

## **Influence of Servant Leadership and Organizational Structure on Employee Innovative Behaviour in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of Servant Leadership style on Innovative Behavior of Employees in tertiary institutions, analyzing information from 336 employees and 48 top management team using a convenience and purposive sampling technique in selecting a sample size of 384 from tertiary institutions in southwest, Nigeria. Findings unveil servant leadership and organizational structure positively relate to employee's innovative behaviour while a nexus also exists between organizational structure and servant leadership. This research contributes to the infantile literatures on servant leadership style in promoting employees innovative work behaviour.

**Keywords:** Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Innovative work behaviour, Organizational structure, Servant leadership, Tertiary institutions, Nigeria.

### **1. Introduction**

In today's increasing dynamic business environment, innovation becomes indispensable in realizing and gaining competition, which researchers emphasized on leadership style accrued to its cause. Innate insight on leadership foster innovative behavior, turning out to be an imperative exploration for organization and innovation scholars (Feng, Huang & Zhang, 2016; Dhar, 2016; Tu & Lu, 2013). This study is anchored on two theories as invoked by prior research. Firstly, the social identity theory which depicts that "social

identity underpins intergroup behavior and sees this as qualitatively, distinct from interpersonal behavior". It describes conditions which warrant values for social identities being the main contributing factor for social perceptions and behaviors. However, hinging on the theory, suggestion was made on servant leadership curing for their subordinates with veracity to result in a more satisfactory self-concept via social categorization and analogy (Opoku, Choi & Kang, 2019). Secondly, the social exchange theory explained why servant leadership improves organizational commitment of employees (Blau, 1964; Miao, Newman, Schwarz & Xu, 2014). As supervisors are in charge of implementing organizational policy, optimistic treatment provided by them is expected to command and reciprocate improved work behaviour by subordinates.

Despite the growth noticeable in the educational sector of both developed and developing countries, increasing and significant recognition is required, which yet to be identify mostly in the aspect of human development. Leadership maintains a pivotal, in defining the achievement of establishments, most especially a servant leader who profoundly focus on increasing organizational performance through his distinct and sincere engagement while serving employees (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn & Wu, 2018). Yet, research is lacking on what comprises the communication pattern, leadership style and perception of employees invariably influencing their

work behaviour and ability in creating new ideas, no matter the structure of the organization. However, it is quite pertinent to examine roles of servant leadership as influence on employee innovative behaviour, considering the model of the organizational structure. In an attempt to achieve the research aim, answers are required to the following

research questions and the conceptual model is presented below:

RQ I; Does servant leadership influence innovative work behaviour?

RQ II; Does organizational structure influence employee innovation behaviour?

RQ III; Is there any effect of servant leadership on organizational structure?

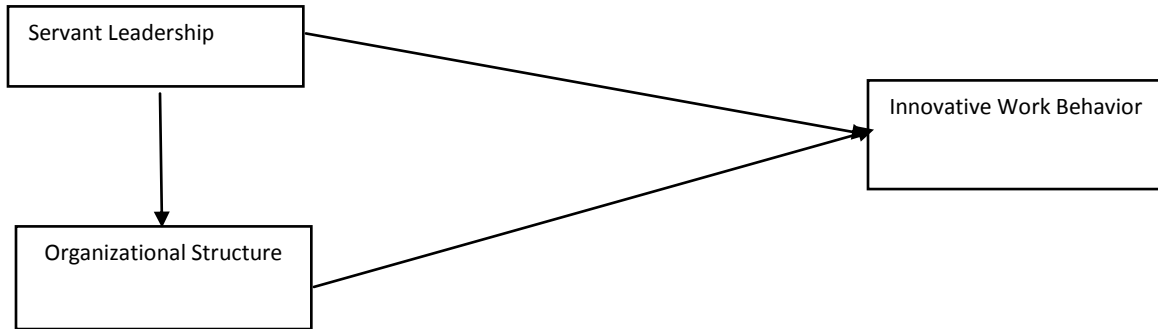


Fig 1: Research Model

2. Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature, which necessitates the use of a cross-sectional survey. The emphasis of this study centers on tertiary institutions in southwest part of Nigeria, since it is the region accommodating majority of tertiary institutions (Olaleye, Anifowose, Efuntaade & Arije, 2021). Convenience and purposive sampling were used in this study, where three tertiary institutions (university, polytechnic and college) were selected each from three states in the southwest region, while fifty staff including members of top management team (TMT) were selected to arrive at a sample size of 450. Out of the 450 surveys administered online, 384 were retrieved to give a response rate of 85%. A well-structured questionnaire was developed to obtain the data containing items used from prior research. Innovative work behaviour was operationalized using a 6-item scale, where responses were rated from "not at all" to " an exceptional degree" (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Servant leadership was gauged employing a scale adopted from Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) developed by Barbuto, & Wheeler (2006), but a re-modified version by Liden et al. (2015), while organizational structure was also measured with a 15-item scale borrowed from previous studies (Hage & Aiken, 1967; Johari, Yahya & Omar (2011). Hence, all the scales used were on a 5-point likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", while measurements were subjected to reliability and validity test. Descriptive analysis was adopted to explain the sample population frame, frequency and percentage was employed to describe the socio-economic characteristic of the respondents. The proposed structural model was subjected to strings of tests, where the measurement, analysis and research questions were achieved using SPSS version 21 for conduct of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression.

