# Servant Leadership and Teachers' Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Teachers' Empowerment

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#### Abstract

This research study aims to examine the mediating role of teachers' empowerment between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. For this purpose, a research study was conducted comprising of a sample of 279 subjects from higher secondary schools of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Using the PROCESS approach for mediation analysis, the findings of this study revealed that teachers' empowerment mediated the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. A mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methodology can be used to investigate this study in future. This research study can be helpful for scholars and practitioners who are responsible for developing more cost-effective leadership-training programs. It exhibits the potential to provide support for the current struggle in conducting research on the application of servant leadership concept within the educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Servant leadership, teachers' empowerment, teachers' job satisfaction, educational administrators

#### Introduction

In this era of globalization educational institutions are shifting towards more collaborative, collegial and service approach in the whole learning society. Educational practices in all over the world are pressurized by the demands brought on by rapid globalization. It is necessary to reform and evaluate the educational policies and practices in the view of these demands. In this scenario, educational leaders must ensure that students are being educated to meet the demands of global economy (Zahran et al., 2016). Now the educational institutions are placing much more emphasis on the development of democratic environment for learning within the organization. However, these types of changes affect our vision about educational leaders. Nohria and Khurana (2010) mentioned

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that there is still a dire need to provide satisfactory answer to many leadership issues despite of having fifty years research history on various features of leadership. The field of educational leadership also passes through the similar trend. Campbell (1999) revealed that a transformation of education management to education leadership is seen in the period of 1990s. It is so because various researchers like Ball (1990) and Kydd (1997) criticized on the 'managerialism' in education and proved its unsuitability for educational organizations.

The emergence of the concept of servant leadership points out a vital change towards the identification of power in education leadership study. The concept of servant leadership points out the model transformation in leadership from autocratic approach towards empowerment (Dambe and Moorad, 2008). Empowerment is a mode of creating successful leaders at different levels of the organization (Dennis and Bocarnea 2005). Nowadays, the competitive advantage is achieved not only through the use of technology but there are also many other factors like commitment and abilities of staff, creativity, innovation which may exert influence on its achievement (Gresov&Drazin, 2007). Rafig & Ahmed (1998) stated that employee behaviours are positively influenced by the factor of empowerment. Similarly, Mohanty and Baruah (2012) argued that teachers' empowerment is one of the significant and most fundamental components among the school effectiveness strategies. It results in developing skills among teachers which enable them to be responsible for their personal development by solving their individual problems in different circumstances.

Bogler (2001) argued that when educational leaders believe on the delegation of authority, share information and act as an open channel of communication then it will result in greater satisfaction of teachers. However, Hill Valari (2013) investigated that ineffectiveness of school leaders is caused by their inability to delegate duties to others. They remain busy in doing those tasks which should be delegated to others. Therefore, there is a dire need to study the element of empowerment in the education sector along with its relationship to servant leadership and ultimately to the teachers' job satisfaction.

## **Literature Review**

Operative schools have the major and key characteristic of effective leadership (Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi, 2013; Ghamrawi, 2011). Leadership which is responsible for developing trust in subordinates possesses the ability to promote effectiveness in them (Ghamrawi, 2011). Teacher satisfaction and retention has been considered to be possible through effective leadership (Ghamrawi and Al- Jammal, 2013). Many

researchers (such as Kabadayi1982; Bogler, 2001; Miears, 2004; Voon et. al., 2011; Hui et al. 2013; Tek, B. 2014) proved that teachers' job satisfaction is affected by the principals' leadership style. But, unfortunately the traditional schooling system emphasizes the importance of management instead of leadership (Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi, 2013).

According to Miears (2004), servant leadership style is one of the core leadership style which hassignificantimpact upon teachers' job satisfaction. Various researchers investigated this connection between servant leadership behaviourand job satisfaction(like Tischler, et al, 2016;Sepahvand et al, 2015; Laub 1999;Irving, 2005; Miears, 2004)

The concept of servant leadership is important for school because of its principle of building trust-based relationship in subordinates (Sergiovanni, 2006; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2010; Ferch and Spears, 2011). Brumely (2012) revealed that servant leaders are a continuous source of improvement in the organization. They are able to find out opportunistic approaches which results in fulfilling the expectations of teachers (Tey, 2006).

