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Exploring the Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Job Performance with Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence and Moderating Role of Grit and Compassion

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Abstract

This study delves into examining the impact of servant leadership on job performance within the realm of higher education institutions. The concept of servant leadership has garnered substantial attention from both practitioners and researchers due to its constructive influence on employee job performance. Within this investigation, we delve into unraveling the potential mediating impact of emotional intelligence and the potential moderating roles of grit and compassion in the intricate interplay between servant leadership and job performance. The data for this research was amassed from a sample size of 250 pairs of leaders and followers, utilizing a questionnaire adapted from prior scholarly works. The findings of our study illuminate a noteworthy and affirmative association between servant leadership and job performance, with emotional intelligence serving as an intermediary factor. Furthermore, our inquiry reveals that both grit and compassion exhibit a modulating function within the connection between servant leadership and job performance. These research outcomes hold significance for the advancement of leadership practices, augmenting job performance levels, and cultivating a deeper comprehension of the pivotal roles of emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion.

Introduction

The rapid growth of the information-based economy, technological advancements, social upheavals, and the diminishing of traditional funding sources have raised concerns about traditional methods of leadership in higher education. To address these challenges, the higher education sector requires leaders who possess the capabilities to navigate these complexities and motivate employees effectively. However, traditional leadership approaches that have been successful in manufacturing, health, and banking sectors have shown limited effectiveness in bringing about change in higher education. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the higher education landscape, resulting

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in increased workloads and stress for faculty members, thereby exposing and challenging the role of leadership.

In response to these challenges, servant leadership has gained attention from both researchers and practitioners as an effective leadership model for promoting well-being and performance during times of disruption and transition (Turner, 2022). While numerous studies have examined the impact of servant leadership on various outcome variables in disciplines such as business, health, and education (Liden et al., 2015), the higher education sector has received relatively little attention in this context (Ghasemy et al., 2022). Research has indicated that poor leadership styles are occasionally observed in higher education settings, leading to detrimental effects on employee performance (Blase & Blase, 2006). Therefore, effective leadership is crucial in higher education institutions to provide direction and guidance, delivering productive results and cultivating valuable talent for the employment market (Quinn & Andrews, 2010; Haider & Ahmed, 2017).

Servant leadership, characterized by prioritizing followers' needs and serving others, aligns with ethical and honest ideals, fostering a sense of care, ethics, community building, and serving others first (Liden et al., 2008; Graham, 1991; Sendjaya et al., 2008). It has been shown to be beneficial in educational settings, as it motivates teachers and emphasizes serving communities to drive positive change (Haider & Ahmad, 2017; Ghasemy et al., 2022). Additionally, emotional intelligence plays a vital role in understanding and managing the emotions of followers, which is essential for effective leadership. Although research has explored the relationship between servant leadership and emotional intelligence, the significance of emotional intelligence as a mediator between servant leadership and job performance in the education sector remains unknown.

Furthermore, while servant leadership has been extensively examined in relation to organizational and individual-level outcomes, there is still a need to investigate its role in various settings (Turner, 2022). It has been observed that servant leadership can shape employees' mindsets and contribute to characteristics of grit, highlighting the potential positive influence of servant leadership on employees' job performance (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Ullah et al., 2020). Additionally, empathy, a key component of servant leadership, describes the ability to understand another person's suffering, while compassion goes beyond understanding and involves actively reducing that suffering. The impact of compassion on the relationship between servant leadership and job performance has not been examined thoroughly.

The higher education sector faces evolving challenges due to the rapid growth of the information-based economy, technological advancements, social upheavals, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional leadership approaches that have been successful in other sectors have shown limited effectiveness in bringing about change in higher education.

This study focuses on higher education institutes in Quetta, Balochistan, as the specific context for investigating the impact of servant leadership on job performance. The study aims to collect data from employees and leaders within these institutes to

analyze the relationship between servant leadership and job performance, considering how does servant leadership impact job performance in higher education institutes, and what is the role of emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion in this relationship? The study will utilize quantitative research methods and employ a questionnaire adapted from previous studies to gather data from a sample of participants. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of effective leadership practices, job performance enhancement, and the importance of emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion in the higher education sector in Quetta, Balochistan, Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the application and impact of servant leadership in the higher education context. Furthermore, the role of emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion in the relationship between servant leadership and job performance remains largely unexplored. Therefore, there is a need to address these gaps and understand the dynamics of servant leadership and its impact on job performance, as well as the mediating role of emotional intelligence and the moderating roles of grit and compassion.

Literature Review

Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership originated from Robert Greenleaf, who proposed that an individual can possess both the qualities of a leader and a servant (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf's interest in servant leadership was sparked by his reading of Hermann Hesse's fictional work, "Journey of the East," which depicted effective and ineffective followers and leaders (Greenleaf, 1977). In the story, a character named Leo, who served the group on their quest, was crucial for the team's success. Greenleaf concluded that Leo exemplified true leadership as the group struggled to function effectively without him (Greenleaf, 1977). This led Greenleaf to explore the idea of leaders prioritizing the needs of their followers, believing that such leaders could be more effective in contemporary organizations. He argued that as society changes, so do people's perceptions of effective leadership, power, and authority. According to Greenleaf (1977), servant leaders are individuals who prioritize the needs of their followers and have a primary goal of serving others rather than themselves.

Eva et al. (2019) in their comprehensive literature review on servant leadership, provided a definition of servant leadership as a leadership approach that prioritizes the interests and needs of followers. They emphasized that this approach involves a shift from self-centeredness to concern for others, both within the organization and in the broader community. A servant leader takes the time to understand the desires of their followers and supports them in achieving their goals. While several leadership philosophies have emerged that emphasize followers, servant leadership stands out because it focuses on supporting followers to realize their full potential and meet the needs of larger stakeholder groups (Schwarz et al., 2016).

Servant leadership is characterized by several key attributes. Conceptualization refers to a leader's ability to have a comprehensive understanding of the organization,

perceive the big picture, and effectively communicate a vision to their followers (Liden et al., 2015). Empowering entails providing followers with a level of independence and authority to make decisions about their work (Liden et al., 2015). Helping subordinates grow and thrive involves a leader's concern for the career and development of their followers, providing assistance and guidance in these areas. Putting subordinates first refers to a leader's willingness to prioritize the needs and expectations of their followers over their own interests. Behaving ethically relates to a leader's adherence to established ethical norms and the ethicality and acceptability of their words and actions to followers. Emotional healing refers to a leader's ability to address emotional pain by being attentive to the problems, issues, and feelings of others. Adding value to the community refers to a leader's contributions to the well-being of their followers and the broader community (Northouse, 2016; Liden et al., 2008, 2015).

