

# Servant Leadership in Public Sector Organizations: A Literature Review

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**Abstract.** Servant leadership has gained increasing attention as a human-centered and ethical leadership approach, particularly in public sector organizations characterized by complex governance structures and accountability demands. This study aims to provide a comprehensive literature review of servant leadership in the public sector by examining its theoretical foundations, analyzing empirical evidence on its outcomes and effectiveness, and identifying key challenges and opportunities for its implementation. A narrative literature review approach was employed, focusing on 13 peer-reviewed articles indexed in the Scopus database. The selection process was based on relevance to servant leadership within public sector contexts, followed by thematic and interpretative analysis. The findings reveal that servant leadership is theoretically grounded in social exchange theory, social learning theory, and public service motivation (PSM), which collectively explain its influence on employee attitudes and behaviors. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that servant leadership positively affects various outcomes, including job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, work engagement, creativity, and employee well-being. However, these effects are largely indirect and mediated by key mechanisms such as trust, psychological empowerment, knowledge sharing, and PSM. The results also highlight the importance of contextual factors, including organizational politics, cultural differences, and institutional constraints, which may strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of servant leadership. Despite its potential, the implementation of servant leadership in public organizations faces several challenges, including bureaucratic rigidity, political dynamics, and conceptual ambiguity in leadership constructs. Nevertheless, significant opportunities exist, particularly in aligning servant leadership with public service values, enhancing ethical governance, and fostering innovation in increasingly dynamic environments. This study contributes to the literature by synthesizing fragmented research and providing a clearer understanding of servant leadership in public sector settings. It also offers practical insights for policymakers and organizational leaders, while suggesting directions for future research, including the need for multi-level, longitudinal, and cross-cultural studies to advance the field.

**Keywords:** servant leadership; public sector; public service motivation; organizational performance; leadership effectiveness; literature review.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the study of leadership has evolved significantly, shifting from traditional hierarchical and authority-centered models toward more relational, ethical, and service-oriented approaches. Among these emerging paradigms, servant leadership has gained increasing scholarly and practical attention, particularly in the context of public sector organizations. Originally conceptualized by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s, servant leadership emphasizes the leader's role as a servant first prioritizing the needs, development, and well-being of followers, as well as the broader community[1]. This orientation contrasts sharply with conventional leadership styles that often prioritize organizational performance and control over human-centered values. Public sector organizations operate in complex environments characterized by bureaucratic structures, accountability demands, and the need to deliver equitable services to diverse populations [2]–[4]. These institutions are not only responsible

for achieving efficiency and effectiveness but also for upholding ethical standards, transparency, and public trust. In such contexts, leadership plays a critical role in shaping organizational culture, employee engagement, and service quality. However, traditional leadership approaches in the public sector have often been criticized for being overly rigid, hierarchical, and resistant to change[5]. This has led scholars and practitioners to explore alternative leadership models that are better aligned with contemporary governance challenges.

Servant leadership has emerged as a promising framework for addressing these challenges. By fostering a culture of empathy, collaboration, and empowerment, servant leaders can enhance employee motivation, organizational commitment, and ultimately, public service delivery[6], [7]. Empirical studies suggest that servant leadership is positively associated with outcomes such as job satisfaction, trust in leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, and ethical climate. These outcomes are particularly relevant in public sector settings, where employee morale and ethical conduct directly impact the quality and legitimacy of public services. Despite its growing popularity, the application of servant leadership in public sector organizations remains underexplored and fragmented across the literature. Much of the existing research has been conducted in private sector or non-profit contexts, with limited attention to the unique institutional dynamics of public organizations[8],[9],[10]. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive synthesis that integrates theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and contextual factors influencing servant leadership in the public sector. This gap highlights the need for a systematic literature review that critically examines the current state of knowledge and identifies directions for future research.

