

A Conceptual Framework on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour in Educational Institutions based on Servant Leadership Philosophy

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Abstract

Employee organisational behaviour is crucial in educational institutions as it enhances performance, drives development, fosters transformation and innovation and improves efficiency. In Malaysia, teachers' well-being and school atmosphere are affected by heavy workloads and burnout. The reliance of Muslim teachers on their spiritual beliefs and Islamic principles is paramount in shaping their professional identity and well-being within educational settings. While Servant Leadership improves school climates globally, its impact in Malaysia's socioreligious context remains understudied. This study proposes an enriched theoretical framework and practical insight into how Servant Leadership enhances Organisational Citizenship Behaviour and teacher well-being through *Sejahtera Living*.

Keywords: Servant Leadership; Teachers' Well-Being, Sejahtera Living, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The Malaysian Educational Blueprint (MOE, 2013) presents a contrasting perspective, highlighting instructional leadership as fundamental to its educational framework, and emphasising principals' direct influence on classroom practices and teacher development to improve student achievement (Raman et al., 2022). However, challenges persist regarding the provision of proper guidance for school leaders adopting this approach (Bush, 2013), which necessitates intensive monitoring of teachers' work and focusing on building trust through personal connections rather than self-interest (Jit et al., 2017).

1.2 Problem statement

Instructional leadership remains a crucial component for improving educational outcomes in Malaysia, where authoritative instructional leaders have been shown to enhance teacher competency (Ismail et al., 2020). However, challenges in implementing Instructional leadership persist due to principals' limited understanding of their roles (Lim & Bishen Singh, 2020). Malaysia's centralised education system has further complicated matters, prompting reforms such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which grants schools greater autonomy (MOE, 2013). Consequently, principals now face heavy workloads that strain their well-being and relationships with teachers, creating organisational climates where teachers feel undervalued and disengaged (Chai Ling et al., 2022). This cycle of

disengagement undermines Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), those voluntary contributions essential for school success. In this context, Servant Leadership emerges as a promising alternative that combines empowerment with Islamic principles of *Sejahtera Living*. According to Rashid et al. (2019), the significance of leadership in organisations relies heavily on their employees and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) can help employees perform their job duties more effectively. OCB is described as employees' extra-role performance (Bambale et al., 2011) and behaviour not directly recognised by the formal reward system but promotes the effective functioning of the organisation (Organ, 1994). However, as reported by Ebrano & Apostol (2024), when teachers do not feel supported and valued, their overall job satisfaction and commitment may decline, leading to lower levels of collaboration and participation in school initiatives. Teachers who are low in OCB are reluctant to help coworkers with assignments, lack tolerance, fail to make contributions, and refuse to display a positive image of the school (Quick & Nelson, 2009). Without effective organisational behaviour, it may lead to diminished psychological well-being among teachers, ultimately impacting their engagement and willingness to exhibit OCB. Consistent with this, Pau et al. (2022) found that teachers in Malaysia are more likely to experience burnout, characterised by a low sense of personal accomplishment, followed by work-related sources, and then time management issues. Through this, we agree that teachers who suffer from mental stress, burnout, or low psychological well-being may find it challenging to provide a positive and engaging educational setting (Mat Zin et al., 2023).

According to Dreer (2022), the job-related well-being of teachers plays a crucial role in teachers job satisfaction and their subsequent retention. In Malaysia, Islamic principles and spiritual beliefs among Muslim teachers are paramount in shaping their professional identity and well-being. Ogambi (2024) found that organisational culture plays a significant role in promoting teachers' workplace well-being, where Islamic principles serve as a cornerstone for fostering a supportive and positive work environment. In this context, Servant Leadership emerges as a promising alternative that combines empowerment with Islamic principles of *Sejahtera Living* (Liden et al., 2015; Nordin et al., 2022), offering a framework to enhance teacher well-being while fostering the discretionary efforts that characterise OCB.