3. Results

The socio-economic characteristic of respondents including gender, age, marital status and educational level are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Descriptive Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=384)	Percentage
Gender	Male	203	52.9
	Female	181	47.1
Age	Below 30 years	91	23.7
	30 - 39 years	107	27.9
	40 - 49 years	106	27.6
	50 years & Above	80	20.8
Educational Level	Bachelors	232	60.4
	Masters	85	22.1
	Doctorate	67	17.4
Marital Status	Single	166	43.2
	Married	218	56.8

Source: Computations from Survey Data, 2020

The gender distribution shows that male respondents accounted for above average (52.9%) of total responses obtained, while 47.1% are female. On the average, majority of the respondents are still in their active age, where only 23.7% are below 30years and if linked with the marital status, an above average proportion (56.8%) are married compared to 43.2% accounting for being single. Finally, responses in lieu of educational level attained reveal majority possess bachelor’s degree while 22.1% and 17.4% attained additional qualifications (masters and doctorate) respectively.

**Table 2:** Mean, Standard Deviation, Inter-construct correlations, Convergent and discriminant validity

Constructs	<i>λ</i>	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis	CA	rho	CR	AVE	OSTR	LEAD	IWB
IWB	0.849	2.558	1.171	0.265	-1.029	0.902	0.913	0.928	0.721	<b>0.849</b>	<i>0.149</i>	<i>0.111</i>
LEAD	0.821	2.257	1.036	0.216	-1.176	<b>0.591</b>	<b>0.533</b>	0.749	0.507	0.385	<b>0.712</b>	<i>0.096</i>
OSTR	0.737	2.147	0.736	0.234	-0.021	0.822	0.822	0.918	0.841	0.442	0.572	<b>0.921</b>

Notes:  $\lambda$  = Loadings, CA=Cronbach’s Alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, rho= rho\_A reliability indices, AVE= Average Variance Extracted, <sup>a</sup>= Diagonal values in bold are the square root of AVE, <sup>b</sup>= *Italicized* values above the square root of AVE are Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios.

In assessing the measurement model, constructs contained in the research instrument are subjected to psychometric test, where all items recorded outer loadings ( $\lambda$ ) above 0.5, as suggested by Lin & Wang (2012), while the Composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha have values greater than the 0.7 threshold as recommended by Dijkstra & Henseler (2015), except for servant leadership construct (CA=0.591). Although, the item-construct structure in the measurement model has convergent validity and affirms internal consistency since the Composite Reliability and AVE exceed the limit of 0.7 and 0.5 respectively Fornell & Larcker (1981). Following Fornell-Larcker criterion (1981) as a test for discriminant validity, the inter-construct correlation values are compared with the square root of the AVE of each construct in bold format and diagonal. It reveals that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is greater than the inter-construct correlation for each construct as supported in a research conducted by Olaleye, Adeyeye, Anifowose, Efuntade & Arije (2021). In addition, the result of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations presented in italics right above the square roots of AVE in diagonal shows HTMT values below the thresholds of 0.85, as recommended by Kline (2005), hence this confirms presence of discriminant validity in our model.

**Table 3:** OLS Results on influence of servant leadership and organizational structure on innovative work behaviour

Constructs	RQ1 SL → IWB			RQ2 OSTR → IWB			RQ3 SL → OSTR		
	Coefficient	t-value	Sig	Coefficient	t-value	Sig	Coefficient	t-value	Sig
(Constant)		9.316*	0.000		6.323*	0.000		18.349*	0.000
Independent variable	0.572	13.638*	0.000	0.442	9.633*	0.000	0.385	8.160*	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.327			0.195			0.148		
Adjusted R-square	0.326			0.193			0.146		
F-test	185.989		0.000	92.798	0.000		66.587		0.000

Note: SL= Servant leadership, OSTR= Organizational structure, IWB= Innovative work behaviour; RQ- Research Questions

Table 3 presents result of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, revealing the response to research questions developed in the study. The results shows that servant leadership and organizational structure influence employees’ innovative behaviour ( $\beta = 0.572$ ;  $t = 13.638$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and ( $\beta = 0.442$ ;  $t = 9.633$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) respectively, while servant leadership has a great effect on organizational structure ( $\beta = 0.385$ ;  $t = 8.160$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, the F-statistics for all the questions showed a significant value ( $F_1 = 185.989$ ;  $F_2 = 92.798$ ;  $F_3 = 66.587$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value in Table 3 depicts that servant leadership explained as high as 32.7% of the variation in innovative work behaviour while organizational structure has an influence of 19.5%. Meanwhile, relationship between servant leadership and organizational structure remains significant with a moderate R-squared estimated at 14.8%. Hence, positive and significant outcomes are provided to all research questions and this implies a significant nexus among the constructs.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study compliments numerous findings showing that servant leadership can exert influence on employees in any structure which organizations operate, by promoting innovative behaviours. Meanwhile, results support the assertion that creation of prospects in promoting employee's growth and development by a leader who practice servanthood relationship envisage high sense of attitude to work, and positively affect employee innovative behaviour. The persistent emphasis on leadership and organizational structure as a crucial sway on employees and their behavior implores for research that reveals an oriented leadership; "servant leadership" contributing positively in influencing the mindset of employees and, in turn, impact innovative behavior in a work context. Great contribution would be made as regarding the relationship between roles of servant leadership and innovative behaviour considering the role of organizational structure among workers of tertiary institutions in a developing country like Nigeria. Also, Employers of human resources in corporate organizations would benefit much with this research, as it would allow them to understand governance, diversity, employee relations, environment, and behaviour.

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