Another important consideration is the alignment between servant leadership and public service values. Public organizations are inherently mission-driven, with a focus on serving citizens and promoting the common good[11], [12]. In this regard, servant leadership appears to be conceptually compatible with the principles of public administration, such as accountability, inclusiveness, and social responsibility. However, the extent to which servant leadership can be effectively implemented within bureaucratic systems remains a subject of debate. Structural constraints, political influences, and resource limitations may hinder the adoption of servant leadership practices, raising questions about its feasibility and impact in different public sector contexts. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of public sector challenges such as digital transformation, crisis management, and sustainable development requires leaders who are not only competent but also adaptive, ethical, and people-oriented. Servant leadership offers a holistic approach that integrates these qualities, emphasizing long-term value creation over short-term gains. As governments and public institutions strive to become more responsive and citizen-centric, understanding the role of servant leadership becomes increasingly important.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive literature review of servant leadership in public sector organizations. Specifically, it seeks to (1) examine the theoretical foundations of servant leadership, (2) analyze empirical evidence on its outcomes and effectiveness in public sector settings, and (3) identify key challenges and opportunities for its implementation. By synthesizing existing research, this study contributes to the advancement of leadership theory and offers practical insights for policymakers, administrators, and organizational leaders. Servant leadership represents a paradigm shift in how leadership is understood and practiced, particularly within the public sector. Its emphasis on service, ethics, and human development aligns closely with the core values of public administration. However, realizing its full potential requires a deeper understanding of contextual factors, organizational constraints, and leadership capabilities. Through this literature review, the study seeks to bridge existing gaps and provide a foundation for future research and practice in this important area..

## **2. Method**

This study adopts a narrative literature review approach to examine and synthesize scholarly work on servant leadership in public sector organizations. Unlike a systematic literature review, which follows highly rigid protocols and extensive database coverage, a narrative review allows for a more flexible, interpretative, and critical exploration of existing studies[13]. This approach is particularly appropriate given the relatively limited number of studies specifically addressing servant leadership within the public sector context, enabling a more in-depth conceptual and thematic analysis. The data source for this review is restricted to the Scopus database, which is widely recognized as one of the most reputable and comprehensive indexing platforms for high-quality academic publications. Scopus was selected due to its rigorous indexing standards, broad international coverage, and relevance for identifying peer-reviewed journal articles in the fields of leadership, public administration, and organizational studies. By focusing exclusively on Scopus-indexed publications, this study ensures that the reviewed literature meets the quality standards expected in internationally reputable journals.

The literature search was conducted using a combination of targeted keywords and Boolean operators to capture relevant studies. The primary search string included: “servant leadership” AND “public sector”, supplemented by related terms such as “public organization”, “government institution”, and “public

administration". The search was limited to journal articles published in English to maintain consistency and accessibility of analysis. No strict temporal limitation was imposed; however, most of the identified studies fall within the period of 2005 to 2024, reflecting the growing scholarly interest in servant leadership in recent years. The initial search results yielded a limited number of publications, indicating that research on servant leadership in public sector settings remains relatively underdeveloped. After applying relevance screening based on titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review, a total of 13 articles were identified as directly relevant and included in the final analysis. The inclusion criteria required that each article (1) explicitly address servant leadership as a central variable or theoretical framework, and (2) be situated within the context of public sector or government-related organizations. Studies focusing exclusively on private or non-profit sectors without clear linkage to public sector implications were excluded.

Data extraction was conducted manually by carefully reviewing each selected article. Key information was identified and organized, including authorship, year of publication, research objectives, methodological approach, study context, and principal findings. Given the relatively small number of studies, this process allowed for a detailed and nuanced understanding of each contribution, rather than relying on aggregated or purely quantitative synthesis. The analysis employed a thematic and interpretative approach, aiming to identify recurring patterns, conceptual insights, and key research trends across the selected literature. The reviewed articles were categorized into several thematic areas, including (1) conceptualization of servant leadership in public organizations, (2) its impact on employee-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust, and (3) contextual and institutional factors influencing its implementation. This thematic structuring enables a coherent synthesis of findings while highlighting both consistencies and divergences in the literature.