1.3 Research objectives

This study intends to examine how Servant Leadership enhances teachers' well-being and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) through the lens of *Sejahtera Living* in Malaysian secondary schools. The research objectives are:

- RO1: To explore the perceptions of teachers on Servant Leadership towards *Sejahtera Living* and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
- RO2: To investigate the significant relationship between Servant Leadership, *Sejahtera Living*, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior
- RO3: To investigate the significant direct effect of Servant Leadership on *Sejahtera Living* and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour.
- RO4: To examine whether *Sejahtera Living* mediates between Servant leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

2.0 Literature review

2.1 SET theory

Leadership effectiveness is a key factor influencing team cohesion, workplace climate, employee performance, staff productivity, and overall organisational success. Servant leaders offer a supportive environment by prioritising the development and well-being of their employees rather than personal gain, which motivates employees to contribute to organisational success (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021). Men et al. (2021) agree that inspiring language used by leaders will result in strong relationships between employees and their organisations due to increased psychological need satisfaction and organisational identification. This approach has been proven to increase work engagement, improve work-related outcomes such as OCB, affective commitment and satisfaction (Aboramadan et al., 2022). The most appropriate theory that elucidates the connection between Servant leadership and its relationship with OCB and teacher well-being is Social Exchange Theory. According to Cook and Rice (2006), Homan approached to SET theory as the reciprocal transfer of activities, whether tangible or intangible, that are variably rewarding or burdensome, occurring between a minimum of two individuals. Homan's key ideas centre the study of social behaviour around rewards and punishments. In his first premise, the Success Proposition, he posits that actions resulting in positive outcomes are more likely to be recurring. Stimulus Proposition, which is the second proposition, explains that if an individual's behaviour has been acknowledged in the past, they will continue to behave in the same manner after receiving the acknowledgement. Value Proposition, which is the third premise, is that an individual is more likely to engage in a particular behaviour if the outcome of that behaviour is perceived as benefiting the individual. The fourth proposition, the Deprivation-satiation proposition, introduced the concept of diminishing marginal value. Finally, the fifth proposition, the Aggression-approval proposition, explains how individuals behave emotionally in response to various reward circumstances and unmet expectations, which can lead to anger and aggression.

In 2022, Yang et al. found that employees who feel appreciated for their work tend to exhibit better performance and subsequently return with positive attitudes and behaviours. Likewise, their study, which suggests that non-monetary rewards such as recognition can effectively motivate employees and improve their performance, is aligned with Homans' success proposition in SET Theory. They added that leaders who recognise and praise employees for their work behaviours will help to inspire employees' positive reactions and emotional responses at work. This confirms the Homan's stimulus and value proposition, which suggests that meaningful recognitions and rewards cultivate a cycle of positive behaviours.

2.2 Spirituality at work

According to Mitroff and Denton (1999), religiosity and spirituality are individual efforts to find the ultimate goal in life, develop close relationships with colleagues and work-related individuals, and maintain consistency between core self-beliefs and organisational values. Another theory introduced by Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) suggests that there are three dimensions of spirituality at work: having a purpose in one's work or meaningful work, having a sense of community, and being in alignment with the organisation's values and mission. This is consistent with Podsakoff et al. (2000), who suggest that when employees have a stronger sense of spirituality, they are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviour that extends beyond their core job responsibilities, thereby increasing overall organisational success.

Research conducted by Hayat and Rabia (2019) revealed that Islam, Iman and Ehsan are the three components that form the foundation of the Islamic religion and incorporating them among Muslim employees in the workplace is essential. The first term, Islam, means total devotion to Allah. Secondly, Iman, involves affirming with one's heart, announcing with one's tongue, and acting upon one's faith through one's actions (Muhamad & Sari, 2024). The third component is called Ehsan, which means doing good even to those who do not treat you well (Az-Zuhaili & Muhtadi, 2013). The integration of the Sejahtera Living framework with Islamic concepts of Islam, Iman and Ehsan offers a comprehensive approach to understanding and enhancing teachers' well-being. A study conducted by Chirico et al. (2022) found that spiritual practices can directly reduce stress and burnout levels among teachers, and workplace spirituality significantly impacts their trust in colleagues and overall mental well-being (Iman et al., 2024).