The concept of leadership underwent a significant transformation as the traditional view associated leadership with individuals possessing high competence, legitimate power, a managerial position, and the ability to exert authority over others. The distinctive characteristics of servant leadership, as described above, set it apart from other leadership approaches (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). Servant leadership emphasizes compassion, empathy, and the principle of prioritizing followers' needs over self-care, legitimacy, and authority (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). Servant leaders constantly strive to develop their followers, fostering their growth, well-being, and autonomy in their roles. These characteristics make servant leadership particularly relevant to the higher education sector (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership also challenges individualism and promotes the growth of followers, benefiting the higher education sector in the long run (Taylor et al., 2007). Additionally, servant leadership has been identified as an effective leadership approach for faculty development, even in bureaucratic organizations characterized by excessive formalization and centralization (Eva et al., 2019; Sendjaya et al., 2008).

Servant Leadership and Job Performance

Job performance refers to the overall contributions an employee is expected to make to an organization within a specific time period in exchange for the benefits they receive (Motowidlo, 2000). Previous research by Spears (1996) has established a link between servant leadership and improved work performance. Servant leaders act as organizational agents (Parris & Peachey, 2013) and are committed to enhancing the well-being of their employees. Despite their emphasis on meeting employees' wishes and interests, servant leaders do not overlook the importance of employee job performance (Frech, 2003). Proactive servant leaders adopt a service-oriented approach to promote the long-term success of the organization (Eva et al., 2019).

Numerous studies conducted across different cultures and industries have demonstrated that servant leadership predicts various positive outcomes (Liden et al., 2015; Liden et al., 2008; Eva et al., 2019). For instance, servant leadership has been found to influence team performance and organizational success (Sousa & Dierendonck, 2016;

Choudhary et al., 2013). However, despite extensive research on the relationship between servant leadership and job performance, there is still some variation in the findings regarding the strength of this relationship (Lee et al., 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Some studies have reported a strong correlation (Ling et al., 2016), while others have found only a weak association (Ling et al., 2016). Therefore, our understanding of the relationship between servant leadership and job performance remains limited (Lee et al., 2019). Likewise, Susanto et al (2023) also suggest that the relationship between both constructs should be explored in variety of setting, not only in industrial sector. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Servant leadership has a statistically significant influence on job performance.

Servant Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Job Performance

Emotional intelligence, as defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), refers to an individual's ability to perceive and differentiate their own and others' feelings and emotions, and to use this understanding to guide their actions and thoughts. While the theoretical framework of servant leadership takes precedence, the application of servant leadership philosophy can be influenced by one's personal state. Therefore, the development of a servant leadership mindset may require emotional intelligence. Research suggests that servant leaders who possess the ability to manage their own and others' emotions tend to be more effective compared to those lacking emotional intelligence (Lee et al., 2019; Plessis et al., 2015). Studies employing similar methodologies have also found a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and servant leadership (Shahzad et al., 2013; Barbuto et al., 2014; Shamshad, 2016). Furthermore, Kaur and Sharma (2019) assert that emotional intelligence influences job performance, while Sy et al. (2006) highlight the significant impact of emotional intelligence on job performance and job satisfaction for both employees and managers.

Barbuto et al. (2014) conducted research indicating that emotional intelligence is a good predictor of a leader's servant-leader philosophy but may not be a strong predictor of servant-leader actions as evaluated by followers. Similarly, Ullah et al. (2022) explored the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance as an antecedent of servant leadership. Given the limitations in existing research, the present study aims to address this gap by examining the role of emotional intelligence as a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and job performance. We believe that emotional intelligence can help leaders and employees maintain a positive outlook, forgive, and move forward, thereby managing emotions for the benefit of organizations. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle the emotions of their colleagues, effectively motivating staff performance (Aashkanasay & Dasborough, 2003). Similarly, individuals with strong emotional intelligence are more likely to maintain positive working relationships, which in turn enhances job performance (George, 2000). Similarly, Alsalminy et al.(2023) aruge what emotional intelligence plays role between servant leadership and job performace yet to be explored in variety of settings. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Emotional intelligence significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance.

Servant Leadership, Grit, and Job Performance

The concept of grit, as defined by Duckworth et al. (2007), refers to perseverance and passion for long-term goals, demonstrating dedication to achieving these goals despite obstacles, roadblocks, and the fear of failure. Considering the definition of grit, it can be inferred that there is a potential link between servant leadership and grit, as serving as a leader requires passion and perseverance. Serving others is a challenging task that demands a high level of dedication and persistence. Therefore, we propose that there is a connection between grit and servant leadership.

Servant leadership, as defined by Luthans and Avolio (2003), involves providing opportunities for followers to learn and grow in order to achieve their short and long-term objectives. However, long-term focus and success can only be attained with a mindset of grit (Duckworth, 2007; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Similarly, servant leadership is centered around serving for long-term success (Sendjaya, 2015). A servant leader is essentially a lifelong learner with a growth mindset, continuously developing various aspects of servant leadership such as emotional healing, empathy, persuasion, community building, awareness, foresight, and more. This process requires long-term commitment and perseverance, and grit plays a crucial role in acquiring these behaviors (Chan, 2016).

Moreover, grit is considered essential for success in various areas of life (Duckworth et al., 2017). It is believed that educators who possess non-academic characteristics can provide their students with a more beneficial educational experience. Similarly, there is substantial evidence that grit contributes to positive personal and organizational outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2007; Dugan et al., 2018). Furthermore, personality traits have been found to explain over 31% of the variance in leadership effectiveness evaluations, leading much of the leadership research to focus on trait-based leadership approaches (Derue et al., 2011).

However, it remains unclear which specific personality traits have the greatest impact on leadership and how they do so (Derue et al., 2011; Caza & Posner, 2018). It has been suggested that servant leaders need to overcome hurdles in the long run to be more effective (Ullah et al., 2021). Ullah et al. (2021) explored the mediating role of grit between servant leadership and job performance, proposing that grit should also be examined as a moderator in the relationship between the two concepts. Similarly, Neill et al. (2023) propose the role of grit should be explord with different leadership approaches. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Grit significantly moderates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance.