To enhance the credibility of the review, attention was given to analytical rigor and transparency. Each article was critically assessed in terms of its theoretical contribution, methodological strength, and relevance to the research objective. Rather than merely summarizing findings, this review emphasizes critical interpretation and comparison across studies, which is a key characteristic of high-quality narrative reviews. Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations. The exclusive reliance on the Scopus database may result in the omission of relevant studies indexed elsewhere. Additionally, the small number of available articles ( $n = 13$ ) reflects the nascent stage of research in this area, which may limit the generalizability of conclusions. However, this limitation also underscores the importance of the present review in consolidating existing knowledge and identifying avenues for future research on servant leadership in public sector organizations.

### **3. Results**

The development of servant leadership research within the context of public organizations has attracted increasing scholarly attention over the past two decades, reflecting a broader shift toward human-centered and ethical leadership paradigms in governance. Servant leadership, which emphasizes serving others, empowering subordinates, and fostering community values, is particularly relevant in public sector settings where accountability, transparency, and citizen-oriented services are central concerns. Despite its conceptual relevance, empirical studies focusing specifically on public organizations remain relatively limited and unevenly distributed over time. Therefore, a bibliometric overview is necessary to understand how this research area has evolved, especially within reputable academic databases such as Scopus. The figure below presents a temporal distribution of publications on servant leadership in public organizations, highlighting the frequency of studies across selected years. By examining this trend, it becomes possible to identify patterns of scholarly interest, periods of increased research activity, and potential gaps that require further exploration. This visualization serves as an essential foundation for situating the current study within the broader academic discourse and justifying the need for continued investigation. Moreover, understanding publication trends not only reflects the maturity of the field but also indicates how global challenges in public administration may influence research priorities. Consequently, this graphical representation provides a concise yet informative overview that supports deeper analytical and theoretical discussions in subsequent sections of this study.

