

# Servant Leadership and Lecturer Performance at Private Universities in the City of Sorong: The Intermediary Role of Organizational Commitment

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**Abstracts:** The study aims to find out the influence of Servant Leadership on lecturer performance through the Organizational Commitment of a private university in the city of Sorong, Indonesia. This research presents organizational commitment as a mediator between Servant Leadership and Lecturer Performance. Six private universities were involved as the objects of the study. The sampling method was Proportional Random Sampling using the Slovin formula gaining 236 respondents. The data collection used was a questionnaire with the tested validity and reliability. The data analysis technique employed was SEM-PLS. The research results show that Servant Leadership has a positive and insignificant effect on Lecturer Performance and Servant Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Organizational Commitment while Organizational Commitment has a positive and significant effect on Lecturer Performance. The relationship between servant leadership and lecturer performance has a full mediating effect among the variables examined. The research evidences that the construct of Organizational Commitment is the main factor that plays a mediating role in the relationship between Servant Leadership and Lecturer Performance. Building and improving Organizational Commitment requires open communication, consistency, and transparency from the heads and management of private universities. The study provides important reinforcement for institutional leaders in improving the performance of lecturers at private universities in Sorong by increasing the causal relationship between the construct of the organizational commitment variable as a mediator toward the influence of servant leadership on lecturer performance.

**Keywords:** Servant leadership, Organizational Commitment, Lecturer Performance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of world society 5.0, Indonesia's higher education should play a strategic role in solving national and state problems in order to enhance the competitiveness of human resources so that they are ready to encounter the ASEAN Free Trade Area. According to data from the 2021 World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) survey conducted by the IMD World Competitiveness Center, Indonesia's competitiveness is ranked 37th out of a total of 64 countries. Meanwhile, in the 2020 Global Innovation Index (GII) ranking, Indonesia is ranked 85th and is far behind other ASEAN countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand. According to the Institute for Management Development (IMD) World Competitiveness Center, competitiveness is one of the main factors in determining the level of innovation. It is a challenge for universities how they can contribute to increasing the competitiveness of human resources amidst globalization. Competitiveness components related to the world of higher education include education and training, labor market flexibility and efficiency, technological readiness, and innovation (1)

Private universities in the city of Sorong which like other higher education institutions, face various challenges in maintaining and improving the quality of their education. One important factor that influences the quality of higher education is lecturer performance (2). Lecturers are a key element in creating an effective learning environment and providing a positive impact on student achievement (3). Servant leadership is a leadership paradigm emphasizing devotion, empathy, and attention to the interests of others above one's own interests (4). This concept has emerged as a potential leadership approach to create a work climate that is conducive to staff development in the context of lecturer performance (5–8). However, more research is still needed that explores the relationship between servant leadership and lecturer performance in higher education (9).

On the other hand, organizational commitment is a key factor that influences individual performance in an organization (10). It includes loyalty, identification with organizational values, and willingness to contribute optimally (11,12). In the context of higher education, lecturers' organizational commitment to the universities where they work can be an important factor in determining the extent to which they perform well (9,12,13).

However, only a few scholarly academics have examined the intermediary role of organizational commitment in the relationship between servant leadership and lecturer performance in higher education. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore whether organizational commitment plays a critical role as a mediating factor in the relationship between practical servant leadership implemented by leaders of private universities in the city of Sorong and the performance of lecturers in that environment.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1. The Influence of Servant Leadership and Lecturer Performance**

Leadership style was a way for leaders to influence their subordinates to cooperate and work productively to achieve organizational goals (14). Contingency theory identified managerial components in organizations, namely leader-member relationships, task structure, and position power (15). Some recent literature favored task-oriented servant leadership in higher education (9).