Servant Leadership, Compassion, and Job Performance

Compassion, defined as being affected by another's pain and having a desire to help, plays a significant role in the context of servant leadership. Compassionate and

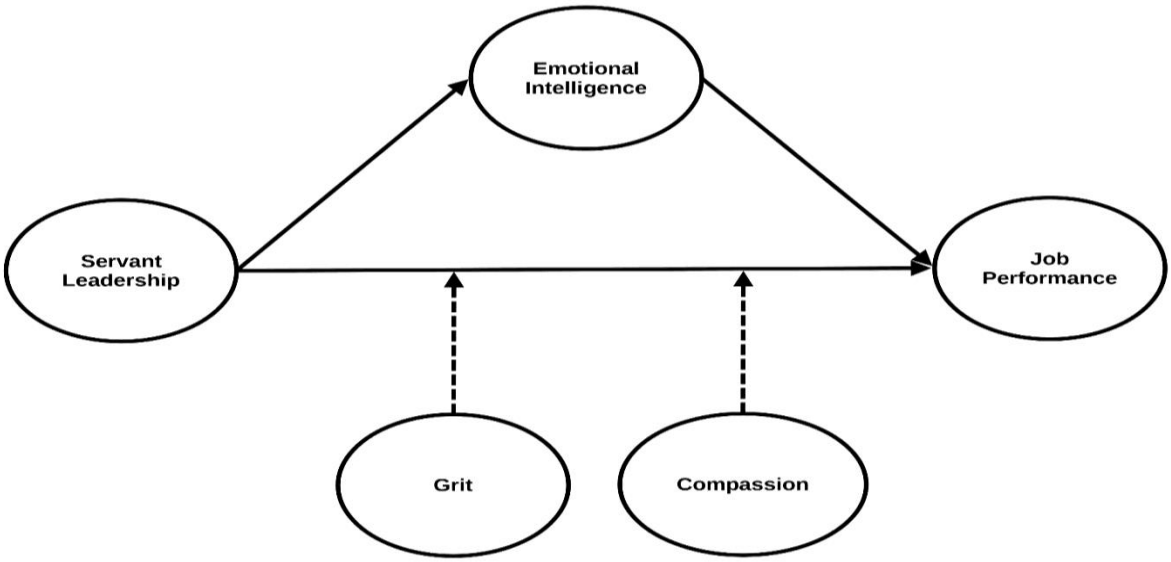
empathetic servant leaders are genuinely concerned about the well-being and suffering of their employees (Jit et al., 2017). In fact, compassion can serve as a motivator for servant leaders to exhibit greater empathy towards others (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). By incorporating compassion into the concept of servant leadership, leaders are better equipped to address and alleviate the suffering of their followers (Davenport, 2015).

Moreover, compassion has been identified as a positive predictor of job performance in various studies conducted across different organizations (Cameron et al., 2004). When leaders exhibit compassion, it fosters positive emotions and enhances the overall well-being of employees, consequently improving their job performance. Employees feel valued, listened to, and their opinions and needs are prioritized, leading to increased motivation and engagement in their work.

Ullah et al. (2020) explored the mediating role of compassion between servant leadership and job performance, suggesting that the level of compassion exhibited by leaders influences their effectiveness in eliciting desired performance from their followers. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the more servant leaders practice compassion, the stronger their influence will be in terms of achieving desired outcomes from their followers. By cultivating compassion in the work environment, positive relationships are established, the leader's influence over followers is enhanced, and overall job performance is improved. Likewise, Ahmed et al. (2022) posit that compassion does change the level of influence that leaders possess. Therefore, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Compassion significantly moderates the relationship between servant leadership and job performance.

Conceptual Framework



Theoretical Justification

Servant leadership, as a theoretical framework, emphasizes leaders' focus on serving their followers and promoting their growth and development. This concept has been widely discussed and supported in various studies (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2018), highlighting its positive influence on employee outcomes, including job performance.

Emotional intelligence, rooted in the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), focuses on individuals' ability to perceive, understand, and manage their own emotions and those of others. Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant impact of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2008) and employee outcomes, including job performance (Bar-On, 2006; Carmeli et al., 2010).

Grit, as defined by Duckworth et al. (2007), refers to the perseverance and passion for long-term goals. It has gained attention as a determinant of individual success and achievement, with studies highlighting its positive relationship with performance outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2007; Credé et al., 2017). Combining the concepts of servant leadership and grit, it can be argued that servant leaders' perseverance and passion for serving others align with the characteristics of grit, leading to enhanced job performance.

Compassion, as a concept, involves experiencing, recognizing, and taking action to alleviate the suffering of others (Dutton et al., 2014). Servant leadership emphasizes leaders' care and empathy towards their followers, which aligns with the principles of compassion. Research has shown that compassion positively influences employee well-being and performance (Cameron et al., 2004; Dutton et al., 2014), making it a relevant construct to explore in the context of servant leadership and job performance.

Methodology

Method

The study was quantitative and explanatory, with a non-probability sampling strategy that employed the convenience sampling methodology to obtain data from respondents.

Participants

The population of this study included teaching faculty members and department heads from five institutions in Quetta, Pakistan. The 300 surveys were distributed in total. The sample size was put 300 based on the previous studies. Later, 250 valid corresponding responses from heads of department (HODs) and a faculty member were gathered and included in the study (the response rate of study respondents was 83 percent). The responders included 61 HODs and faculty members reporting to them. Each group has one HOD and two to five faculty members.

Procedure

For data collection, respondents’ information was obtained from university websites and teaching faclulty - those who were present, were reached for data collection. The teaching staff were informed that their job performance would be evaluated by their direct supervisors and they would evaluate their leader's servant leadership abilities, as well as their emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion. As well as department directors were asked to assess the job performance of the teaching staff whom they supervise.

Separate questionnaires were presented to the teaching faculty and their supervisors. The replies of teaching faculty were then identified using a code so that their responses could remain anonymous. Furthermore, the identifying code made it easier to connect each teacher's replies to the leader's responses.