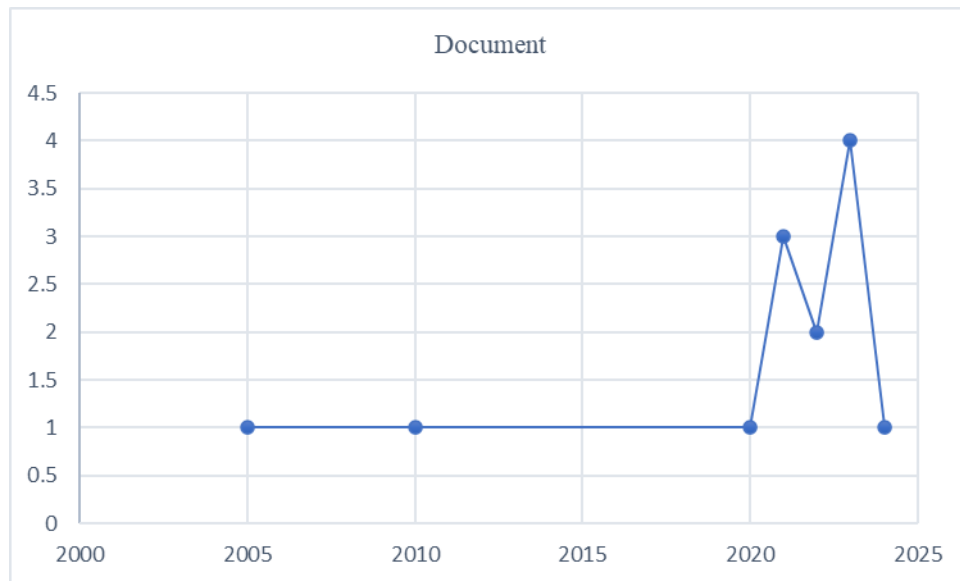


Figure 1. Publication Trends of Servant Leadership in Scopus Database

As illustrated in the figure, the trend of servant leadership research in public organizations demonstrates a fluctuating yet gradually emerging pattern over time. Early contributions appear sporadically, with isolated publications recorded in 2005 and 2010, indicating that the topic initially received minimal attention within the academic community. A noticeable gap follows until 2020, when research interest begins to re-emerge, likely influenced by increasing global discourse on ethical leadership and governance reform. The number of publications rises in 2021 and continues to grow in 2022, suggesting a strengthening recognition of servant leadership as a relevant framework in public sector studies. This upward trajectory reaches its peak in 2023, with the highest number of recorded publications, reflecting a significant surge in scholarly engagement. However, a decline is observed in 2024, which may be attributed to publication cycles, database indexing delays, or shifting research priorities. Overall, the trend indicates that while servant leadership in public organizations is still a developing field, it has gained considerable momentum in recent years. The observed fluctuations also suggest that the field has not yet reached full maturity, thereby presenting opportunities for further empirical and theoretical contributions. Future research is therefore encouraged to explore underrepresented contexts, employ diverse methodological approaches, and strengthen interdisciplinary perspectives to advance the understanding and application of servant leadership within public governance systems.

Table 1. Summary of Empirical Studies on Leadership Across Organizational Contexts

No.	Authors (Year)	Source Title	Document Type	Citations
1	Iqbal, A., Ahmad, I., & Latif, K. F. (2021)	<i>Leadership and Organization Development Journal</i>	Article	15
2	Han, Y., Kakabadse, N. K., & Kakabadse, A. (2010)	<i>Journal of Management Development</i>	Article	82
3	Schaeffler, D. (2023)	<i>The Emerald Handbook of Authentic Leadership</i>	Book Chapter	2
4	Mishra, S. S., & Hassen, M. H. (2023)	<i>International Journal of Public Leadership</i>	Article	13
5	Gelaidan, H. M., Houtgraaf, G., & Al-Kwafi, O. S. (2022)	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i>	Article	19
6	Khattak, M. N., & O'Connor, P. (2021)	<i>Personnel Review</i>	Article	20

No.	Authors (Year)	Source Title	Document Type	Citations
7	Latif, K. F., Ahmed, I., & Aamir, S. (2022)	<i>International Journal of Public Leadership</i>	Article	8
8	Tripathi, D., Priyadarshi, P., Kumar, P., & Kumar, S. (2021)	<i>VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems</i>	Article	42
9	Roberts, G. E. (2023)	<i>The Palgrave Handbook of Servant Leadership</i>	Book Chapter	0
10	Uluturk, B. (2024)	<i>Management Communication Quarterly</i>	Article	7
11	Alimo-Metcalfe, B., & Alban-Metcalfe, J. (2005)	<i>Leadership</i>	Article	134
12	Khuwaja, U., Ahmed, K., Abid, G., & Adeel, A. (2020)	<i>Cogent Business and Management</i>	Article	47
13	Almazrouei, S., Bani-Melhem, S., & Mohd Shamsudin, F. (2023)	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i>	Article	23

The studies summarized in Table 1 provide a comprehensive overview of leadership research across various organizational contexts, highlighting both the evolution of scholarly attention and the diversity of publication outlets. A total of 13 studies were identified, predominantly published in peer-reviewed journals, with only two contributions appearing as book chapters. This indicates that the discourse on leadership—particularly within organizational and public sector contexts—has been largely driven by empirical journal-based research, which is often associated with higher academic rigor and wider dissemination. In terms of temporal distribution, the studies span nearly two decades, from 2005 to 2024, reflecting a sustained and growing interest in leadership research. Earlier foundational work, such as Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe and John Alban-Metcalfe [14], demonstrates the highest citation count (134 citations), suggesting a significant theoretical and empirical contribution that has shaped subsequent research. Similarly, the work by Yong Han, Nada Kakabadse, and Andrew Kakabadse [15] has also received substantial scholarly attention (82 citations), indicating its continued relevance in leadership studies. In contrast, more recent publications (2023–2024) exhibit relatively lower citation counts, which is expected due to their limited time for accumulation, rather than a reflection of lower academic value.