Research on leadership styles in higher education provided empirical evidence that Servant Leadership was the main predictor in improving the performance of higher education organizations (16). It is in line with the findings of (17–19) stated that servant leadership strongly predicted increased task performance. These results were supported by the results of an empirical study by (9,20) which concluded that servant leadership in higher education would have a significant impact in improving the performance of academic tasks in higher education. Based on this description, the hypothesis proposed is

***H1: If Servant leadership is good, then Lecturer Performance will increase***

### **2.2. The Influence of Organizational Commitment on Lecturer Performance**

Allen & Meyer, (1990, 1991, 1996) defined organizational commitment as a positive emotion that complements the organization. Employees with high organizational commitment have a solid emotional attachment to the organization (12). This means that individuals will be motivated and want to continue contributing to performance improvement. Organizational commitment is necessary for organizations because it influences turnover intention and its relationship with task performance improvement (9,13).

Empirical studies indicate that organizational commitment plays a role in improving the task performance of academics in higher education (9,12,23–25). Based on the description, the proposed hypothesis is:

***H2: If organizational commitment is high, then lecturer performance will increase***

### **2.3. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Organizational Commitment**

Servant leadership and commitment are two constructs that continue to attract the interest of researchers (26). Employees with high commitment will strongly desire to remain in an organization, as they value social relationships and appreciate the relational values of the organization, considering it a part of their organizational family. Commitment is the emotional bond within an employee to engage with the organization where they work actively. Employees who leaders serve are likely to be committed to the organization, thereby impacting performance improvement (9).

Commitment is the extent to which an employee prefers the organization to maintain their membership in it (10,27). Commitment is the nature of an individual's relationship with their organization, with a strong desire to

remain an employee by providing their best abilities through accepting the organization's values and goals (27).

Empirical studies on the influence of servant leadership on organizational commitment in higher education have been conducted by (9,12,19,28) concluding a significant influence of servant leadership on organizational commitment and its impact on the improvement of academic task performance. These findings align with the Social Exchange Theory (SET) proposed by (29) establishing a relationship between servant leadership and commitment. Subsequent researchers have found a relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment (30) Based on this description, the proposed hypotheses are:

**H3: If Servant leadership is good, then organizational commitment will increase**

**H4: If organizational commitment is exemplary, it will mediate the relationship between servant leadership and lecturer performance.**

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The Research employs the explanatory research method. The data source utilizes primary data from a questionnaire distributed to respondents containing their responses to the research variables. The population in the study consists of lecturers in private universities in the city of Sorong. The research sampling technique uses the proportional random sampling method determined based on the Slovin formula. Therefore, based on this opinion, the total research sample is 236 lecturers distributed across six private universities in Sorong

The total questionnaire consists of 14 indicator items. All indicator items are measured using a Likert scale with a 5-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The Lecturer performance variable in this study is measured through four indicators: implementing Education and Teaching, Conducting Research and developing scientific works, Implementing Community Service, and Implementing Other Supporting Activities (8). The Servant Leadership variable is measured through seven indicators: Emotional Healing, Creating Value for the Community, Conceptual Skills, Empowering, Helping Subordinates grow and Succeed, Putting Subordinates first, and Behaving Ethically (31). The organizational commitment variable is measured through three indicators: Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment (22). Subsequently, the data analysis technique uses the Structural Equation Model-PLS (32,33)

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Respondent Characteristics

Based on the data successfully collected through questionnaires from 236 respondents, the characteristics of the respondents are as follows:

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristic**

Descriptipn	Frequency (person)	Percentage (%)	Total
Gender			236
Male	104	44,1	
Female	132	55,9	
Age			236
<40 Years	48	20,3	
40-50 Years	179	75,8	
>50 Years	9	3,8	

Educational Level			
Doctoral (S3/Ph.D)	4	1,7	236
Magister (S2/ Master)	232	98,3	
Years of Service			
<10 Years	148	62,7	236
10-15 Years	81	34,3	
>15 Years	7	3	
Functional Position			
Assistant Professor	138	58,5	236
Associate Professor (200-300)	98	41,5	

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2023

Table 1 shows that out of 236 research respondents, 55.9% are female, and 44.1% are male. Additionally, respondents are generally dominated by the age group 40-50 (75.8%), <40 years (20.3%), and >50 years (3.8%). In terms of Educational Level, 98.3% have a master's degree (M.A./M.S.), while 1.7% have a doctoral degree (Ph.D.). Regarding Years of Service, 62.7% have <10 years, 10-15 years (34.3%), and >15 years (3%). Respondents with the Functional Position of Assistant Professor account for 58.5%, while the Functional Position of Associate Professor (200-300) is held by 41.5%.