On the other hand, Hoy and Miskel (1982) revealed that teachers' job satisfaction is increased by providing them opportunity to participate in decision making process. In addition, various studies (like Hui et al, 2013; Evans& Johnson, 1990; Ma &MacMilan, 1999) found that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by conducive school climate for working and administrative support provided to teachers, respect given to teachers from principals and open communication between teachers and principals. However, some researchers (like Lawson, 2004; Pearson &Moomaw, 2005) revealed that the level of teachers' job satisfaction is associated with the autonomy given to them. The above-mentioned factors are linked with different aspects of servant leadership like developing employees and a care for follower leadership, valuing employees, meeting the needs of employees (Stone et al., 2003; Laub, 1999; Drury, 2004).

Servant leadership theory also put emphasis on the empowerment of employees, serving them and being committed to developing them (Page and Wong, 2000). Similarly, Mehrara and Bahalo (2013) investigated that servant leadership indexes (like humility, service, trust and kindness) increase the empowerment level of employees.

According to the Hanney, M. (2009) servant leaders show belief in the competences of followers by enabling them to share power, exercise abilities and perform their tasks efficiently. Also, Russell, R. (2001) investigated that servant leaders give importance to each individual in the organization and thus enables them to achieve their goals efficiently and effectively which is the fundamental value of servant leadership. However, Murari and Gupta (2012) investigated that the servant leadership has positive impact on the employee empowerment.

In the words of Short et al. (1994), empowerment is the process by which the school participants can be able to solve their problems and take charge of their own growth. Maeroff (1988) identified that teacher empowerment is based upon increased knowledge, improved status and access to decision making. In this way empowerment results in increased autonomy of individuals and it also brings definite changes in the professional authority of employees due to which they become more involved in wide-ranging organizational matters beyond their daily repetitive tasks. When teachers are provided with such a supportive, conducive, stimulating and motivating environment in the organization which can enhance their *ability* to act and perception of competence then they will become more satisfied (Wu and Short, 1996).

Many researchers (such as, Sagieet al., 2002; Ghaemi and Sabokrouh 2014; Somech, 2010; Witt et al., 2000) investigated thatteachers' empowerment is significantly correlated with job satisfaction. Likewise, Taylor and Tashakkori (1997) confirmed that teachers' involvement in decision making process increase their level of satisfaction. Some studies emphasized that teacher empowerment is positively correlated to greater productivity, greater self-esteem of teacher, increased job satisfaction, increased teacher knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter, stronger staff collegiality, in some cases higher achievement level of student (Rice & Schneidner, 1994; Marks & Louis, 1997).

## **Hypotheses**

Following hypotheses are proposed on the basis of above discussion:

H1: Servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction are positively correlated with each other.

H2: Servant leadership is positively related with teachers' empowerment.

H3: Teachers' empowerment is positively related with teachers' job satisfaction.

H4: Teachers' empowerment mediates the relationship of servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction.

## Research Methodology

## Sample

A total of 300 professional teachers from Government higher secondary schools have filled the survey questionnaires. Out of these returned questionnaires, a total of 279 questionnaires (response rate of 93%) were retained for further analysis. The remaining 21 responses were rejected for these two reasons. Firstly, some questionnaires were not suitable for further analysis because of having missing values. Secondly, multivariate and univariate outliers were also a major reason of rejection of these questionnaires. According to Hair et al., (1998), such questionnaires do not represent the sample, so it is important to exclude them. Most of the respondents of this survey belonged to the age group of 41 to 50. The sample was based upon 63.4 percent female and 36.6 percent male participants.

#### Measures

Servant leadership survey (SLS) instrument (Van Dierendonck&Nuijten,2011) was used in the research study to investigate different aspects of servant leadership. The internal consistency of this instrument was 0.825.

Teachers' job empowerment was measured byschool participant empowerment scale(Short & Rinehart, 1992). The internal consistency of this instrument was 0.808.

Teachers' job satisfaction was measured by the instruments of Lester (1987) and Ho and Au (2006). The internal consistency of this instrument was 0.928.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

After the collection of data, both the descriptive and inferential statistics were used for thedata analysis. The PROCESS procedure of Hayes (2012) was used in this study to examine the mediation effects. It calculates regression models by the criteria of Baron and Kenny (1986), along with normal theory test (sobel test) and Kappa-squared test.

## Results

The suitability of the measurement model was tested by following Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The model revealed remarkable chi-square statistic; X = 526.949; p = 0.000.