From a thematic perspective, the literature demonstrates a strong emphasis on leadership within public sector and organizational management settings. Several studies published in outlets such as *International Journal of Public Leadership* and *International Journal of Public Sector Management* indicate a growing scholarly focus on leadership practices in governance and public administration. Additionally, the presence of publications in journals such as *Personnel Review and Leadership and Organization Development Journal* suggests an intersection between leadership and human resource management, particularly in understanding employee behavior, organizational performance, and knowledge management. The citation distribution further reveals disparities in scholarly impact among the studies. While a few seminal works dominate in terms of citations, such as Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe [14] and Han et al. [15], other studies demonstrate moderate to emerging influence, with citation counts ranging from 7 to 47. This pattern is typical in literature reviews, where foundational studies serve as key theoretical anchors, while newer research contributes to the expansion and contextualization of existing knowledge. Notably, the inclusion of recent works (e.g., Uluturk [16]; Schaeffler [17]; Roberts [18]) indicates ongoing scholarly efforts to refine leadership theories, including perspectives such as authentic and servant leadership.

Table 2. Summary of Research Findings on Servant Leadership in the Public Sector

Authors	Year	Title	Findings
Iqbal et al.[19]	2021	Servant leadership and organizational deviant behaviour	Servant leadership is not negatively associated with organizational deviant behavior; however, it enhances self-efficacy and trust in leaders without significant mediating effects.
Han et al.[15]	2010	Servant leadership in the People's Republic of China	Servant leadership demonstrates conceptual similarity with Western perspectives, with additional culturally specific characteristics in the Chinese public sector context.
Schaeffler[17]	2023	Authentic leadership: A critical review	Authentic leadership lacks a consistent definition and is predominantly examined through employee-level quantitative studies.
Mishra & Hassen[20]	2023	Servant leadership and employee job performance	Servant leadership significantly improves employee performance, with public service motivation (PSM) acting as a full mediator.
Gelaidan et al.[21]	2022	Creativity and innovation in Qatar	Servant leadership positively influences employee creativity through the mediating role of psychological empowerment.
Khattak & O'Connor[22]	2021	The interplay between servant leadership and organizational politics	Servant leadership enhances task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), with trust acting as a partial mediator and organizational politics as a moderator.
Latif et al.[23]	2022	Servant leadership, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction	Servant leadership improves self-efficacy and life satisfaction, with self-efficacy serving as a mediating variable.
Tripathi et al.[24]	2021	Servant leadership and work role performance	Servant leadership positively affects work role performance through partial mediation of knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment.
Roberts[18]	2023	Public service motivation and servant leadership	Servant leadership has a synergistic relationship with PSM and plays a key role in enhancing motivation and trust.
Uluturk[16]	2024	Servant leadership and work engagement	Servant leadership increases work engagement through motivating language and perceived organizational support as mediators.
Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe[14]	2005	Leadership: Time for a New Direction?	Contemporary leadership emphasizes a human-centered approach aligned with servant leadership principles.
Khuwaja et al.[25]	2020	Leadership and employee attitudes	Servant leadership improves job satisfaction and organizational commitment while reducing perceptions of organizational politics.
Almazrouei et al.[26]	2023	Servant leadership and innovative behavior	Servant leadership strengthens the relationship between job impact and innovative work behavior through work meaningfulness.

Table 2 presents a comprehensive synthesis of empirical and conceptual studies examining the role of servant leadership in public sector organizations. Overall, the findings consistently indicate that servant leadership exerts a positive and multifaceted influence on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance outcomes, although the strength and direction of these relationships vary depending on mediating and contextual factors. First, a dominant pattern emerging from the literature is the positive impact of servant leadership on employee performance and work-related outcomes. Several studies (e.g., Mishra & Hassen [20]; Tripathi et al. [24]; Khattak & O'Connor, [22]) demonstrate that servant leadership enhances job performance, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Importantly, these relationships are rarely direct; instead, they are largely mediated by psychological and relational mechanisms such as public service motivation (PSM), trust, knowledge sharing,

and psychological empowerment. This indicates that servant leadership operates through strengthening intrinsic motivation and social exchange processes within organizations.

