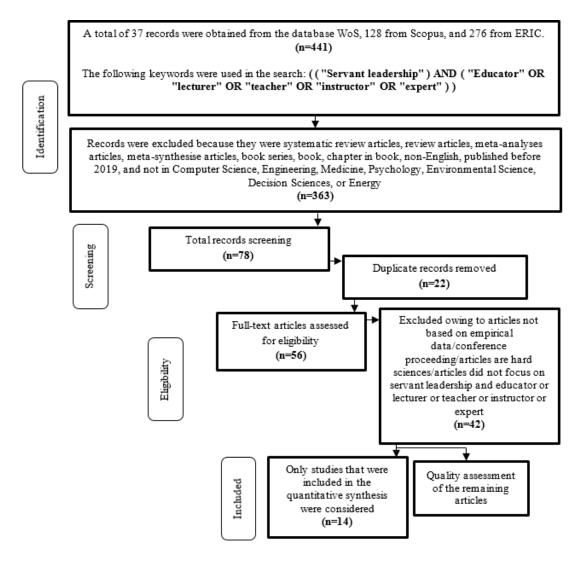


Figure 1. Flow diagram of research selection process using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) adapted from a research by Moher, et al. [32]

## 3.1. Main Findings

Table 1 shows the 14 research publications that were included in the scoping review based on the criteria stated above [12], [20], [37], [38], [39], [40], [41], [42], [43], [44], [45], [46], [47], [48]. The outcomes of the analysis revealed that the impact of servant leadership on leaders in educational institutions is more beneficial when successfully implemented, which could address the research questions. From the analysis, servant leadership is examined as an independent variable that is prominent in shaping individual behavior, encouraging positive character building, creating a healthy work environment and enhancing work

performance. Specifically, the research on servant leadership encompasses many facets related to individual performance that will also trickle down to organizational performance. Apparently, servant leadership approach is seen to empower teachers and students, fosters creativity, and motivates employees, resulting in higher levels of job engagement, performance, and loyalty. Consistent to both individual and work environment, servant leadership prioritizes well-being, collaborative problem-solving, and a clear goal. Through mentoring and coaching, this leadership approach is effective in supporting career development of the employees thus helping them to attain their full potential.

The scoping review generates themes and subthemes to answer the second research question. There are four major themes that are then divided into eleven sub-themes. The first theme is work empowerment (work influence and work feelings) that entails leaders recognizing team members' contributions, encouraging cooperation, and promoting a good, caring environment. The second theme is attitude (self-attitude, self-determination, and self-belief) that describes how leaders value each individual's worth, conferring autonomy, and developing confidence, resulting in enhanced self-

esteem, drive, and resilience. The third theme is behavior (behavior formation) which occurs when leaders set a good example, offer advice for skill development, and encourage positive actions, thereby establishing a collaborative and productive work culture. Management support is the last theme (problem solving, team support, motivation, loyalty encouragement, and potential development) that fosters teamwork through cohesiveness, motivation, and empowerment.

The table below depicts the description of the research and the mapping of themes and sub-themes.

Table 1. Charting the data

Publication	Variables	Impact of servant leadership	Sub-Theme	Theme
Ahmad, et al. [1]	Independent: servant leadership Dependent: job satisfaction (accountability, courage and empowerment, standing back, humility and forgiveness, authenticity, stewardship)	Even though they are relatively new among educational leaders, there is a strong positive and substantial association between the perceived servant leadership style of school heads and job satisfaction among teachers. Leaders who have a high level of servant leadership are definitely able to create a prosperous work environment.	Work Influence	Work Empowerment
Osserand, et al. [2]	Independent: servant leadership Mediating: teacher engagement Dependent: reduced stress	Servant leadership is ineffective in reducing teacher stress, although teacher engagement is a substantial positive mediator. Servant leaders must boost teachers' well-being by organising collaborative discussion sessions on completing assignments and generating a feeling of enjoyment in their job.	Work Feeling	
Demir [3]	Independent: servant leadership Dependent: loyalty to supervisors (dedication, extra effort, attachment, identification, and internalization)	Shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership and loyalty to supervisors. This shows that their leaders who practise the servant leadership style are honest, dedicated, and committed.	Self-Attitude	Attitude
Swart, et al. [4]	Independent: servant leadership Dependent: organisational climate	Correlation analysis reveals a link between servant leadership and the organisational climate of private schools. Servant leadership empowers their people and enables more independence, inventiveness, activity implementation, and knowledge sharing.	Self- Determination	
Gultekin and Kara [5]	Independent: servant leadership Dependent: student achievement; organizational health	Servant leadership has a major impact on student achievement and organisational health. Servant leaders maintain employee motivation by letting them realise that they are fundamental and necessary aspects of the organisation's activities.	Self-Belief	

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valued while accomplishing tasks.					
	Hermanto and	Independent:	Was able to demonstrate that the	Motivation	