The results of other fit indices revealing the fitness of model with population were comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.96, Tucker-lewis index (TLI) = 0.95 and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.05. These are the generally accepted values for fitness of model (Hu and

Bentler, 1999). It allows us to proceed further for testing the hypothesized relationships in the model.

Correlation analysis is used to test the strength of hypothesized relationships of the study.

**Table 1 Correlations analysis** 

Variables	Mean	SD	SL	TE	JS
Servant Leadership	3.34	0.28	1		
Teachers' Empowerment	3.39	0.27	.302**	1	
			.000		
Teachers' job satisfaction	3.03	0.30	.623**	.241**	1
-			.000	.000	

The results of table (1) depict a positive and strong correlation of .302\*\*, .623\*\* and .241\*\* between the three main constructs i.e. servant leadership, teachers' empowerment and teachers' job satisfaction of the research study.

PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Model = 4

Y = JS

X = SL

M = TE

Sample size = 279

Table 2 Servant leadership/ Teachers' job satisfaction (Total effect model)

Model Summary Outcome: JS

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6230	.3882	169.8331	175.7267	1.000	277.00	000. 0
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	44.1590	9.2949	4.7509	.000	25.861	62.456

Table (2) reveals that the predictor variable servant leadership explains 3% variance in teachers' job satisfaction (R-square=.3882). The value of 'F' is 175.73which is statistically significant p<.0001. Servant leadership significantly predicts the outcome variable teachers' job satisfaction,  $\beta$  = 1.22, t = 13.256, p<.0001. The positive value of 'b' indicates a positive correlation between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 3 Servant leadership/ Teachers' empowerment. Outcome: TE

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.3022	.0913	56.264	27.8426	1.000	277.000	.000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	70.2248	5.3500	13.1262	.000	59.693	80.756
SL	.2806	.0532	5.2766	.000	.1759	.3852

The results of table (3) show that the predictor variable of servant leadership explains 9% variance in teachers' empowerment (R-square=.0913). Servant leadership significantly predicts the teachers' empowerment,  $\beta = .2806$ , t = 5.276, p<.0001.

Table 4 Servant leadership, Teachers, empowerment/ Teachers' job satisfaction Outcome: JS

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6255	.3912	169.5981	88.6769	2.000	276.00	.000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	35.5418	11.8296	3.004	.002	12.2541	58.829
TE	.1227	.1043	1.1763	.2405	0826	.3281
SL	1.1901	.0968	12.289	.000	.999	1.380

Table (4) depicts the mediating role of teachers' empowerment between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. The findings reveal that predictor variable servant leadership ( $\beta$  =1.19, t=12.29, p=.0000) and mediating variable teachers' job empowerment ( $\beta$  =.1227, t=1.18, p=.2405) significantly predict the outcome variable of teachers' job satisfaction. However, the results in this table also fulfill the last condition of mediation by depicting that the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction in table (2) is stronger having value of unstandardized beta  $\beta$  = 1.22 than its 'b' value in table (4) i.e.  $\beta$  = 1.19.

Total effect of X on Y

Total effect	OLAOHI						
Effect	SE	t	р	LLCI	ULCI		
1.2246	.0924	13.256	.000	1.0427	1.4064		
Direct effec	et of X on Y						
Effect	SE	t	р	LLCI	ULCI		
1.1901	.0968	12.2896	.000	.9995	1.3808		
Indirect effect of X on Y							
	Effe	ect B	oot SE E	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
T	E .03	344	.0361	0225	.1214		

The total effect of servant leadership on outcome variable teachers' job satisfaction is  $\beta = 1.22$ , p<.0001 and the direct effect including the combination of independent variable servant leadership and mediating variable teachers' empowerment predicting teachers' job satisfaction is  $\beta = 1.19$ , p=.0000.

However, the beta for indirect effect of servant leadership on teachers' job satisfaction through the mediation of teachers' empowerment is .0344 with a bootstrapped standard error of .0361 and a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.0225 to .1214. Thus, the beta value (.0361) of teachers' empowerment depicts that it statistically significantly mediates the relationship between predictor variable servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction.