2.3 Servant leadership

The concept of Servant Leadership (SL) is being highlighted as an all-encompassing leadership approach that emphasises honourable behaviour and genuine concern for employees. Greenleaf (1998) argued that the primary objective of Servant leaders is to serve others, including workers, customers, and the community. Research done by Sugito et al. (2022) found that SL promote the well-being and professional development of teachers, resulting in improved teacher performance. SL was also found to increase employee involvement and positively influence customer satisfaction (Nichols et al., 2020). The following are the seven dimensions of Servant Leadership that were discovered by Liden et al. (2015): (1) Emotional Healing, which the leader cares about the well-being of followers and their problems; (2) Creating value for the community, which encouraging followers to be active in the community while simultaneously helping the community surrounding the organization; (3) Conceptual Skills, where the leaders are able to understand the organisation's goals and solve work problems; (4) Empowering, assessing the degree to, which the leader entrusts followers with decision-making, give autonomy and influence responsibility; (5) helping subordinates grow and succeed, which the leader helps followers succeed in their careers and reach their full potential and; (6) Putting Subordinates first, which the leader forego his or her own needs and prioritises meeting the needs of followers; and (7) Behaving Ethically, which serving as a model of integrity, including being honest and trustworthy (Liden et al., 2015).

2.4 Sejahtera living

The term Sejahtera, which roughly translates to "well-being or "prosperity" in English, is widely used in Malaysia and Indonesia to refer to a fundamental idea of human existence (Nordin, 2022). The concepts of Sejahtera Living are aligned with the five essential elements of Maqasid al-Shari'ah, a set of rulings in Islam that provide guidance for Muslims to understand their purpose of living. According to Yusof et al. (2019): (1) The term "preservation of religion" (al-din) refers to the act of preserving moral and ethical values and conduct at the individual, society, belief system, as well as acts of worship; (2) The preservation of life, also known as al-nafs, is described as the process of preserving the both bodily and spiritual demands, as well as moral and social needs, nourishment, by ensuring that fundamental needs are met. (3) The term "preservation of intellect" (al-aql) refers to the utilisation of knowledge in order for the right or wrong to be distinguished; (4) The term "preservation of lineage" (al-nasl) refers to the protection, survival, and progression of the family, including emotional, physical, material and spiritual aspects, while safeguarding the stability of the family institution through marriage and growth of upcoming generations. Finally, (5) the preservation of property (al-mal) refers to restoring socioeconomic fairness, promoting mutual generosity, and ensuring accountability of the wealth and the recognition that all resources belong to God and man. These five elements should be reflected in the responsibilities and duties carried out by both individuals and society within the Muslim community. When these duties are fulfilled appropriately, they pave the way for achieving Sejahtera, a state of peace and harmony.

2.5 Organisational citizenship behaviour

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) encompasses extra-role behaviours that employees voluntarily undertake, often surpassing job descriptions and not explicitly recognised by the organisation (Rashid, 2019). Based on the theory introduced by Organ, OCB consists of five dimensions: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, politeness, and civic virtue (Organ, 1994). In contrast to the five dimensions mentioned earlier in Organ, a new study by DiPaola & Hoy (2005) introduced three dimensions of OCB: (1) OCB-Individual, to measure behaviours directed towards helping individual students or colleagues; (2) OCB-Organisation, to measure behaviours that benefit the school as a whole; and (3) OCB-Change, to measure behaviours that support innovation and improvement in the school. By integrating these theoretical concepts and frameworks, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Servant leadership, Sejahtera Living, and teachers' OCB within the Malaysian education system.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the study is constructed at Fig.1

