



RESEARCH PAPER

Translating the Role of Servant Leaders into Organizational Change Management: Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing

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ABSTRACT

This study turns to explore the role of servant leaders into organizational change management along with the mediation of knowledge sharing. We used the cross-sectional research design in service sector of Pakistan to examine the impact of servant leadership on change management. The results of the study translate that servant leaders' positive and significantly influence organizational change management in terms of organizational culture, fostering employees' creativity and dynamic capabilities. Further, results of study demonstrate that knowledge mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organizations change management. As a result, this study contributes that managers should focus on knowledge sharing in the organizations as it mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organizational change management.

KEYWORDS Knowledge Sharing, Organizational Change Management, Servant Leadership

Introduction

A servant leader shares authority, emphasizes employees' request, and helps people to grow and realize their full potential (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2022). Rather than helping the public, the leader spends his or her life working for them (Abbas *et al.*, 2020). Servant leadership is based on a natural desire to persuade individuals, organizations, and communities rather than on personal power or status (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020). A servant leader is one whose major purpose as a leader is to serve others by investing in people's growth and well-being in order to perform tasks and achieve objectives (Eva *et al.*, 2019). Prior research asserted that servant leaders may also inspire and motivate team members by designing work settings that make employees feel more productive and satisfied (Greenleaf, 1998; Abbas *et al.*, 2020; Yeh *et al.*, 2022). In his essay "The Servant as Leader," written in 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf coined the concept "servant leadership". Greenleaf (1998) describes why and how he came up with the concept of servant leadership, as well as what a servant leader is, in this essay. Before putting this notion into existence, Greenleaf gave it a lot of thought. Servant leadership, according to Greenleaf, begins with a natural desire to serve others first (Greenleaf, 1998; Pawar *et al.*, 2020). Shafi *et al.* (2020) viewed that servant leadership serve the employees by way of sharing knowledge to bring the positive change in organization (Tripathi *et al.*, 2020). Servant leaders are willing to serve their followers, lead the organizational change, and motivate and support followers to achieve professional and emotional success, even when it is not in their best interests (Abbas *et al.*, 2020). The secrets of servant leadership are revealed after listening to one's inner voice as well as the voices of those who have grasped the truth (Shafi *et al.*, 2020).

Many factors influence a leader's effectiveness, and these factors can help to bring the positive change in organizations (Babalola *et al.*, 2022). Usually, employees are

galvanized by servant leaders, who nurture their learning and expansion to make a positive change and stimulate their dynamic capabilities (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020). Servant leaders persuade employees knowledge sharing behavior and fosters employees' creativity engagement, and job performance (Greenleaf, 1998; Pawar *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, studies pointed out that knowledge sharing bridge the gap, empower the employees' which positively contributes in organization performance by providing innovative goods and services (Tripathi *et al.*, 2020). This is also pertinent that in the value generation process, organizations are mostly likely dependent on individuals' knowledge and process innovation (Rehman *et al.*, 2015a). Rehman *et al.* (2017) contended that knowledge sharing among individuals, groups and the firm as a whole expected to generate fresh knowledge, fostering the employees' creativity, lead the change by fostering process innovation and established the business prospects.

Theoretical underpinning acknowledges that servant leadership primarily focus on subordinates needs rather their own needs and organizational goals (Greenleaf, 1978; Bhatti *et al.*, 2022; Patterson & Davis, 2015). Servant leaders prioritize needs of their followers above their own (Bhatti *et al.*, 2022; Patterson & Davis, 2015). They are more supportive and voluntarily share the knowledge which is viewed positively by their followers and organizations particular in inculcating change in organization (Wieland, 2021). Such leaders motivate their followers to express their opinions with them, are open to share information, lead the conversations with subordinates (Babalola *et al.*, 2022). Such leaders supportive to establish the healthier organizational culture, foster the free flow of information which resultantly enabled the organization to inculcate the radical innovation in organization (Patterson & Davis, 2015). Previous research has revealed that, in addition to organizational fairness, knowledge sharing is a significant factor in personnel's innovative working performance (Akram *et al.*, 2020). Thus, servant leaders prioritize the interest of their followers, voluntary knowledge sharing and consequently strengthen the knowledge process capabilities of organization (Swanson *et al.*, 2020; Rehman *et al.*, 2015).