#### 4.2. PLS Analysis Results

Based on the questionnaire validation results, Table 2 shows that the outer loading of each indicator in each construct has values above >0.5, indicating validity and suitability for measuring the variables of servant leadership, organizational commitment, and lecturer performance. Furthermore, the Square Root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are also above >0.5, meeting the requirements for convergent validity testing. Therefore, all questionnaire items can be used to analyze the results of this study. Additionally, composite reliability is used to test the reliability of indicator variables. As presented in Table 2, the composite reliability values for all research variables are above >0.6, indicating that each variable has achieved a high level of reliability (32).

Table 3 presents the Path coefficient results where the direct effect of the Servant Leadership variable (X) has a positive but not significant impact on Lecturer Performance (Y), with a path coefficient value of 0.183 and P-Values = 0.060 > 0.05 (**Hypothesis Rejected**). Servant Leadership (X) has a positive and significant impact on Organizational Commitment (M), with a path coefficient value of 0.514, and P-Values = 0.000 < 0.05 (**Hypothesis Accepted**). Organizational Commitment (M) has a positive and significant impact on Lecturer Performance (Y), with a path coefficient value of 0.247, and P-Values = 0.005 < 0.05 (**Hypothesis Accepted**). Furthermore, our Mediation Analysis found that Organizational Commitment mediates between Servant Leadership and Lecturer Performance, with an indirect effect of 0.127, P-value ≤ 0.025 (**Hypothesis Accepted**).

**Tabel 2. Outer Loading, AVE, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability**

Indicator or Dimension	Outer Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)	Composite Reliability (CR)
<b>Servant Leadership</b>				
Emotional Healing	0,900	0,708	0,979	0,981
Creating Value for the Community	0,922			
Conceptual Skills	0,910			
Empowering	0,913			
Helping subordinates grow and succeed	0,906			
Putting subordinates first	0,906			
Behaving Ethically	0,735			
<b>Organizational Commitment</b>				
Affective Commitment	0,912	0,749	0,958	0,964
Continuance Commitment	0,915			
Normative Commitment	0,917			
<b>Lecturer Performance</b>				
Implementing educational and teaching activities	0,963	0,802	0,994	0,994
Conducting research and development of scientific works	0,953			
Implementing community service	0,924			
Carrying out other supporting activities	0,950			

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2023

**Table 3 Path Coefficients and Specific Indirect Effects**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
<b>Direct Effects</b>					
Servant Leadership (X) -> Lecturer Performance (Y)	0,183	0,175	0,097	1,887	<b>0,060</b>
Servant Leadership (X) -> Organizational Commitment (M)	0,514	0,512	0,077	6,642	<b>0,000</b>
Organizational Commitment (M) -> Lecturer Performance (Y)	0,247	0,252	0,089	2,792	<b>0,005</b>
<b>Specific Indirect Effects</b>					
Servant Leadership (X) -> Trust (M) -> Lecturer Performance (Y)	0,127	0,131	0,057	2,250	0,025

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2023

## 5. DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance

Based on the hypothesis testing results of the influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance, it was found that Servant Leadership has a positive but insignificant effect on Lecturer Performance at Private Universities in Sorong City. This indicates that high servant leadership in universities does not significantly impact or trigger an improvement in lecturer performance at private universities in Sorong City. These results suggest that Servant Leadership, built on emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowerment, helping followers grow and succeed, putting followers first, and behaving ethically, has yet to

stimulate better lecturer performance.