Measures

The study used adopted scales. On 7 item Likert scale we opted to measure servant leadership developed by (Liden et al., 2008), with Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. The sample question was "My HOD / Supervisor/ Boss takes time to talk to others on a personal level". Likewise, for grit 8-item scale was used by (Duckworth et al., 2007). The sample question was "I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one". Cronbach's alpha value was 0.76. Alike, to measure compassion we opted for the Santa Clare brief compassion scale (Hwang et al., 2008). The sample item was "I often have caring feelings towards people (strangers) when they seem to be in need" The alpha value is 0.90. In the same manner, to measure emotional intelligence 16-item scale was opted. Where sample item was, "I really understand what I feel" (Wong & Law, 2002). With the alpha value of 0.89. Likewise, to measure job performance we used a five-item scale. "My subordinate almost always performs better than what can be characterized as acceptable performance" (Kuvaas, 2007). Whereas the alpha value of the scale was 0.86.

Data analysis

For data analysis IBM SPSS 26 and SmartPLS 4 have been used.

Data Analysis and Findings

After getting the data from the respondents, the next step is data analysis. Data analysis includes preliminary and secondary steps. Preliminary steps include data screening, detecting outliers, normality assessment, and presenting the respondents' profile, and secondary steps include reliability, validity, and hypotheses testing through structural equation modelling (SEM). For preliminary steps IBM SPSS 26 and for analyzing secondary steps SmartPLS 4 have been used. Table 4.1 shows the detail of the respondent's profile. The sample respondents comprised 250 subordinates and 61 HODs. Out of the 250 respondents of study 151 (60.4%) were males and 99 (39.6%) we female. 211 (84.4%) respondents were from public universities and 39 (15.6%) were from private universities. Their ages were from 34.1 to 60 years (M =34.1). Regarding position 187 (76.8%) were Lecturers, 58 (23.2%) were assistant professors, 3 (1.2%) were associate professors, and only 2 (0.8%) were professors. Whereas, 61 HODs include; 41(67%) male and 20 (33%) female.

Profile of the Respondents

Table 4.1 summarizes the frequency distribution of respondents' demographic profiles.

Table 0.1:Demographics of study

Demographic variables	***(N=250)***	***Valid Percentage (%)***
Gender		
Male	151	60.40%
Female	99	39.60%
Total	250	100%
Org		
Public	211	84.40%
Private	39	15.60%
Total	250	100%
Position		
Lecturer	187	74.80%
Assistant Professor	58	23.20%
Associates Professor	3	1.20%
Professor	2	0.80%
Total	250	100%
Age		
Mean Age	34.1	
Median Age	32	
Minimum Age	24	
Maximum Age	60	

Preliminary Data Analysis

Preliminary steps start with data screening. In which we analyze the missing data, outliers, and normality of the data. Missing data has been decided to replace with the mean value of that variable. As per Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) recommendation, the current study used the z-score technique to check the univariate outliers and applied the Mahalanobis distance method to check the multivariate outliers in the data set. There was no outlier in the data set. Once the outlier was detected, the data normality was checked. Because both structural equation modelling (SEM) and factor analysis require data to be normally distributed. The most frequent approaches for determining data normality are the skewness and the kurtosis methods, which are used in this study. The study findings show that all skewness and kurtosis values are within the permissible levels (see table 4.2). As a result, the data has a normal distribution and is ready to apply structural equation modelling (SEM) in SmartPLS.

Table 0.2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
SERV_01	250	5.37	1.14	-0.69	0.84
SERV_02	250	5.53	1.05	-0.77	1.16
SERV_03	250	5.74	1.02	-1.04	2.27
SERV_04	250	5.57	1.09	-0.87	1.13
SERV_05	250	5.52	1.20	-1.08	1.44
SERV_06	250	5.37	1.25	-0.78	0.45
SERV_07	250	5.50	1.02	-0.51	0.29
EI_01	250	5.76	1.00	-0.55	-0.45
EI_02	250	5.74	0.97	-0.41	-0.44
EI_03	250	5.62	1.00	-0.32	-0.37
EI_04	250	5.58	1.00	-0.39	-0.00
EI_05	250	5.65	1.03	-0.33	-0.67
EI_06	250	5.77	0.98	-0.35	-0.57
EI_07	250	5.69	0.99	-0.74	1.55
EI_08	250	5.67	1.03	-0.52	-0.02
EI_09	250	5.69	0.97	-0.38	-0.38
EI_10	250	5.64	0.96	-0.43	0.05
EI_11	250	5.71	0.97	-0.54	0.09
EI_12	250	5.75	1.02	-0.98	1.83
EI_13	250	5.78	1.08	-0.82	0.49
EI_14	250	5.68	0.97	-1.22	3.54
EI_15	250	5.76	0.98	-0.81	1.48
EI_16	250	5.74	0.97	-0.72	1.32
GRT_01	250	5.54	1.23	-1.05	1.64
GRT_02	250	5.45	1.22	-0.82	0.68
GRT_03	250	5.50	1.12	-0.94	1.66
GRT_04	250	5.36	1.11	-0.62	0.59
GRT_05	250	5.71	1.06	-0.57	0.06
GRT_06	250	5.59	1.14	-0.79	0.95
GRT_07	250	5.59	1.18	-0.92	0.85
GRT_08	250	5.69	1.08	-0.94	1.79
Compas_01	250	2.80	1.23	1.44	2.13
Compas_02	250	2.55	1.19	1.23	2.60
Compas_03	250	2.39	1.19	1.50	3.55
Compas_04	250	2.52	1.27	1.27	2.01
Compas_05	250	2.68	1.21	0.90	1.17
Perf_01	250	5.67	0.75	-1.25	5.76
Perf_02	250	5.85	0.78	-0.92	2.35
Perf_03	250	5.85	0.81	-0.55	0.68
Perf_04	250	5.99	0.91	-0.86	0.94
Perf_05	250	5.97	0.89	-0.95	1.62
Perf_06	250	5.98	0.80	-0.43	-0.33

Common Method Bias (CMB)

Common method bias (CMB) may cause a problem in the current study since the nature of our data was cross-sectional, self-reported, dependent, and independent variables data were gathered at the same time from respondents of the study (Avolio et al., 1991). To deal with CMV we applied Harman's single factor test and full collinearity test through random variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Kock & Lynn, 2012). The results of Harman's single factor test revealed that the first component explained 24.56% of the variation. and the output of the full collinearity test through the random variables test showed VIFs of all variables well below threshold 3. Thus, it is conculcated that CMV is not the issue in the current study.