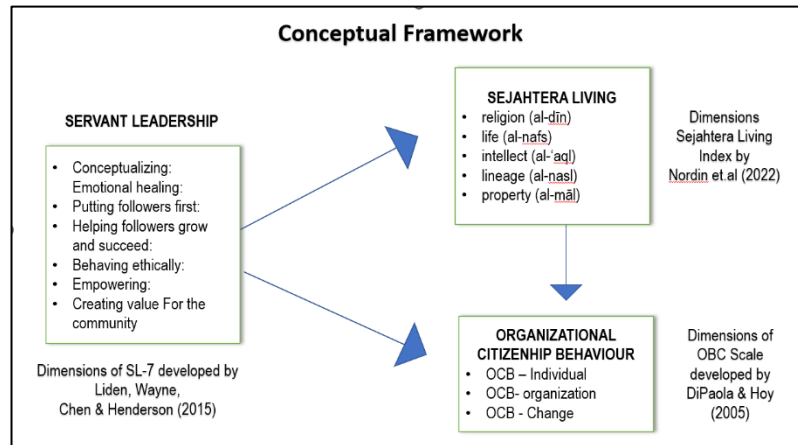


Figure. 1: Conceptual framework of the study

This study utilised one independent variable, a mediating variable and one dependent variable. The independent variable, Servant Leadership, frames the conceptualisation of emotional healing, putting followers first, helping followers grow and succeed, behaving ethically, empowering, and creating value for the community as a dimension. The mediating variable of Sejahtera Living, with its dimensions of religion (ad-din), life (Al-nafs), intellect (al-aql), lineage (Al-nasl), and property (Al-mal), will be measured separately. Lastly, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, with its dimensions OCB-Individual, OCB-Organisation and OCB-Change will be the dependent variables. Path analysis will be used to test the relationship between each variable and each construct. Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework of Servant leadership, Sejahtera Living and OCB constructs under Social Exchange Theory.

3.2. Research Design

This research intends to conduct a quantitative correlational study using PLS-SEM Analysis to measure the positive impact of servant leaders on followers through leaders' characteristics and the mediating role of Sejahtera Living between SL and OCB. Therefore, this study is causal, as it aimed to determine the impact of independent variables on dependent variables.

3.2. Sample

The study will involve purposive sampling of 350 subject heads, department heads and teachers from secondary schools in Sepang, Malaysia, that includes teachers at different stages in their careers (e.g., novice, mid-career, and experienced).

3.3. Measurement

The present study employed a self-administered questionnaire that has been previously tested, reliable and validated for data collection. The short scale of SL-7 was developed by Liden et al. (2015) and will use a 7-point Likert scale question to measure each of the seven areas corresponding to different Servant leadership behaviour. The OCB Scale, created by DiPaola & Hoy (2005), which explores three dimensions (Individual, Organisation and Change) will be used to measure OCB. Finally, the Sejahtera Living Index, developed by Nordin et al. (2022), will be used to measure five elements of Muslim teachers' well-being in Malaysia.

4.0 Discussion

4.1. Relationship between servant leadership constructs and sejahtera living

Prioritising the needs and well-being of employees, fostering a spiritual work environment, and promoting employee well-being are the main characteristics of Servant leadership. As indicated by Ortiz-Gómez et al. (2020), they found that Servant leadership, which emphasises the importance of passionate, non-judgmental spirituality and strong verbal communication, and leadership styles based on empathy, effective communication, and adaptability within small groups, indeed nurtures the spiritual lifestyle of digital generation employees. These practices embody Liden's dimensions of putting subordinates first and emotional healing, which create the foundation for Sejahtera Living's preservation of life (al-nafs) that fosters holistic well-being. Another study done by Obi et al. (2021) found that the primary pathway of spiritual well-being depends on team trust. The spiritual focus resonates deeply with Sejahtera Living's preservation of the religion (al-din) dimension of spiritual fulfilment. Consistent with this, they assert that when Servant leaders prioritise serving their followers, it enhances the trust among team members. This trust is a vital trait for fostering spiritual well-being within the community. Aligning with the study conducted by Mohd Khalid and Othman (2024) in the Malaysian public sector, supportive leaders who manage both the professional and personal responsibilities of employees will amplify the positive relationship between work-from-home practices and work-life balance. Work-life balance is supported through Liden's empowering behaviours, which encourage the preservation of

wealth (al-mal) in Sejahtera Living, prioritising family welfare for stability. This suggests that Servant Leadership supports the Sejahtera Living, which is the preservation of posterity, ensuring the survival and progress of the family in all dimensions, physical, material, spiritual, and emotional, as well as the preservation and development of future generations.