Concerning lecturer performance and its implementation, it has been regulated in the Ministry of PANRB Regulation Number 17 of 2013 concerning Lecturer Performance Reports. The minimum achievement value is considered good and having integrity in carrying out duties. This is a guideline for lecturers to be continuously accepted and trusted, serving as the philosophy of the lecturer's work. Improving lecturer performance is not solely the responsibility of the organization and the government but is also the individual effort of lecturers to achieve career and institutional goals. To achieve this, there needs to be internal and external encouragement for individuals to develop themselves through their efforts. Servant leadership and motivational encouragement allow a lecturer to perform better.

These findings are not consistent with the findings of (2), indicating a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership and lecturer performance. Meanwhile (34) study found that Servant Leadership has an impact that, in turn, affects the achievement of solutions offered by formal and informal management and development to stimulate more effective work results. Similarly, studies conducted by (9,13,17–19) state that good servant leadership in higher education will have a tangible impact on performance in higher education.

### **The Influence of Servant Leadership on Organizational Commitment**

The analysis results indicate that the servant leadership variable positively and significantly influences organizational commitment. This analysis implies that the higher the servant leadership, the higher the Organizational Commitment. This result suggests that Servant Leadership, built on the ability to heal emotions, create value for the community, conceptualize, empower, help followers grow and succeed, prioritize followers, and behave ethically, can improve Organizational Commitment.

The results of the descriptive analysis show that, on average, servant leadership and organizational commitment achieved by lecturers in universities in Sorong City are considered good. Similarly, confirmatory analysis results measuring servant leadership and Organizational Commitment indicators are significant. This means there is a positive correlation between servant leadership and Organizational Commitment. The higher the servant leadership, the better the Organizational Commitment produced by the lecturers. Thus, empirical evidence proves that servant leadership significantly impacts the Organizational Commitment of lecturers in private universities in Sorong City.

In implementing the Tri Dharma of lecturers, servant leadership is one of the critical factors in motivating a lecturer to work. Servant leadership has a direct relationship with Organizational Commitment. As stated by (35) Organizational Commitment is a strong desire to maintain and nurture valuable relationships between employees and their organization. Servant leadership emerges as the most critical determinant of Organizational Commitment for lecturers at private universities in Sorong City. Lecturers with high commitment feel loyalty and a sense of ownership. They strongly desire to remain with the organization, are always actively involved in their work, and exhibit behaviour aligned with the institution's goals. The findings of this study confirm the Social Exchange Theory by (29) which has been used to explain that Servant Leadership can enhance organizational commitment among subordinates (36).

Furthermore, previous research by (37) revealed that good servant leadership allows for an increase in higher Organizational Commitment. Research on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment at Sorong City private universities confirms findings by (9,12). Similarly, research by (38) investigating the relationship between servant leadership and organizational commitment in higher education, found that Servant Leadership has a positive relationship with organizational commitment. Thus, the results of this study support previous research on the influence of Servant Leadership on Organizational Commitment.

### **The Influence of Organizational Commitment on Lecturer Performance**

The analysis results indicate that the organizational commitment variable positively and significantly influences

lecturer performance. This analysis implies that the better the Organizational Commitment, the higher the lecturer's performance. This result suggests that Organizational Commitment, built on Affective Commitment, Continuous Commitment, and Normative Commitment, can trigger an improvement in Lecturer Performance.

Descriptive analysis results show that, on average, Organizational Commitment and Lecturer Performance in universities in Sorong City are considered good. Similarly, confirmatory analysis results of measuring Organizational Commitment indicators are significant. This means there is a positive correlation between Organizational Commitment and Lecturer Performance. The higher the Organizational Commitment, the better the Performance the lecturer produces. Thus, empirical evidence proves that Organizational Commitment significantly impacts Lecturer Performance at private universities in Sorong City.

Empirical evidence indicates that the success of an educational institution, among other things, lies in obtaining competent employees and retaining them to work in the institution. Organizational Commitment is considered good when lecturers show a sense of pleasure and pride in their work, desire to continue working, and are loyal to the institution because organizational Commitment is seen as one factor in achieving the university's vision.