Why Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the theoretical model. The following were the reasons for selecting PLS-SEM; (1) PLS-SEM has been widely used in management and associated fields (José and Manuel, 2012; Real et al., 2014; Kura et al., 2015; Kura, 2016; Hair et al., 2019). (2) Since the purpose of our study was to predict the dependent variable, thus Hair et al., (2019) recommended PLS-SEM as a suitable method. (3) PLS-SEM is regarded as the most completely developed and broad method to apply (McDonald, 1996, p. 240). Finally, concerning the limitations of other methods and software, in which variables can only be estimated individually rather than simultaneously. (Complete model), This can have a significant effect on the quality of the findings (Sarstedt et al., 2020). As a result, the current study utilizes SmartPLS 4 software to test the study model. The current study used the two-stage PLS-SEM approach, which includes a measurement model and structural model assessment (Hair et al., 2021).

Stage One: Assessment of Measurement Model

In the measurement model, we assess the reliability by (indicator and internal consistency reliability) and validity by (convergent and discriminate validity) (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Indicator / Individual Item Reliability:

Indicator reliability examines the indicator loadings. Loadings greater than 0.708 show that the concept explains more than 50% of the variation in the variable, which indicates that the indicator has a good level of item reliability (Hair et al., 2019). In general, an item with loadings between 0.40 and 0.708 should be removed only if doing so improves internal consistency reliability or convergent validity (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The indicator EI_14, EI_15, GIT_04, and Perf_01 were removed from the model due to low loading. In this study, The outer loadings for each latent variable were high enough to establish the indicator item reliability (see Table 4.3).

Internal Consistency Reliability:

Internal consistency reliability is the second stage of evaluating the measurement model. Three tests are used to assess internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha [CA], composite reliability [CR], and rho A [RA]). While Cronbach's alpha is

conservative, the composite reliability (rhoc) may be relatively liberal, and the actual reliability of the concept is often considered as falling between these two extreme values (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Thus, Dijkstra presented the accurate (or consistent) reliability coefficient rho A as an alternative (Dijkstra, 2014; Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). A score of .7 or higher is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2019; Memon et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Table 4.3 shows the value of measured constructs that have a value of .70 or higher. Thus, internal consistency reliability was achieved.

Convergent Validity:

To evaluate convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) method was used. The AVE is defined as the average mean value of the squared loadings of the construct's indicators. According to Hair et al. (2019), the value of the AVE must be > .5 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Table 4.3 shows that the AVE values for all variables in the current study model are well above .5. As a consequence, it has been discovered the convergent validity of the present model is not problematic.

Table 0.3 :Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Variables name	Item Label	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Compassion			0.76	0.77	0.83	0.50
	Compas_01	0.67				
	Compas_02	0.74				
	Compas_03	0.73				
	Compas_04	0.68				
	Compas_05	0.70				
Emotional Intelligence			0.92	0.92	0.93	0.50
	EI_01	0.72				
	EI_02	0.68				
	EI_03	0.72				
	EI_04	0.69				
	EI_05	0.67				
	EI_06	0.73				
	EI_07	0.73				
	EI_08	0.72				
	EI_09	0.78				
	EI_10	0.66				
	EI_11	0.69				
	EI_12	0.70				
	EI_13	0.66				
	EI_14			***		
	EI_15			***		

Variables name	Item Label	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
	EI_16	0.68				
Grit			0.83	0.85	0.87	0.50
	GRT_01	0.79				
	GRT_02	0.68				
	GRT_03	0.69				
	GRT_04	***				
	GRT_05	0.68				
	GRT_06	0.67				
	GRT_07	0.75				
	GRT_08	0.64				
Job Performance			0.83	0.84	0.88	0.60
	Perf_01			***		
	Perf_02	0.81				
	Perf_03	0.68				
	Perf_04	0.78				
	Perf_05	0.81				
	Perf_06	0.79				
Servant Leadership			0.83	0.83	0.87	0.50
	SERV_01	0.68				
	SERV_02	0.75				
	SERV_03	0.65				
	SERV_04	0.71				
	SERV_05	0.75				
	SERV_06	0.66				
	SERV_07	0.71				

Note: *** = Item deleted due to low loading

Discriminant Validity:

The fourth and last stage of the measuring model assessment is discriminant validity. It assesses how different the variables/(items) are from each other. Generally, two criteria are used for measuring discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criteria, and Heterotrait-Monotrait [HTMT] criteria).

As per Fornell-Larcker criteria (1981), to assess discriminant validity, the square root of construct AVE should be higher than the correlations of other constructs in the model of study. (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021). In table 4.4, all bold values represent the square root of the construct's AVE, and off-diagonal numbers show correlation values with other variables. In the table, all bold values are greater than off-diagonal values. As a consequence, it suggested that discriminant validity is not a problem in the current study as per the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

Table 0.4 :Discriminate Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criteria)

	Compassion	Emotional Intelligence	Grit	Job Performance	Servant Leadership
Compassion	**0.709**				
Emotional Intelligence	-0.339	**0.708**			
Grit	0.019	0.118	**0.707**		
Job Performance	-0.302	0.591	0.196	**0.779**	
Servant Leadership	-0.697	0.575	0.119	0.581	**0.707**

Henseler et al. (2015) proposed the new and statistically stronger discriminant validity criteria (Heterotrait-Monotrait [HTMT]). According to Henseler et al. (2015), the HTMT value should be less than .85. In addition, researchers should assess if the HTMT values are substantially lower than 1 (by upper confidence intervals). The HTMT values of the current study for all variables are well below .85 as shown in Table 4.5. As a consequence, we determined that the constructs used in this research have adequate discriminant validity. Thus, it has been concluded that the measurement model fulfilled all four criteria.

Table 0.5: Discriminate Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Criteria [HTMT])

	Compassion	Emotional Intelligence	Grit	Job Performance	Servant Leadership
Compassion					
Emotional Intelligence	**0.37** UB_{95}: .52				
Grit	**0.11** UB_{95}: .23	**0.15** UB_{95}: .28			
Job Performance	**0.35** UB_{95}: .55	**0.66** UB_{95}: .78	**0.22** UB_{95}: .40		
Servant Leadership	**0.83** UB_{95}: .94	**0.64** UB_{95}: .74	**0.15** UB_{95}: .30	**0.68** UB_{95}: .80	

Note: UB_{95}: Represents the upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval.