Drawing from above discussion, the primary goal of this study is to expanding the knowledge in the discipline by investigating the mediating role of knowledge sharing and organization change. The gap in the literature suggest that organizational change is not studied so far extensively through the mediation of knowledge sharing (Babalola *et al.*, 2022; Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020; Luu, 2019). Extant of research studied the role of transformational and transactional leaders with organizational change (Anselmann and Mulder, 2020; Lin *et al.*, 2018; Hoon *et al.*, 2012). However, relationship of servant leaders to lead the organizational change particular in presence of knowledge sharing as mediator is relatively sparse (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2022; Eva *et al.*, 2019).

Literature Review

Servant leadership and Organizational change management

When a leader offers appropriate and coherent support for strategy, and the department's rules facilitate change, the unit is more likely to be able to execute new procedures and change quickly while the profits from new procedures, on the other hand, will be decreased if the leader does not show support for the new approach, or if the group has the competencies or enthusiasm to implement change effectively (Pawar *et al.*, 2020). Although, the deployment of the servant leader behavior in organization reduces tiredness and irritation as this style is enthusiastic and pushes people to become better members of the organization eventually bringing a change in organizational environment. The literature on leadership ideals is particularly significant to servant leadership (Li & Xie, 2022). Several servant leadership experts have indicated that in order to develop servant leadership, people must go on a path of self-discovery and personal change (Page & Wong, 2000; Pawar *et al.*, 2020). Prior research suggested that some determinants of employee creative behavior have been established, but relatively little research has looked into the

relationship between creativity and leadership (Shafi *et al.*, 2020). Drawing from this, we propose the following hypothesis.

H1 Servant leaders positively influence the organizational change management.

Servant leaders and Knowledge sharing

Today, one of the primary difficulties facing the Pakistani service sector is lack of knowledge sharing and its relationship with leadership (Ozturk *et al.*, 2021). However, due to asymmetry of literature, scholars are looking for to translate the role of servant leadership with the knowledge sharing (Islam *et al.*, 2018; Ozturk *et al.*, 2021). Today, extant of research attempted to focus on various leadership models that highlight the benefit of employees (Gui *et al.*, 2021). Among others, servant leaders possess unique characteristics to induce employees to share their knowledge to foster the change in organization (Ozturk *et al.*, 2021). Nowadays businesses work in a fast-paced and dynamic environment (Islam *et al.*, 2018), where organizations need to adjust their dynamic workforce with unique characteristic and skills which persuades the employees to share knowledge and to lead the incremental and radical change in organization (Khan *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, knowledge sharing plays an imperative role to come up with, promote, and implement new ideas (Galeazzo & Furlan, 2019; Swanson *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, if employees' perceived cost of value knowledge sharing or reluctant to share knowledge that eventually hampers organization change and resultantly effect the organization performance adversely.

H2 Servant leaders are more volunteer and supportive in knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing and organizational change management

Businesses' reliance on their knowledge asset, which appears in the form of the human capital (staff), has grown in recent years. Currently, businesses and countries rely on competitive information to help them flourish and survive (Akram *et al.*, 2020). The current economy is more knowledge-based; as a result, knowledge is considered a fundamental ingredient of rivalry, existence, and progress for businesses and even countries (Galeazzo & Furlan, 2019). Previous research has revealed that, in addition to organizational fairness, knowledge sharing is a significant factor in personnel's innovative working performance (Akram *et al.*, 2020). Knowledge, as the most valuable organizational asset, enables distinct organizational outcomes like innovation. Knowledge management has been found to be critical for increasing organizational performance in a number of studies. Voluntary knowledge sharing in the manner of providing and acquiring knowledge is essential for a good knowledge management system (Swanson *et al.*, 2020). Employees at all stages of innovative work behavior need to share their knowledge in order to succeed (Swanson *et al.*, 2022).