Srimulyani [12]	servant leadership Mediating: work engagement Dependent: extra-role behaviour; teacher performance	principal's servant leadership practise has a direct positive influence on work engagement, extra-role behaviour, and teacher performance, as well as work engagement acting as a mediator. Servant leaders have the ability to influence others by convincing and		
Dami, et al. [13]	Independent: servant leadership Mediating: trust; leader- member exchange Dependent: job satisfaction	motivating subordinates.  Servant leadership improves trust, leader-member exchange, and job satisfaction significantly.  Meanwhile, trust and leader-member exchange can play an important role in mediating the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. He emphasised that leaders who use the servant leadership style have subordinates who are loyal and emotionally linked to them.	Loyalty Encouragement	
Van der Hoven, et al. [14]	Independent: servant leadership; psychological empowerment Dep endent: organisational citizenship behaviours	There are positive relationships between servant leadership, psychological empowerment, and teachers' organisational citizenship behaviour. Servant leadership implementation among school leaders encourages teacher empowerment and development by allowing the principal to develop teachers to their full potential through mentoring and coaching.	Potential Development	

### 3.2. Background of the Research Included in the Review

Figure 2 illustrates the setting of the research works included in this scoping review. Based on the data, these previous works were undertaken in eight different countries i.e. one each in West Africa [12],

Iran [43], the United States [39], and Pakistan [37]. In addition, two research investigations on servant leadership have been done in South Africa [20], [48], India [41], [42], and Turkey [38], [40]. The majority of the research investigations were conducted in Indonesia [44], [45], [46], [47].

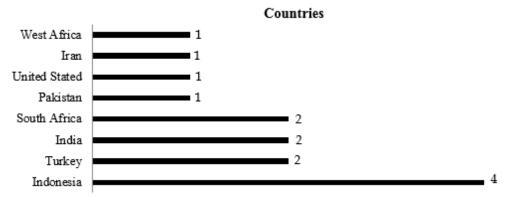


Figure 2. Number of research based on countries

Figure 3 demonstrates the number of papers published in WoS, Scopus, and ERIC in terms of year of publication from 2019 to 2023. No papers included in this study were published in 2019, and one is published in 2020 [43].

In addition, four articles were published in 2021 [40], [41], [42], [48], followed by five pieces in 2022 [20], [38], [39], [46], [47]. There are 4 recent publications (2023) included in this scoping review [12], [37], [44], [45].



Figure 3. Year of publication in WoS Scopus and ERIC database

From the analysis, the findings have addressed the third research question by defining the nature of published scientific literature. The research presented here shows that servant leadership educational leaders has been researched in both developed and developing countries. However, looking at the numbers of relevant works, the research can be considered as relatively new and emerging in the context of educational leaders. In other words, the approach is important yet exploration about this leadership style is still at the infancy and further investigation is required to gain better understanding of the application of the servant leadership style among educators. Another important point is that when compared to general literature on the subject of servant leadership, the number is still considered negligible in the context of educational institutions. This shows future research on servant leadership is applauded and more organizational aspects can be explored to develop a comprehensive understanding on the significance of servant leadership in the context of the education sector.

## 4. Discussion

This scoping review gives an overview of the influence of servant leadership on educational leaders. From the analysis, servant leadership has direct and indirect impacts to the education ecosystem as a whole. Apparently, servant leadership yields positive impact on organisation through the inculcation of loyalty, commitment, and organisational citizenship among employees that would be translated into organisational performance. The effects of servant leadership are also evident in behaviour shaping [40] [41], [42], [43] of positive outlook, benevolence, respect, and innovativeness. The outcome of servant leadership in education institutions can be seen in all three important segments; the organisation, the employees and the students.

As for organisation, servant leadership will create a positive ambience, with an enjoyable, prosperous and healthy work environment. In terms of employees, servant leadership can act as the impetus for behavioural change that will ultimately benefit organisation through excellence in job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and loyalty. Lastly, the impact to students can be seen from teachers' motivation, commitment, and dedication to the job that will be translated into quality of education. In other words, leaders with servant leadership approach would likely promote organisational civic behaviour through engagement and empowerment. It is crucial to highlight here that although this review highlights the impact of servant leadership in the education sector, the connection between servant leadership style and the philosophical elements of teaching and learning is yet to be explored.

Based on scoping review, the majority of the research agreed that servant leadership significantly influencing loyalty, work alienation, stress reduction, organisational climate, teacher performance, student accomplishment, organisational health, emotional commitment, and psychological well-being. It demonstrates that adopting this approach will enable an organisation to prosper and provide greater well-being. To influence leaders in educational institutions, the servant leadership concept is frequently used as an independent variable, while engagement, psychological capital, empowerment, leader-member exchange and trust were included as mediating factors that impacted job satisfaction, job performance, and OCB. In conclusion, teacher engagement, job engagement, psychological empowerment, trust, leader-member interchange, and psychological capital are all key characteristics that can impact servant leadership among educators, particularly in the setting of educational institutions. The mapping of previous studies based on the position of servant leadership and the main theme is illustrated in Table 2.