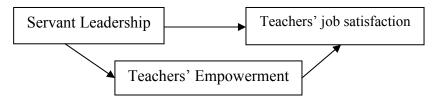
Preacher and Kelley (2011) Kappa-squared

	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
TE	.0235	.0187	.0014	.0710		
Sobel Test Normal theory tests for indirect effect						
Effect	se	Z		p		
.0344	.0305	1.12	90	.2589		

The kappa-squared value ( $k^2$ ) for this data is .02, 95% B Ca CI [.0014, .0710] which confirms the mediation of teachers' empowerment in the relationship of predictor variable servant leadership and outcome variable teachers' job satisfaction. Similarly, the mediation of teachers' empowerment in this relationship is also confirmed by the sobel test having values of indirect size effect  $\beta$  = .0344, associated z-score (z=1.129) and p-value (p=.259).

Therefore the hypothesized relationship between three constructs of study i.e. servant leadership, teachers' empowerment and teachers' job satisfaction is confirmed on the basis of these results. Consequently, all the four hypotheses are also supported.

Direct and indirect effect of servant leadership on teachers' job satisfaction Model



Independent variable  $\beta$  = 1.190, p<.0001 Dependent variable  $\beta$  = .2806,p<.0001 Mediating variable  $\beta$  = 1.227, p<.0001

Figure 1: Direct and indirect effect of servant leadership on teachers' job satisfaction

#### **Discussion**

The results of mediating effects are the most significant part of the study, the theoretical explanation for reasons of mediation could better be explained through theories instead of past studies. Therefore, an important theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964) provide theoretical basis for this research study.

Like social exchange theory (Blau,1964), the mediation results of the study reveal that positive servant leader behavior develop a sense of autonomy, obligation and power among followers (i.e. teachers' empowerment) which ultimately make them more satisfied with their jobs.

Additionally, associated toDouglas McGregor theory Y (1960), the mediation results of this study reveal that positive servant leader behavior provide better opportunities to followers in the form of autonomy, obligation and power (i.e. teachers' empowerment) which ultimately helps in satisfying their higher order needs and therefore, utilizes the creative potential of followers for the institution.

These results validate the findings of previous studies (Mayer et al. 2008; Asag-gau and Van Dierendonck, 2011) which revealed that servant leadership helps in fulfilling the psychological needs of followers in the form of empowerment. All these studies provide support to the basic principle of servant leadership that it will raise the well-being and confidence of the followers.

Furthermore, the findings of this study reveal that when teachers are encouraged to take their own decisions by showing trust in their capabilities then the ultimate result is upsurge in their level of job

satisfaction. The concept of motivational empowerment encourages the personal development of the people and also fosters an attitude of self confidence among followers as well as enables them to exercise personal power (Laub, 1999). Consequently, the people become more pleased and satisfied. These results provide further validation forprior research studies whichconfirmed that teachers' job satisfaction is associated with their involvement in decision making process. Teachers will feel more pleased when principalbelieves on sharing of information, delegates authority and act as an open channel of communication with others. Limited opportunities to participate in decision making results in low level of teachers' satisfaction (Rice and Schneider, 1994; Imper et al., 1990; Poulin and Walter, 1992; Hall et al. 1992).

Similarly, the results of study indicate that when principals as servant leaders show trust in the capabilities of employees and provide them boundaries within which they are free to achieve their specific goals; in return the feeling of empowerment is increased among teachers. This scenario is consistent with the findings of Mehrara and Bahalo (2013), who investigated that servant leadership indexes (like humility, service, trust and kindness) increase the empowerment level of employees.

Moreover, the results of study clearly reveal that teachers' job satisfaction is associated with teachers' empowerment. With the rise in level of teachers' empowerment the level of job satisfaction is raised. This finding is in tandem with the prior research studies (Sergiovanni, 2006;Farling et al., 1999; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Ferch& Spears, 2011; Evans & Johnson, 1990; Ma & MacMilan, 1999) which investigated that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by conducive school climate for working and administrative support provided to teachers, respect given to teachers from principals and open communication between teachers and principals.

However, the results of this study have certain limitations as well. These results are explicitlypertinent to the education sector of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The relationship of these variables can be generalized by conducting future research in different organizational settings. Secondly, the nature of this research study is cross-sectional. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct longitudinal studies in future for studying the casual impact of study variables in long run.

In conclusion, the results of this study give an insight into the process where servant leadership exerts positive influence on teachers' job satisfaction through teachers' empowerment. Educational leaders who adopt servant leadership behavior in daily routine activities are able to find out opportunistic approaches which results in fulfilling the expectations of teachers.

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