Employees are more driven to produce, communicate, promote, and implement new ideas when they may freely share information by donating it as well as acquiring it from other employees in their workplace (Galeazzo & Furlan, 2019). As a result, knowledge sharing helps employees not only share their information with other employees, but also allows others to gain useful knowledge that makes it easier to come up with, promote, and implement new ideas (Swanson *et al.*, 2020). Individuals are encouraged to share their information in order to broaden their knowledge base, improve their real concern abilities, and boost their job production quickly. Positive vibes, in the manner of knowledge exchange, reduce the negative impacts of a poor work atmosphere and encourage innovative abilities. Drawing from above, we proposed the following hypothesis.

H3 *Better the tendency of Knowledge sharing, the more positive effect on organizational change management*

Mediating effects of Knowledge Sharing

However, due to a dearth of research on this topic, scholars are looking into the role of servant leaders in encouraging employee creativity via the mediating role of knowledge sharing (Islam et al., 2018). One of the most significant difficulties facing is innovation and its connection with leadership (Ahmed et al., 2022). Servant leadership refers to a relationship between a leader and a follower in which the leader prioritizes the interests of the follower so that he might advance and thrive in the organization's professional career (Edú-Valsania et al., 2016). The model of leadership has a significant impact on an employee's connection to a business. Servant leadership demonstrates unselfish action for the benefit of employees' development and well-being (Luu, 2019). They also make it easier for their followers to demonstrate service behavior and share expertise with their colleagues and subordinates, which improves organizational performance.

Leaders use appeal and unique characteristics to entice employees to share their knowledge and that knowledge fosters change (Tuan, 2019), Most businesses nowadays work in a fast-paced environment (Islam *et al.*, 2018). Organizations must adjust with increasing frequency and severity for a variety of reasons, including rapidly increasing marketable objectives and organizational change through servant leaders, especially the service industry where the main concern is providing service efficiently (Khan *et al.*, 2022). Although the external environment does not change in a way that requires a reaction, the internal environment most likely does, since human dynamics within a company are continuously moving, and the organization must find a method to deal with those alterations (Luu, 2019). The relationship between leadership and follower commitment is predicted to be influenced by organizational knowledge sharing (Swanson et al., 2020). Therefore, we proposed that knowledge sharing mediates the relation between servant leadership and organization change management.

H4 Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organizational change management.

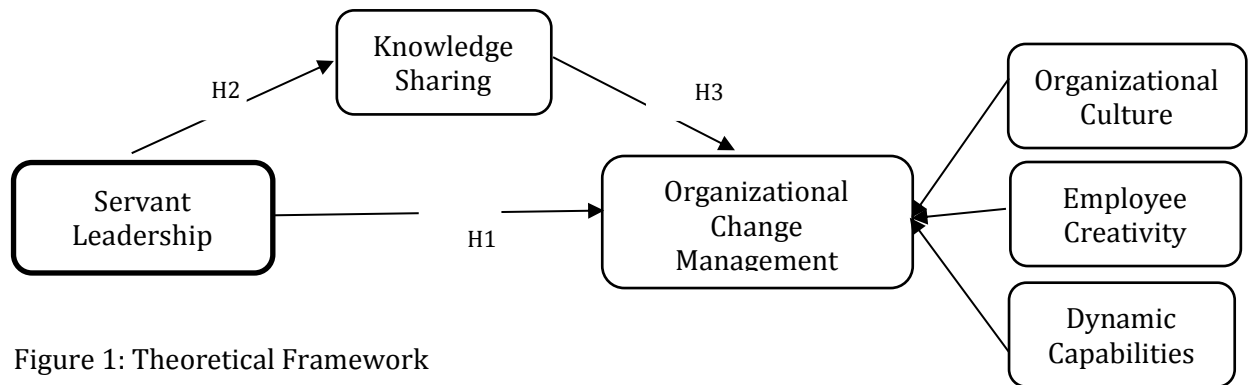


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

H1 Servant leadership > organizational change management

H2 Servant leadership > Knowledge Sharing

H3 Knowledge sharing > organizational change management

H4 Servant Leadership > Knowledge sharing > organizational change management.