Stage Two: Structural Model Assessment (Hypothesis Testing)

The structural model will be examined once step one (measurement model evaluation) is finished (Hair et al., 2019). To establish the significance level of the path coefficients, the current study employed the usual bootstrapping approach with 5000 sub-samples and 250 respondents (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2019;). Hair et al. (2021) and Sarstedt et al. (2021) suggested four steps assess the structural model of the study. The following lines go through each step-in detail.

First Step: Assessment of Collinearity Issue (VIF):

We use the SEM approach, starting with an assessment of construct collinearity. An evaluation of the VIF score for the predictive constructions is investigated. All VIF values are between (2.75 and 1.01) which are less than the threshold value of 3 (Becker et al., 2015). We can infer that collinearity is not an issue in the structural model because all VIFs are less than 3, and we can continue investigating path coefficients.

Second Step: Assessment of relevance and significance of the structural model:

After ensuring that collinearity is not an issue, we measure the significance and relevance of the study structural model path coefficients. Path coefficient is significant at the 5% level if the *t-value* $\geq$ 1.96, *p-value* < .05 and confidence interval value does not cross the zero (Aguirre-Urreta & Rönkkö, 2018). Four hypotheses of the study are tested simultaneously. Results of the bootstrapping show all hypotheses of the study are statistical significance.

Direct relationship: Originally, H_1 proposed that "There statistically significant association between servant leadership and job performance." Results presented in Table 4.9 and Figure 4.1 have shown that there is a statistically significant association between servant leadership and job performance (β = .41, *SE* = .07, *t-value* = 5.51, *p-value* < .00, *CI LB* = .25, *CI UB* = .54). Hence, it supported H_1.

Mediation Analysis: Mediation analysis perform as per Zhao et al. (2010) recommendation. Initially, H_2 hypothesizes that "Emotional intelligence significantly mediates the association between servant leadership and job performance." Results presented in Table 4.9 and Figure 4.1 have shown that emotional intelligence complementary partially mediates (since in the presences of indirect effect direct effect still significant) the association between servant leadership and job performance (β = .20, *SE* = .03, *t-value* = 5.36, *p-value* < .00, *CI LB* = .16, *CI UB* = .13). Hence, it supported H_2.

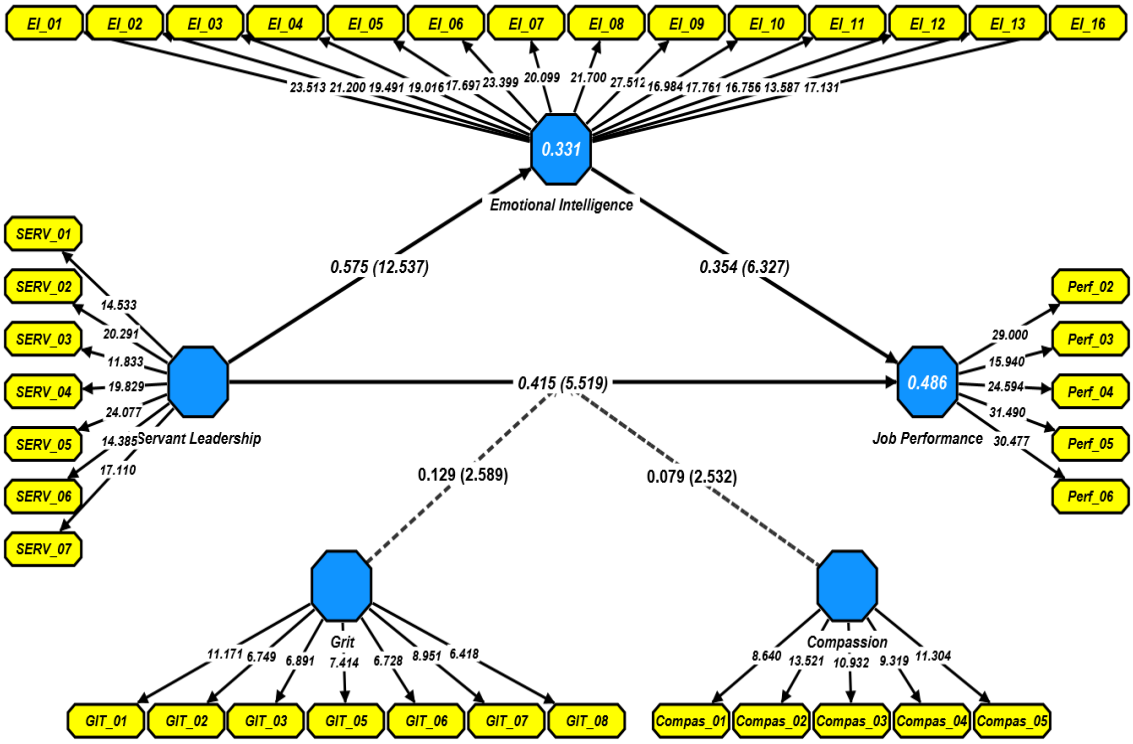
Moderation Effect Analysis: The goal of the current study was to reveal the significance of the moderator; thus, the two-stage approach method of moderation analysis was applied. Originally, H_3 proposed that "Grit significantly moderates the association between servant leadership and job performance." Results presented in Table 4.9 and Figure 4.1 have shown that grit statistically moderates the association between servant

