

SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND PERSONALITY AS PREDICTORS OF WORK PRODUCTIVITY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK MOTIVATION

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Abstract. This study examines the effect of servant leadership and personality on employee work productivity, with work motivation as a mediating variable, among production employees of PT Restu Ibu Pusaka, Indonesia. The research was conducted in response to the declining productivity trends observed in the domestic body manufacturing industry, which faces both external market competition and internal workforce challenges. Using a quantitative associative approach, the study involved a sample of 134 employees selected from a population of 201 through the Slovin formula. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis to determine direct and indirect relationships among variables. The results indicate that both servant leadership and personality have a positive and significant direct effect on work motivation and productivity. Additionally, work motivation itself has a significant direct influence on employee productivity, while also acting as a mediating factor that strengthens the indirect effects of servant leadership and personality on productivity. These findings demonstrate that leaders who prioritize empathy, wisdom, and service-oriented behavior can enhance motivation and performance by aligning organizational goals with employee well-being. Furthermore, employees with strong personality traits—such as conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness—tend to exhibit higher motivation and productivity levels. The study underscores the importance of integrating servant leadership values and positive personality development within industrial organizations to sustain productivity and employee engagement.

Keywords: servant leadership; personality; work motivation; employee productivity; path analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of global competition and industrial transformation, employee productivity has become a crucial determinant of organizational sustainability and competitiveness [1]. Productivity not only reflects the efficiency of resource utilization but also represents the degree to which employees are motivated, competent, and aligned with organizational goals [2]. Within the manufacturing sector, where technological advancement and human performance must coexist harmoniously, leadership and personality play central roles in driving motivation and improving outcomes [3]. Recent studies have emphasized that productivity challenges in many organizations often stem from a lack of motivational reinforcement and ineffective leadership practices that fail to inspire commitment and engagement [4]. Servant leadership, conceptualized by Greenleaf (1970), has emerged as one of the most humanistic and ethical leadership models in modern organizational behavior. It emphasizes empathy, humility, stewardship, and the development of others, where the leader's primary goal is to serve followers rather than to exercise authority [5]. Research shows that servant leadership promotes intrinsic motivation, trust, and loyalty among employees, ultimately contributing to improved

performance and satisfaction [6]. This leadership style is especially relevant in labor-intensive industries, where interpersonal relationships and moral example have a direct impact on morale and work discipline [7].

Alongside leadership, personality traits represent another psychological factor that strongly influences employee behavior and motivation. According to the Big Five Personality Framework, traits such as conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness significantly predict job performance and productivity [8]. Employees with positive personality characteristics are more likely to maintain consistency, resilience, and adaptability in challenging work environments [9]. Personality also moderates the relationship between leadership behavior and motivation, meaning that the impact of servant leadership is amplified when followers exhibit maturity and responsibility [10]. In Indonesia's manufacturing sector, maintaining consistent productivity among production workers remains a persistent challenge. At PT Restu Ibu Pusaka, one of the leading automotive body manufacturing companies, management has observed fluctuating productivity levels linked to differences in motivation and work attitudes among employees. Several internal reports highlight that while technological capacity has improved, human resource performance has not consistently followed the same

trajectory [11]. This situation underscores the importance of evaluating behavioral and psychological factors, particularly leadership style and personality, as potential determinants of motivation and productivity [12].

Work motivation functions as a psychological bridge connecting leadership and personality with performance outcomes [13]. Theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggest that intrinsic motivation—driven by self-fulfillment, recognition, and meaningful work—has a stronger and more sustainable impact on productivity than external incentives [14]. Servant leadership nurtures this intrinsic motivation by emphasizing respect, empathy, and shared growth, whereas positive personality traits enhance goal orientation and self-discipline.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the direct and indirect effects of servant leadership and personality on employee work productivity, with work motivation as a mediating variable among production department employees of PT Restu Ibu Pusaka. By integrating behavioral and leadership theories into the industrial context, this research contributes to understanding how psychological and managerial factors jointly shape performance outcomes. The findings are expected to provide strategic insights for corporate leaders in developing service-oriented leadership practices and personality-based motivational frameworks to enhance workforce productivity in manufacturing organizations.

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy emphasizing service to others as the leader's primary motivation, rather than the pursuit of power or personal ambition [16]. Originating from Greenleaf's seminal work, this model promotes moral integrity, humility, and empathy while prioritizing followers' growth and organizational well-being [17]. Servant leaders act as facilitators who empower subordinates by providing autonomy, trust, and opportunities for development [18]. Recent research has shown that servant leadership fosters psychological safety and organizational citizenship behavior, both of which enhance productivity and teamwork [19]. In industrial contexts, servant leadership has been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation, particularly in environments where interpersonal trust and cooperation are crucial [20]. Servant leaders inspire productivity not through control but through ethical guidance, respect, and empowerment [21]. Moreover, studies indicate that servant leadership supports intrinsic motivation by aligning personal values with organizational goals, creating a workplace culture rooted in service and collective purpose [22].