Material and Methods

Data collection

This study used the survey approach (questionnaire) to collect the data from service managers. The employees were asked to rate the leaders as servants on the five-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Employees were given a total of 250 questionnaires, of which 210 were returned. Only 200 questionnaires were considered as valid response and rest of questions were discarded to incomplete response.

Instrumentation

This study used amended instrument from existing literature after incorporating minor changes. Five items of servant leadership were adopted from the work of (Page & Wong, 2000). We used the three Items of organizational culture by (López et al., 2004), 3 Items of Employee creativity by (Axtell et al., 2000) and 3 Items of dynamic capabilities (Pavlou & El Sawy, 2011) to measure the organizational change management. Whereas, we adopted the five items scale from the work of (Azema & Jafari, 2016) to measure the knowledge sharing.

Results and Discussion

Measurement Model

Table 1 indicates the results of internal reliability, validity and loading values. The convergent validity is supposed to validate one another's propensity. The values of (C- α) vary from 0.84 to 0.92, indicating that internal consistency is higher than the minimum of 0.70. Likewise, the values of factor loading are used to access the convergent validity present in the model. Table 1 shows that loading values are greater than 0.60, which suggests that convergent validity is established. Similarly, the values of composite reliability and discriminant validity are within the thresholds i.e., greater than 0.80 and 0.50 respectively.

Table 1
Results Internal Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Measurement items	Mean	S.D.	Standard Loading	Cronbach alpha's (C- α)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Square root of AVE
SL	SL1	3.17	0.70	0.653	0.756	0.85	0.632	0.81
	SL2			0.732				
	SL3			0.755				
	SL4			0.688				
	SL5			0.754				
KS	KS1	3.19	0.75	0.764	0.774	0.88	0.664	0.78
	KS2			0.773				
	KS3			0.734				
	KS4			0.782				
	KS5			0.832				
OCM	OC1	3.14	0.71	0.774	0.825	0.81	0.710	0.82
	OC2			0.813				
	OC3			0.773				
	EC4			0.742				
	EC5			0.854				
	EC6			0.737				
	DC7			0.687				
	DC8			0.762				
	DC9			0.775				

Table 2 indicates the results of correlation matrix. The results of correlation show that variables are positively correlated with each other in the study.

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	SL	OCM	KS
SL	3.13	0.74	0.76	1		
OCM	3.56	0.73	0.80	0.43**	1	
KS	3.33	0.67	0.74	0.23**	0.42*	1

**p< 0.01; * p<0.05

Table 3 shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for model fitness. We examined the model fitness through absolute fit measures ($\chi^2 / df = 2.956$, GFI=0.815, RMSEA=0.071), incremental fit measures (NFI=0.656, AGFI=0.712, CFI=0.751) and parsimonious fit measures (PGFI=0.667 and PNFI=0.713). All the model fit indices shed light that values are within the thresholds, indicating the model is appropriately fit.

Table 3
Model Fitness

Fit index	Scores	Threshold range
Absolute Fit Measures		
χ^2 / df	2.956	Less or equal to 2
GFI	0.815	Equal or greater.80
RMSEA	0.071	Less or equal .08
Incremental Fit Measures		
NFI	0.656	Less or equal to .90
AGFI	0.712	Less than 0.90
CFI	0.751	Less than 0.90
Parsimonious Fit Measures		
PGFI	0.667	Higher value is better
PNFI	0.713	Higher value is better