Second, the literature highlights the role of servant leadership in fostering positive psychological states and employee well-being. Studies by Latif et al. [23] and Roberts [18] show that servant leadership enhances self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and motivation, reinforcing its human-centered orientation. Similarly, Uluturk [16] finds that servant leadership improves work engagement through communicative and organizational support mechanisms, suggesting that leadership behavior shapes both emotional and cognitive dimensions of employee experience. Third, servant leadership is also strongly associated with innovation and creativity in the public sector. Gelaidan et al. [21] and Almazrouei et al. [26] demonstrate that leadership styles, including servant leadership, significantly influence innovative work behavior and creativity, primarily through mediators such as psychological empowerment and work meaningfulness. These findings are particularly relevant in the context of rapidly developing or reform-oriented public sector environments. However, the relationship between servant leadership and negative workplace behaviors appears to be less consistent. For instance, Iqbal et al. [19] report that servant leadership does not significantly reduce organizational deviant behavior, suggesting that ethical leadership alone may be insufficient without supportive organizational systems such as fairness and moral climate. This highlights the importance of contextual and institutional factors in shaping leadership effectiveness.

Furthermore, cultural and conceptual variations are evident across studies. Han et al. [15] reveal that while servant leadership shares similarities with Western constructs, it also incorporates culturally specific elements in the Chinese public sector. In addition, Schaefer [17] points out the lack of conceptual clarity in related leadership constructs such as authentic leadership, indicating ongoing theoretical fragmentation in the field. Finally, the literature underscores the critical role of mediating and moderating variables, including trust, organizational politics, psychological empowerment, and perceived organizational support. These variables not only explain how servant leadership influences outcomes but also define the conditions under which its effects are strengthened or weakened.

#### **4. Discussion**

Servant leadership has emerged as a prominent leadership paradigm in the public sector, offering a comprehensive framework that integrates ethical, relational, and motivational dimensions of leadership. From a theoretical standpoint, servant leadership is primarily grounded in social exchange theory, social learning theory, and public service motivation (PSM) frameworks. Social exchange theory explains how leaders who prioritize employee well-being foster reciprocal attitudes such as trust, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. This is evident in studies such as Khattak and O'Connor [22], where trust mediates the relationship between servant leadership and performance outcomes. Similarly, social learning theory suggests that employees model the ethical and service-oriented behaviors demonstrated by leaders, reinforcing prosocial workplace norms. The integration of PSM further strengthens the theoretical foundation in public sector contexts, as highlighted by Mishra and Hassen [20] and Roberts [18], where servant leadership aligns with intrinsic motivations to serve society. Additionally, servant leadership reflects a broader human-centered paradigm of leadership, as discussed by Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe [14], emphasizing empowerment, ethical conduct, and individual development. However, theoretical ambiguity remains a concern, particularly when overlapping constructs such as authentic leadership lack clear definitions [17]. This indicates that while servant leadership is conceptually rich, further theoretical consolidation is needed to enhance its clarity and distinctiveness.

Second, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that servant leadership has a significant and positive impact on employee outcomes and organizational effectiveness in public sector settings, although these effects are often indirect. A key pattern across studies is the mediating role of psychological and relational mechanisms. For example, public service motivation fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance [20], while psychological empowerment and knowledge sharing partially mediate its effect on work role performance [24]. Similarly, Gelaidan et al. [21] and Almazrouei et al. [26] highlight the importance of empowerment and meaningfulness in driving creativity and innovative behavior. These findings suggest that servant leadership operates not merely as a direct influence but as a catalyst that strengthens internal employee capacities and motivation. Furthermore, servant leadership contributes to enhanced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced perceptions of organizational politics [25], indicating its relevance for improving workplace climate. It also promotes work engagement through mechanisms such as motivating language and perceived organizational support [16], reinforcing its role in shaping both cognitive and emotional dimensions of employee performance. However, not all findings are uniformly positive. Iqbal et al. [19] reveal that servant

leadership does not significantly reduce deviant workplace behavior, suggesting that leadership alone may be insufficient to address negative organizational outcomes without supportive institutional frameworks. This highlights the complexity of leadership effectiveness in public sector environments, where bureaucratic structures and formal regulations may constrain behavioral change.