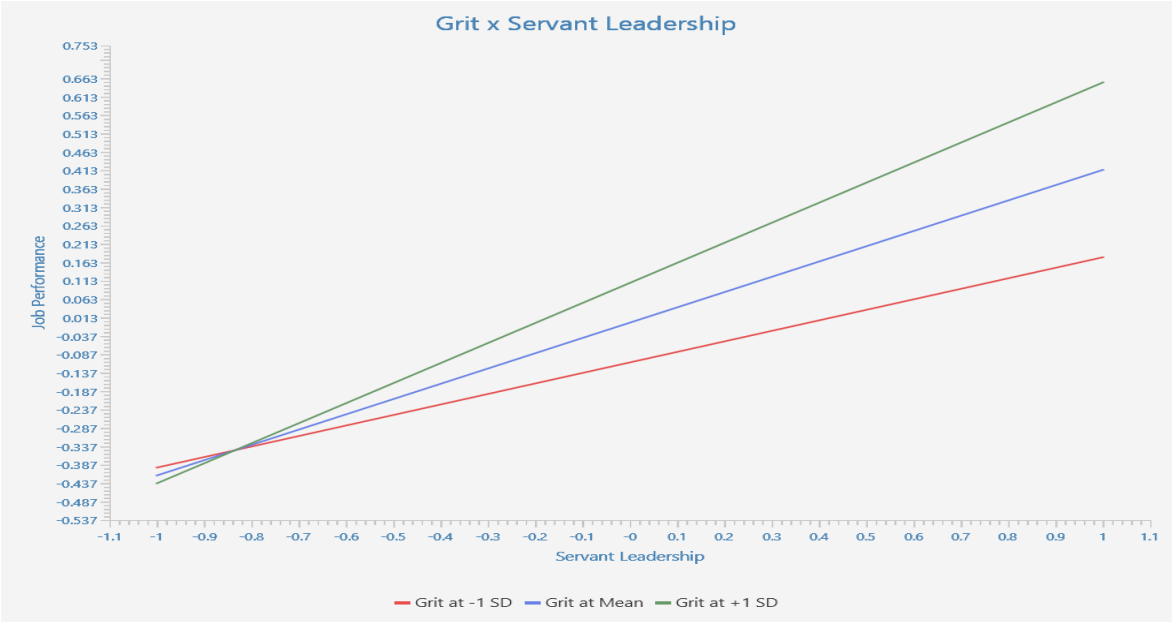
leadership and job performance (β = .12, *SE* = .051, *t-value* = 2.58, *p-value* = .011, *CI LB* = .027, *CI UB* = .22). Hence, it supported H_3. Initially, H_4 hypothesizes that "Compassion significantly moderates the association between servant leadership and job performance." Results presented in Table 4.9 and Figure 4.1 have shown that compassion statistically moderates the association between servant leadership and job performance (β = .079, *SE* = .033, *t-value* = 2.532, *p-value* = .015, *CI LB* = .027, *CI UB* = .156). Hence, it supported H_4.

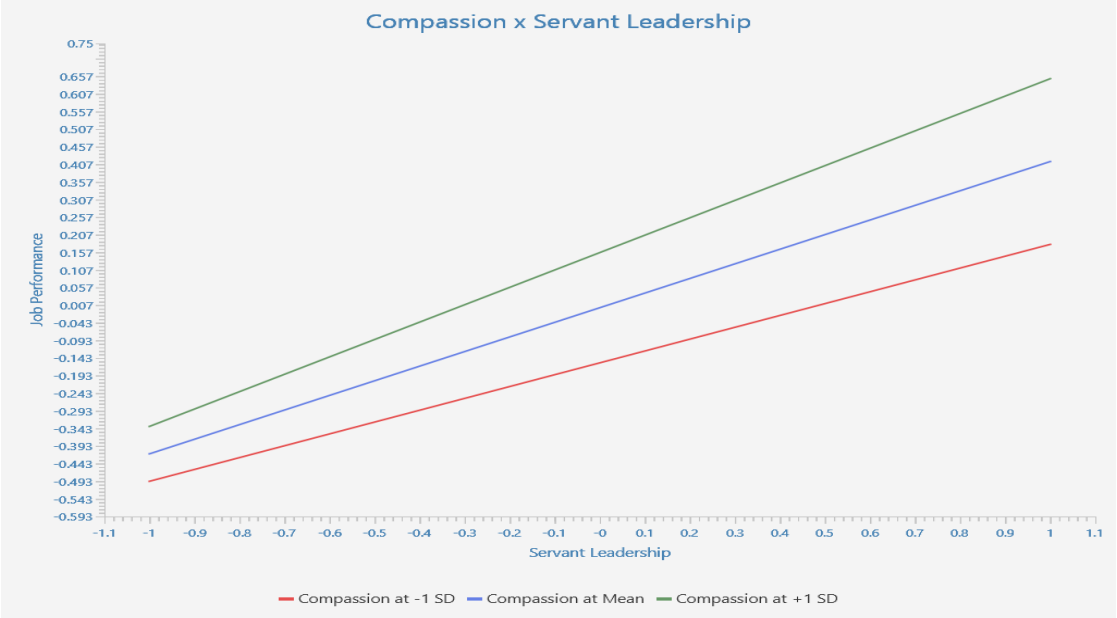
Table 0.6: Testing Hypothesis Using Path Coefficients

H	Relationship	Std Beta	SE	T Value	P Value	f^2	CI LL	CI UL	Decision
H_1	Servant Leadership -> Job Performance	.41	.07	5.51	<.00	.12	.25	.54	Supported
H_2	Servant Leadership -> Emotional Intelligence -> Job Performance	.20	.03	5.36	<.00	.16	.13	.28	Supported
H_3	SL * Grit -> Job Performance	.12	.05	2.58	.01	.03	.02	.22	Supported
H_4	SL * Compassion -> Job Performance	.07	.033	2.53	.01	.02	.02	.15	Supported

Figure 0.1 Structural Model of the Study







Third Step: Assessment Predicative Relevance (R-square and f-square):

We examine the R2 of the endogenous constructs and the f2 effect size of the predictor constructs to determine the model's predictive significance. The coefficient of determination (R2) of the endogenous construct will be investigated in the following phases. The R2 serves as an indicator of the model's explanatory capability, often referred to as its in-sample predictive capacity. It quantifies the portion of variance elucidated within each of the highlighted endogenous components by Shmueli and Koppius (2011). Higher values of the R2, which range from 0 to 1, indicate more explanatory power. In general, R2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 can be categorized as weak, moderate, and considerable in a variety of social science areas (Hair et al., 2011). However, Raithel, et al. (2012) elaborate, that acceptable R2 levels depend on the study setting, and in certain fields, such as stock return prediction, an R2 value as low as 0.10 is considered to be satisfactory. In addition, The R2 value of an endogenous construct may also be examined in relation to the elimination of a particular predictive construct. For this step researcher used f2. As Figure 4.1 illustrate R2 of the current study is .486, which indicates the current study model has moderate explanatory power. And table 4.9 shows that the f2 of predictor constructs is well above the threshold (Memon et al., 2019).