4.2. Relationship between Servant Leadership constructs and OCB

As reported by Setiawan (2020), employee behaviour, job satisfaction and employee engagement are positively influenced by Servant Leadership, which ultimately leads to improved employee performance. The empowering dimension of Servant Leadership enables employees with work autonomy, similar to OCB-O. He suggested that high levels of employee engagement and performance can only be fostered by a strong, determined and consistent Servant leader who can create a robust organisational culture that contributes to organisational success. Based on a systematic review of 179 Servant Leadership articles conducted by Zubairu (2020), it was revealed that 97% Servant Leadership had a significant effect on various employee outcomes, providing robust evidence of inspiring employees to give their best efforts towards achieving organisational objectives. A study done by Abdul Aziz et al. (2024) revealed that servant leaders who display a supportive and empowering environment enhance teachers' willingness to engage in OCB, which includes behaviours that contribute positively to the work culture, mutual trust, and job satisfaction among teachers. Specifically, emotional healing strengthens trust among peers as seen in OCB-I, while creating value for the community drives OCB-O, where teachers are motivated to contribute to school-wide initiatives. These findings concluded that evaluating the impact of Servant leadership on OCB requires consideration of the broader organisational environment and individual employee characteristics.

4.3. Relationship between Sejahtera Living constructs and OCB

Several studies have demonstrated a direct positive relationship between workplace spirituality and OCB. In recent studies by Rao et al. (2024), it was discovered that the predictors of OCB at both individual and organisational levels are spirituality in the workplace, which fosters a sense of community and meaningful work in an organisation. These meaningful experiences resonate with Sejahtera Living's dimension of preservation of religion (Al-din) and life (al-nafs). Specifically, spirituality amplifies OCB-I by providing voluntary peer support that exceeds their role expectations. In conjunction with this, they mentioned that voluntary behaviours that benefit the organisation are often displayed by individuals with strong spiritual values, indicating their substantial role in fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment. As cited by Muric et al. (2022), in their research on 108 white-collar employees, they discovered that organisational citizenship behaviour focused on individuals (OCB-I) is positively influenced by eudaimonic well-being, which encompasses the positive emotions of employees. Eudaimonic well-being aligns with Sejahtera Living's preservation of intellect (al-aql) and life (al-nafs). A study done by Iqbal et al. (2022) among health workers found that self-sacrificial leadership coupled with psychologically empowered employees has an amplifying impact on employees' psychological well-being as well as on their OCBs. Psychological well-being reflects Sejahtera Living's preservation of intellect (al-aql) and life (al-nafs). This suggests that when health workers experience higher levels of psychological well-being, it enhances their OCB, which in turn positively influences their performance.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study acknowledges several limitations. The focus on secondary schools in Malaysia limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels or cultural contexts. In future research, the sampling framework can be expanded to include primary and tertiary institutions across different regions in Malaysia, thereby enhancing the external validity of the findings. Understanding how Sejahtera Living interacts with leadership styles is essential, given the growing concerns about teacher burnout. Although the influence of Servant Leadership on OCB has been extensively studied in Western contexts, there remains the need for research on the topic in the Malaysian Secondary school setting, which is culturally and religiously diverse (Nurbianta et al., 2022).

For recommendation, future research should employ a qualitative approach to complement the PLS-SEM analysis, ensuring a robust and empirical assessment of the relationships among Servant Leadership, Sejahtera Living, and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour. By using qualitative design to validate the constructs of Servant Leadership, OCB and Sejahtera Living, this study will establish a data-driven foundation for future research (Yu et al., 2023). This contributes to the ongoing conversation on sustainable education leadership by determining the best indicators for OCB, Servant Leadership and Sejahtera Living. In conclusion, this study offers a framework for assessing leadership effectiveness and teachers' well-being with cultural sensitivity.

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Paper contribution to related field of study

This study contributes to educational leadership research by analysing the relationship among Servant Leadership, Sejahtera Living, and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) in Malaysian secondary schools. Initially, by incorporating Islamic tenets of Sejahtera Living into leadership paradigms, it is expected that significant deficiencies in comprehending culturally responsive leadership will be

tackled. By corroborating Liden's Servant Leadership model and DiPaola and Hoy's OCB model within Malaysia's sociocultural framework, educational leaders can gain a better understanding of leadership approaches in educational settings.

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