Mediation Effect

Direct Effect

Table 4 indicates direct and indirect relationship among the variables. The path relation (direct effect) from servant leadership to organizational change management is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .8101$; $p > .001$), indicating that the organizations with servant leaders positive and significant influence the organizational change. Thus, H1 is supported. In addition, the path relation from servant leadership to knowledge sharing is positive and significant ($\beta = .6398$; $p = .0000$), indicating that the organizations having servant leaders are more likely to disseminate knowledge sharing. Hence, H2 is also supported that servant leadership has a direct and significant impact on knowledge sharing behavior among employees. Nonetheless, results of study revealed that knowledge sharing positive and significantly influence organizational change management is positive and significant ($\beta = .4454$; $p = .0000$) indicating that if there is more knowledge sharing in the organization, there will be more change management in the organizations, so here, the H3 is accepted as the knowledge (KS) sharing has a positive and significant effect on organizational change management (OCM).

Indirect Effect

We tested the indirect effect by using the bootstrap method through process macro. The mediation can be analyzed if the direct effect of the independent variable shifts after introducing the mediator and reduces, it shows that there is partial mediation between variables. If after introducing the mediator, the whole effect shifts the mediator shows that there is full mediation as the independent variable has no direct effect. In the mediation test, the direct effect reduces but is significant which shows there is partial mediation. In this sense, we can translate that KS partially mediates the relationship between servant leadership and organization change management (see table 4), which shows the Hs is supported consistent with theoretical underpinning of the study (i.e., theory of reasoned action and knowledge-based view).

Table 4
Direct and indirect effects

Hypotheses	Variable	β	S.E	C.R	p	Results	Remarks
H1	SL → OCM	.8101	0.073	7.445	0.000	Significant	Supported
H2	SL → KS	0.6398	0.071	7.231	0.000	Significant	Supported
H3	KS → OCM	0.4454	0.063	5.871	0.000	Significant	Supported
Indirect Effect							
H4	SL→KS→OCM	.4342	0.100	2.442	0.000	Partial mediation	Supported

Discussion

The results of study revealed that servant leadership positive and significantly lead the change in organization thus supporting the H1. This finding is in aligned with prior research which illustrates that unlike other types of leaders, who are primarily concerned with enhancing organizational performance, a servant leader is genuinely concerned with serving employees (Greenleaf, 1998; Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020). As a result, servant leaders positively foster employee creativity (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020; Tripathi *et al.*, 2020). Employees are served by servant leaders, who nurture their learning and expansion to make a positive difference in the form of organizational change management (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2020).

Nonetheless, results of study also explained the positive and significant relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This relationship indicates that servant leaders' unselfish action for the benefit of employees' development and well-being (McCrimmon *et al.*, 2012), make it easier for their followers to demonstrate service behavior and share expertise with their colleagues and subordinates, to lead the positive organizational change (Tuan, 2019). In addition, while translating the partial mediating role of knowledge sharing, this study implies that servant leaders' unique characteristics induce the employees to share their knowledge that enhance the employees' creativity, inculcate the positive organizational culture and foster dynamic capabilities of employees (Islam *et al.*, 2018; Tuan, 2019; Shafi *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusion

The results of study conclude that knowledge sharing translating the partial mediating role between servant leadership and organization change management. This implies that knowledge sharing plays a critical role in organizational change management, thus postulating that a servant leader is one whose primary goal as a leader is to serve others by investing in people, their development and well-being to achieve organizational goals. It is also pertinent to state that knowledge sharing as a critical component of change processes goes beyond communicating information about quality standards or mistakes to avoid (Sihite *et al.*, 2020). This shed light that organizational change management is concerned with workers' innovative work behaviors therefore successful implementation of novel

ideas is an innovation that can be driven by servant leaders. Many organizations are working in Pakistan follow conventional leadership styles. In this sense, this study implies that service sector should more focus on servant leadership styles for positive change in organization. In addition, knowledge sharing will be largely dependent on how leaders create a collaborative working environment based on trust, openness, and ethics, therefore role of a servant leader is critical to bring the change.

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