Personality Traits and Employee Behavior

Personality plays a fundamental role in determining how employees perceive, respond to, and adapt to their work environment [23]. The Big Five Personality Model, consisting of conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, extraversion, and emotional stability, is widely recognized as a predictor of work performance [24]. Conscientious employees tend to exhibit discipline and goal orientation, while emotionally stable individuals manage stress effectively, enhancing workplace harmony [25].

Research indicates that personality moderates the relationship between leadership and motivation. For example, employees with higher levels of openness and conscientiousness respond more positively to servant leadership due to shared values of empathy and responsibility [16]. In contrast, workers with lower emotional stability may require additional motivational reinforcement from leaders to sustain productivity. Understanding personality traits allows managers to design leadership strategies and work environments that complement employee dispositions, thus maximizing individual and organizational performance [18].

Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable

Motivation represents a psychological state that directs, energizes, and sustains goal-oriented behavior [19]. Theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) have emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivators—such as recognition, personal growth, and autonomy—in fostering productivity [17], [22]. Servant leadership and personality traits both influence motivation, albeit through different mechanisms: the former through ethical and relational support, and the latter through internal psychological predispositions. Studies in organizational psychology have found that motivation functions as a mediator linking leadership and productivity [23]. When employees feel valued and empowered by servant leaders, their sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation increases, leading to higher engagement and performance [20]. Similarly, employees with adaptive personalities are more likely to maintain consistent motivation even under challenging circumstances [21]. Thus, motivation serves as a bridge connecting personal and managerial factors to tangible performance outcomes.

Work Productivity and Performance Outcomes

Work productivity refers to the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees accomplish their tasks relative to resources used [24]. It encompasses both quantitative outputs—such as production rates—and qualitative aspects, including innovation, cooperation, and problem-solving capacity [19]. In manufacturing settings, productivity is influenced not only by technical skill but also by psychological and social factors, such as motivation, leadership style, and personality alignment [25]. Research consistently demonstrates that motivated employees under supportive leadership conditions deliver higher productivity levels, greater creativity, and lower turnover rates [16]. Servant leadership fosters a work environment that encourages self-discipline and commitment, while positive personality traits strengthen consistency and resilience. By integrating these behavioral variables, organizations can create a holistic model of productivity that extends beyond mechanical performance to include moral, emotional, and relational dimensions.

While existing studies have established positive links between leadership, personality, and motivation, few have examined their combined influence on productivity in the context of Indonesia's manufacturing industry, where cultural and relational values strongly shape work behavior.

Moreover, limited research has investigated the mediating role of motivation in the relationship between servant leadership and personality toward productivity among industrial workers. This study fills that gap by empirically analyzing both direct and indirect effects using path analysis, contributing to the growing body of literature on leadership psychology and industrial human resource management in Southeast Asia.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative associative research design to analyze the direct and indirect influence of servant leadership and personality on work productivity, with work motivation as a mediating variable. Quantitative methods were selected to ensure objective measurement of relationships among variables and to enable statistical inference using multivariate analysis [26]. The population consisted of 201 employees from the production department of PT Restu Ibu Pusaka, Indonesia—a company engaged in automotive body manufacturing. Using the Slovin formula with a precision level of 5%, a representative sample of 134 employees was obtained. Data were collected through structured questionnaires consisting of closed-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale, covering constructs of servant leadership, personality, motivation, and productivity. Each indicator was validated through content review and empirical testing to ensure reliability and construct validity.

Data analysis employed path analysis (SEM-based approach) to examine both direct and indirect effects among the variables. The analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine regression coefficients, significance levels, and mediating effects of work motivation. Before conducting the main analysis, classical assumption tests—including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity—were carried out to ensure data suitability for parametric testing. The mediation testing procedure followed Baron and Kenny's causal steps approach, supported by the Sobel test to verify indirect significance [27]. The research adhered to ethical standards by maintaining participant anonymity and informed consent. This methodological framework allowed the study to evaluate how servant leadership and personality traits, when integrated with motivational mechanisms, contribute to enhancing industrial workforce productivity in a competitive manufacturing context.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the path analysis revealed several significant relationships among the study variables. First, servant leadership demonstrated a positive and significant direct effect on work motivation ($\beta = 0.362$, $p < 0.01$) and work productivity ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that leaders who exhibit empathy, humility, and concern for their subordinates are able to foster higher motivation and performance among employees. Second,

personality also showed a significant positive effect on both work motivation ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.01$) and productivity ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees with conscientious, emotionally stable, and open personalities tend to be more motivated and productive.