Third, the implementation of servant leadership in the public sector presents several challenges and opportunities. One major challenge lies in the influence of organizational context, particularly the presence of bureaucratic rigidity and organizational politics. Khattak and O'Connor[22] demonstrate that perceived organizational politics can weaken the positive effects of servant leadership, indicating that political environments may hinder trust-building processes. Additionally, cultural differences pose challenges to the universal application of servant leadership. Han et al.[15] show that while the concept is transferable across contexts, it requires adaptation to local cultural norms, as seen in the Chinese public sector. Another critical challenge is the lack of conceptual clarity and measurement consistency, as noted by Schaefer[17], which limits comparability across studies and weakens theoretical advancement. Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for advancing servant leadership in public organizations. The strong alignment between servant leadership and public service values makes it particularly suitable for fostering ethical governance, employee motivation, and citizen-oriented service delivery. Moreover, its emphasis on empowerment and meaningful work positions it as a key driver of innovation and adaptability, especially in rapidly changing public sector environments such as those observed in Qatar and the UAE [21], [26]. The increasing recognition of mediating mechanisms such as PSM, psychological empowerment, and perceived organizational support also provides actionable insights for policymakers and managers to design more effective leadership development programs. In this regard, servant leadership should not be viewed as a standalone approach but rather as part of a broader organizational system that includes supportive policies, fair practices, and a strong ethical climate. The literature indicates that servant leadership is a theoretically grounded and empirically supported leadership approach with substantial relevance for the public sector. Its effectiveness is largely mediated by psychological and relational mechanisms and shaped by contextual factors such as organizational politics and culture. While challenges related to conceptual clarity and implementation remain, the opportunities it offers for enhancing employee performance, motivation, and innovation make it a promising framework for public sector leadership. Future research should focus on integrating theoretical perspectives, exploring cross-cultural variations, and examining multi-level dynamics to further strengthen the understanding and application of servant leadership in complex organizational settings.

## 5. Conclusion

This study highlights that servant leadership constitutes a relevant and impactful leadership approach within public sector organizations, supported by both theoretical and empirical evidence. Theoretically, servant leadership is firmly grounded in social exchange theory, social learning theory, and public service motivation (PSM), which collectively explain how leaders influence employee attitudes and behaviors through trust, role modeling, and intrinsic motivation to serve. Empirically, the literature consistently demonstrates that servant leadership positively affects a wide range of outcomes, including employee performance, organizational citizenship behavior, work engagement, creativity, and well-being. However, these effects are largely indirect and mediated by key psychological and relational mechanisms such as trust, psychological empowerment, knowledge sharing, and PSM. At the same time, the effectiveness of servant leadership is not universal, as it is influenced by contextual factors such as organizational politics, cultural settings, and institutional structures. These findings suggest that servant leadership should be understood as a context-sensitive and mechanism-driven leadership approach rather than a universally applicable solution. Despite its contributions, several limitations in the existing literature open avenues for future research. First, there is a need for greater theoretical integration and conceptual clarity, particularly in distinguishing servant leadership from closely related constructs such as authentic and transformational leadership. Future studies should aim to develop more refined theoretical models that clearly delineate the unique dimensions and mechanisms of servant leadership. Second, most existing research relies heavily on cross-sectional and quantitative designs, which limit the ability to capture causal relationships and dynamic processes. Therefore, future research should employ longitudinal, experimental, and qualitative approaches to better understand how servant leadership evolves and operates over time in real-world public sector settings.

Third, the role of contextual and cultural factors requires further exploration. While existing studies suggest that servant leadership can be adapted across different cultural environments, more comparative and cross-national research is needed to examine how cultural values, governance systems, and institutional norms shape its effectiveness. Fourth, future research should expand the scope of analysis by adopting multi-level perspectives, examining the impact of servant leadership not only at the individual level but also at team, organizational, and societal levels. This is particularly important in the public sector, where leadership outcomes extend beyond internal performance to include public value and citizen satisfaction. Finally, there is a need to explore practical

implementation strategies for servant leadership in bureaucratic and politically complex environments. Future studies should investigate how organizational policies, leadership development programs, and institutional reforms can support or hinder the adoption of servant leadership principles. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of servant leadership, ultimately enhancing its applicability and effectiveness in advancing public sector performance and governance.

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