Similarly, previous research by (39) revealed that high Organizational Commitment improves Lecturer Performance. Research by (40) regarding the relationship between Organizational Commitment and Performance confirms the findings of (9) Similarly, research by (12,13) investigating the relationship between Organizational Commitment and Performance in higher education found that Organizational Commitment is a critical predictor in achieving better Performance. Thus, the results of this study support previous research on the influence of Organizational Commitment on Lecturer Performance.

### **The Role of Organizational Commitment in Mediating the Influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance**

Based on the results of hypothesis testing on the influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance through Organizational Commitment, it was found that Organizational Commitment mediates the influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance. These results indicate that organizational commitment plays a crucial role in mediating the impact of servant leadership on the performance of lecturers in private universities in Sorong City. Servant leadership is a leadership approach where leaders focus on serving the needs and interests of their team members, building strong relationships, and promoting their growth and development. Lecturer performance includes achieving academic goals, productivity, teaching quality, research, community service, and contributions within the educational environment.

Organizational commitment is the level of loyalty and emotional identification that lecturers perceive towards the private university where they work. Organizational commitment acts as a mechanism mediating the influence of servant leadership on lecturer performance. This means that servant leadership positively affects organizational commitment, which, in turn, enhances the performance of lecturers in private universities in Sorong City. When lecturers feel emotionally and cognitively attached to the institution, they are likely to perform better in teaching, conducting research and community service, and contributing to achieving organizational goals.

The findings of this research support the views of (41–46), which suggest that organizational commitment plays a crucial role in mediating the positive influence of servant leadership on performance. Servant leadership creates a climate where organizational commitment can grow and develop, and commitment provides a foundation for lecturers to feel connected, motivated, and perform at a high level in the academic environment.

## **6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings from the development of an integrative research model have theoretical implications, indicating that this study can construct a theoretical model of Organizational Commitment's role in mediating Servant Leadership's

influence on Lecturer Performance in private universities in Sorong City. The research model explains the mediating role of the Organizational Commitment variable in the relationship between servant leadership and lecturer performance in the context of private higher education in Sorong, expanding on previous research conducted by (9) Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrate that servant leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing lecturer performance through Organizational Commitment. This implies that servant leadership applied by leaders impacts the organizational commitment of lecturers, subsequently influencing performance. Leaders in higher education environments need to pay attention to servant leadership principles, such as caring for the needs of lecturers, providing support and inspiration, and building strong working relationships. By doing so, leaders can enhance organizational commitment, positively impacting their performance in higher education.

### Research Limitations

This study has limitations that can serve as a reference for further research to achieve better results. The limitations of this research include:

1. The study cannot generalize more broadly because it was conducted only in private higher education institutions in Sorong, with a limited sample of lecturers. Therefore, generalizing the research findings to the overall population of lecturers in other higher education institutions may be restricted. Further research with a more representative sample is needed to validate these findings in various contexts.
2. The research focuses on the role of the organizational commitment construct as a mediator between servant leadership and lecturer performance in private universities in Sorong. These findings serve as a starting point for more in-depth research on why servant leadership does not influence improving lecturer performance. Additionally, further research could explore other variables that affect lecturer performance, such as intrinsic motivation, perceived organizational support (POS), professional competencies, and local culture. Subsequent research could comprehensively consider these factors contributing to improving lecturer performance.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented earlier, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Servant leadership positively but not significantly influences lecturer performance. This indicates that while exemplary, servant leadership in private universities in Sorong City has yet to improve lecturer performance significantly.
2. Servant leadership has a positive and significant influence on Organizational Commitment. This suggests that the better the implementation of servant leadership in private universities in Sorong City, the higher the Organizational Commitment.
3. Organizational Commitment has a positive and significant influence on Lecturer Performance. This indicates that the higher the Organizational Commitment in private universities in Sorong City, the better the Lecturer Performance.
4. Organizational Commitment mediates the influence of Servant Leadership on Lecturer Performance. This shows that effective servant leadership in private universities in Sorong City, accompanied by high Organizational Commitment, will further enhance Lecturer Performance.

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