Fourth Step: Assessment Predictive Power ($PLS_{predict}$):

The R2 statistic is used by many academics to evaluate the prediction ability of their models (Shmueli & Koppius, 2011; Sarstedt & Danks, 2022). However, this interpretation is incomplete since the R2 only captures the model's in-sample explanatory power and not its predictive capacity (also known as out-of-sample predictive power) (Hair & Sarstedt, 2021; Chin et al., 2020), which represents the model's capacity to predict

new or future data. Shmueli et al., (2016) developed PLSpredict, a method for out-of-sample prediction, in response to this issue. The $PLS_{predict}$ process is used with 10 folds and ten repetitions to evaluate the model's predicting ability. The construct job performance with its five indicators (perf 02, perf 03, perf 04, perf 05, and perf 06) is the mean focus of predictive power testing. Table 4.10 results demonstrate that the model beats the naive benchmark since all five indicators obtain Q2 predict values greater than zero (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis of the PLS path model's prediction errors reveals that their distribution is not very asymmetric. Thus, The RMSE statistic is the subject of the analysis. The investigation demonstrates that the PLS path model consistently produces RMSE values that are lower than those of the LM benchmark (see Table 4.10). Thus, we conclude that the model has a high level of predictive ability.

Table 0.7:Model Predictive Relevance (PLS-Predict)

	Q^2predict	PLS-SEM RMSE	PLS-SEM MAE	LM RMSE	LM MAE	RMSE Difference (PLS-ML)	MAE Difference (PLS-ML)
Perf_02	0.22	0.69	0.52	0.71	0.56	-0.02	-0.03
Perf_03	0.15	0.75	0.58	0.77	0.60	-0.02	-0.01
Perf_04	0.21	0.81	0.63	0.86	0.67	-0.05	-0.04
Perf_05	0.24	0.78	0.60	0.81	0.64	-0.03	-0.04
Perf_06	0.28	0.68	0.54	0.73	0.58	-0.04	-0.04

Conclusions and Discussion

This study sheds light on the relationships between servant leadership, emotional intelligence, grit, compassion, and job performance. The findings indicate that servant leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing job performance. Additionally, the study reveals that grit and compassion act as moderators, influencing the relationship between servant leadership and job performance. Furthermore, emotional intelligence was found to mediate the interaction between servant leadership and job performance.

Moreover, the identification of grit and compassion as moderators emphasizes the need to consider individual characteristics and traits when examining the effects of servant leadership on job performance. Organizations can benefit from promoting a culture that values and encourages traits such as perseverance, passion, empathy, and care. By integrating these qualities into their leadership development programs and fostering a caring company culture, organizations can create an environment that enhances employee job performance.

By incorporating these managerial implications, organizations in the higher education sector can create a conducive work environment that promotes servant

leadership, enhances emotional intelligence, and fosters compassion. This, in turn, will positively impact job performance, employee satisfaction, and overall organizational success.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between servant leadership and job performance, as well as the mediating and moderating effects of emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion. The results confirm that servant leadership has a positive impact on job performance in the higher education sector, aligning with previous research that highlights the effectiveness of servant leadership in improving performance at individual, team, and organizational levels (Turner, 2022).

The study also reveals the importance of emotional intelligence in the servant leadership context. The findings suggest that servant leaders with higher emotional intelligence are more adept at managing their own and others' emotions, which positively influences job performance. This emphasizes the significance of emotional intelligence training for servant leaders to enhance their ability to effectively handle emotions in the workplace, ultimately leading to improved job performance.

Furthermore, the study highlights the role of grit as a moderator between servant leadership and job performance. It indicates that when leaders exhibit traits of perseverance and passion for long-term goals, it enhances the motivation and performance of employees. This finding emphasizes the need for servant leaders to develop a growth mindset and cultivate grit in order to tackle challenges and inspire their followers to achieve higher levels of performance.

Additionally, the study demonstrates the moderating effect of compassion on the relationship between servant leadership and job performance. Compassionate servant leaders, who are empathetic and caring towards their followers, foster positive work environments and establish strong bonds with their employees. This, in turn, leads to improved job performance. The findings suggest that incorporating compassion into work settings can have significant benefits, not only for individual job performance but also for cultivating positive relationships and increasing the leader's influence over their followers.

Hence, this research contributes in current literature by presenting empirical proof regarding the impact of servant leadership on job performance, along with the mediating and moderating functions of emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion. The findings support the notion that servant leadership positively impacts job performance in the higher education sector. Moreover, emotional intelligence, grit, and compassion emerge as important factors that enhance the relationship between servant leadership and job performance. Organizations can benefit from these findings by fostering servant leadership behaviours and providing training and development opportunities to enhance emotional intelligence, promote grit, and encourage compassion among leaders.

Practical implications

These findings have significant implications for organizations and their leadership development strategies. Recognizing the beneficial influence of servant leadership on job performance underscores the significance of fostering traits associated with servant

leadership in not only higher education leaders but also across various domains. By training and developing leaders in servant leadership practices, organizations can create a supportive and empowering environment that fosters employee growth and ultimately improves job performance.

This includes fostering a culture of trust, empathy, and collaboration, where leaders prioritize the well-being and growth of their followers. By selecting leaders who naturally exhibit servant leadership tendencies, organizations can create a leadership team that is more likely to positively influence job performance among employees. Additionally, Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in the servant leadership context. By improving emotional intelligence, leaders can better understand and manage their own emotions and those of their employees, leading to improved job performance and overall organizational effectiveness.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The generalizability of the findings is limited as the study was conducted in the specific context of Quetta city in Balochistan, Pakistan. To enhance the robustness of future research, it is recommended to incorporate larger sample sizes for both leaders and followers, which would provide more reliable and representative results.

Future research endeavors should address the aforementioned concerns to further advance the field. For instance, the same constructs explored in this study could be examined in different industries such as health, manufacturing, and fast food, allowing for a broader understanding of their implications across diverse organizational contexts. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the role of other leadership approaches, such as transformational, ethical, and transactional leadership, and their potential interactions with servant leadership. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics and their impact on job performance in various settings.

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