	Independent	Mediating	Dependent
Process	Ahmad, et al. [37]	Osserand, et al. [12]	Ünsal and Usta [40]
	van der Hoven, et al. [48]	Gunawan, et al. [45]	
	Singh and Ryhal [42]	Dami, <i>et al</i> . [47]	
		Ghalavi and Nastiezaie [43]	
Outcome	Anshori, <i>et al</i> . [44]	Hermanto and Srimulyani [46]	
	Gultekin and Kara [39]		
	Demir [38]		
Enabler	Swart, et al. [20]	Clarence, et al. [41]	

Table 2. How educators in educational institutes perceive servant leadership as a concept

In addition to the qualitative inquiries, a comprehensive examination through a survey of quantitative studies further illuminates multifaceted impact of servant leadership on leaders within educational institutions. This exploration interrelated encompasses two distinct yet the intricate mechanics of the perspectives: implementation process and the tangible outcomes that emerged as a consequence. By delving into these dual vantage points, a more holistic understanding of the influence and efficacy of servant leadership within the educational arena can be ascertained. This analytical approach extends an encompassing lens through which the intricate workings of servant leadership unfold, providing insights that bear significance for educators and stakeholders alike.

## 5. Limitation and Recommendations

The focal point of this study's limitations lies in the exclusive concentration on sourcing materials from the WoS, Scopus, and ERIC databases. This deliberate emphasis provokes a broader discourse within academia, inviting contemplation on the necessity of integrating supplementary databases to encompass a more expansive panorama of servant leadership research. It is pertinent to underscore that the incorporation of these additional databases is poised to yield a proliferation of pertinent articles. Moreover, it is essential to understand that the domain of servant leadership has recently captured the scholarly community's attention, particularly those researchers who demonstrate a penchant for delving deeply into the intricate dimensions of servant leadership paradigms across educational contexts. Looking forward, scholarly investigations unfold a spectrum of opportunities, including the exploration of repositories like Springer and ProQuest. These endeavors hold the potential to yield findings characterized by a broader scope and a more structured arrangement. The prospect of employing a statistically oriented design presents itself as a viable avenue for providing an explanation marked by enhanced precision and granularity.

Concurrently, it is noteworthy to highlight that the continuum of literature reviews resides within the confines of rigorous scrutiny. A pertinent observation is that the body of literature referenced in this study predominantly revolves around themes linked to the repercussions emerging from systematic reviews. This dynamic prompts future scholars to consider adopting a systematic review approach, thereby facilitating the extraction, amalgamation, comprehensive examination of all accessible data, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The implementation of such a method holds the potential to bolster and substantiate the conclusions derived throughout the course of this research venture. This rationale extends beyond the current field of inquiry, resonating across diverse disciplines where methodological comprehensiveness and contextual relevance intersect, prompting scholars to meticulously evaluate their research paradigms, and strive for a comprehensive analysis of available evidence.

## 6. Implications

This research has engaged in an intricate analysis of servant leadership, systematically uncovering underlying sub-themes and overarching paradigms that presently delineate the roles assumed by leaders. By means of a methodical and exhaustive scoping review, this inquiry not only corroborates the foundational conceptual frameworks and broadimplications that characteristically accompany servant leadership within the sphere of educational leadership but also directs focused attention toward educational domains that beckon exploration, thereby contributing to a comprehensive apprehension of the intricate dynamics governing leadership.

In executing this endeavour, the research serves as an impassioned call to action, urging a heightened dedication to probing uncharted intellectual territories.

It compels a renewed commitment to scrutinising the upper echelons of educational institutions and undertaking a profound exploration into the multifaceted origins that underlie the phenomenon of servant leadership. The ramifications of this research reverberate as a guiding light, illuminating the paths for forthcoming scholars and practitioners alike. It furnishes an intellectual compass, adeptly charting a course through the hitherto unexplored terrain of the servant leadership paradigm, particularly when contextualised within the domain of education.

#### 7. Conclusion

Nowadays, servant leadership is seen as an essential leadership style in education. Although the material provided is adequate but not comprehensive. This scoping review looks at a broader range of research subjects as well as the expansion of research on servant leadership among educational leaders. The research reveals significant elements, with behavior being a primary focus in the literature on educatorservant leadership. Based on the findings, good team support is a critical ability for servant leadership in higher education. While this discussion provides a high-level summary, thus further research is needed to properly comprehend servant leadership among educators. Furthermore, additional research is needed to get further agreement on the variables that contribute to servant leadership in educational leadership as a whole, therefore assisting educators more effectively. The assessment also identifies a research gap, indicating the necessity to extend databases in order to conduct a more in-depth investigation of servant leadership's influence on educational leaders. Overall, this research provides a detailed summary of the scope, current state, and areas for future investigation.

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