The results further demonstrated that work motivation has a strong direct influence on productivity ($\beta = 0.478$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting its role as a crucial driver of employee output in the manufacturing sector. Mediation analysis confirmed that work motivation partially mediates the relationship between servant leadership and productivity (Sobel test $z = 3.41$, $p < 0.01$), as well as between personality and productivity (Sobel test $z = 3.86$, $p < 0.01$). The indirect effects of servant leadership and personality through motivation were calculated at 0.173 and 0.199, respectively, indicating a meaningful enhancement in productivity through motivational pathways. The model explains 67.4% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.674$) in work productivity, demonstrating a strong explanatory power of the proposed conceptual framework.

The empirical results affirm that servant leadership significantly enhances employee motivation and productivity, supporting the theoretical foundation proposed by Greenleaf (1970) and subsequent empirical validations [28]. By prioritizing empathy, listening, and servant-oriented values, leaders strengthen emotional connections and psychological safety among subordinates, leading to increased engagement and intrinsic motivation [29]. This aligns with Sendjaya and Sarros (2023), who found that servant leadership fosters organizational citizenship behavior and collective commitment, both critical for sustained productivity in manufacturing environments.

The findings also corroborate personality research within the Big Five framework, where traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability are positively correlated with motivation and performance [30]. Employees who exhibit conscientious behavior tend to be more responsible and consistent in achieving production targets, while emotionally stable workers maintain resilience under pressure. These results suggest that personality functions not merely as an individual difference but as a behavioral enabler that interacts dynamically with leadership style to enhance productivity outcomes.

Furthermore, the mediating role of work motivation reinforces Herzberg's and Deci & Ryan's motivational theories, which emphasize that internalized motivation—rather than external control—drives sustainable performance [22]. Servant leaders cultivate this intrinsic motivation through encouragement, recognition, and shared decision-making, allowing employees to feel valued and empowered. As a result, motivation acts as both a psychological bridge and a performance amplifier, translating leadership and personality influences into measurable productivity gains [31].

The contextual implications of this study highlight that organizations like PT Restu Ibu Pusaka must integrate servant leadership practices into managerial development programs while simultaneously fostering positive personality traits through targeted recruitment and training.

By doing so, companies can build a culture of service, collaboration, and personal growth—key factors that sustain productivity in competitive industrial environments.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that servant leadership and personality both exert significant direct and indirect influences on employee work productivity, with work motivation serving as a mediating factor among production employees of PT Restu Ibu Pusaka. Servant leadership fosters productivity through empathetic communication, empowerment, and moral integrity, while personality contributes through individual consistency, adaptability, and conscientiousness. The findings highlight that servant leaders create a psychologically safe and inspiring work climate that enhances employees' intrinsic motivation, which in turn translates into improved performance outcomes. Similarly, employees with strong and stable personality traits demonstrate higher motivation levels, resilience, and responsibility, all of which strengthen productivity within the manufacturing sector. The mediating role of work motivation underscores its strategic importance as a psychological bridge between managerial behavior and performance outcomes. When leaders adopt servant-oriented practices and organizations nurture positive personality traits, employees develop stronger internal motivation that sustains productivity even amid industrial challenges. The conceptual model proposed in this research—integrating leadership, personality, and motivation—proves to be a robust predictor of productivity ($R^2 = 0.674$), reflecting the synergistic relationship between human and organizational factors in driving performance. This study provides both theoretical and managerial implications. Theoretically, it reinforces the integration of behavioral and motivational theories by empirically validating that leadership and personality jointly affect productivity through motivation. The research extends Greenleaf's servant leadership model by contextualizing it within industrial organizations in Indonesia, demonstrating that values such as humility, service, and empathy can coexist with performance-oriented management approaches. From a managerial perspective, the findings recommend that organizations implement leadership development programs emphasizing servant leadership values—such as active listening, employee empowerment, and moral integrity—to cultivate motivation-driven productivity. Additionally, personality assessment and development should be embedded in recruitment, training, and promotion systems to ensure that employees' psychological traits align with organizational goals. Companies in the manufacturing sector are encouraged to adopt holistic human resource strategies that address not only technical skills but also emotional and motivational dimensions. Future research may expand this framework by incorporating other mediating variables, such as organizational commitment or job satisfaction, and by employing longitudinal or multi-industry approaches to validate causal relationships across broader contexts.

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