

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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journal homepage: <https://www.ijol.cikd.ca>



Impact of Self-sacrificial Leadership on Organizational Engagement: A Psychological Mechanism of Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

*Self-sacrificial leadership,
Organizational engagement, Job
satisfaction*

Received

03 March 2022

Received in revised form

01 April 2022

Accepted

04 April 2022

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Drawing on social cognitive theory, this paper examines the relationships between self-sacrificial leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational engagement. This study proposes that job satisfaction serves as a psychological mechanism reflecting how Self-sacrificial Leadership (SSL) influences organizational engagement. This study defines SSL in terms of a leader's willingness to prioritize the interests of their employees ahead of their own interests and to bear any costs associated with such behavior. The findings of the empirical data, collected through self-reporting questionnaires taken from a sample of 176 employees working in the banking sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, demonstrate that self-sacrificial leadership does positively impact both job satisfaction and organizational engagement. The results further suggest that the link between self-sacrificial leadership and organizational engagement is mediated by job satisfaction. In light of the positive and significant relationships shown to exist between these constructs, this study has valuable implications for leadership and employee behavioral management within the banking and finance industry. Specifically, the results illustrate how SSL as a leadership approach may outperform traditional leadership styles in several ways. We would further suggest that these findings may also be extrapolated to other industries in order to benefit from the implementation of self-sacrificial leadership to improve organizational outcomes.

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Self-sacrificial Leadership (SSL) is a psychological concept of self-governance that describes a leader's dedication to their wider team and willingness to sacrifice their own interests in the service of the interests of others by expending resources that may be to the leader's own

detriment (McKenna & Brown, 2011). SSL tends to be defined as influencing, controlling, and managing behavior through the use of certain behavioral and cognitive techniques (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001). However, there is no academic consensus on an official definition of SSL, as researchers vary in their conceptions, but there are shared principles among definitions. Behaviorally, SSL is seen as the willingness of a leader to take risks and sacrifice their interests on a voluntary, temporary, or permanent basis (Mulder & Nelissen, 2010; Yorges et al., 1999). For our study, we define SSL in accordance with the work of Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998), as a leader's willingness to prioritize the interests of their employees ahead of their own personal interests and to bear the cost or burden of such behavior. SSL is a form of servant leadership, and the ethical nature of this altruistic leadership style allows leaders to act morally and show concern for the best interests of their followers (Öner, 2008). Although SSL shares similarities with other styles, such as transformational leadership, SSL's main concern is motivating employees to deliver organizational outcomes and do what is considered best for the organization. To do this, the leader must work in service of what is best for their staff as well as for the organization (McKenna & Brown, 2011). Compared to traditional employee leadership, self-sacrificial leadership not only requires the consideration of employees' needs, but also a leader is willing to personally bear the associated burden or cost (McKenna & Brown, 2011).

Many experts espouse SSL as one of the most significant characteristics of successful leaders (De Cremer & Knippenberg, 2004, 2005). In this vein, several studies have determined that SSL makes for more effective leaders within an organization due to a perceived increased charisma and genuineness (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; Choi & Yoon, 2005; De Cremer and Knippenberg, 2004, 2005; Halverson et al., 2004). The existing body of literature indicates that leaders who demonstrate SSL behaviors are more likely to inspire their employees to similarly engage in positive behaviors in the workplace, which boosts the overall aims of the organization (De Cremer et al., 2009).

The theoretical background for this study is underpinned by social cognitive theory, also called social context theory. This involves interpreting individuals' reactions and activities within their social environment or context (Bandura, 1986). According to this theory, there is a triangular interplay between the social environment, the individual, and the individual's behavior in response to their social environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Individuals gather and utilize information from their social environment that governs their socially-oriented behavior and consequences (Bandura, 1991). The individual learns what is moral and ethical based on the environment they are in. Therefore, the social cognitive theory provides a theoretical foundation for exploring the moral and cognitive processes behind SSL and the effects on employees' job satisfaction and organizational engagement.

Organizational engagement relates to an employee's attitude towards their organization and their specific role, and the extent to which they devote themselves to their work. Employees who experience higher levels of organizational engagement are more willing to invest time, labor, and resources into their work (Perwira et al., 2021). The concept of job satisfaction, on the other hand, refers to the level to which an employee enjoys and feels fulfilled by their work within an organization (Satuf et al., 2018).

Organizational engagement and SSL possess key attributes that make them a worthy topic for further study in order to add to the existing literature and fill research gaps. Given that

employees who are more engaged in their work are more likely to make greater contributions to the organization, it is important for organizations to learn how they can improve this in their workplaces, especially whether adopting a certain leadership style increases engagement. SSL has been widely noted for its apparent ability to encourage employees to display better organizational engagement because the leader acts in the interests of the employees and promotes their well-being at work. Therefore, our study needs to consider the links between these two concepts, which work together to improve the effectiveness of the organization.

Although previous studies have explored the association between employee engagement and different leadership styles such as charismatic leadership (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010), transformational leadership (Vincent-Höper, Muser, & Janneck, 2012), servant leadership (de Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2014), and ethical leadership (Sarwar et al., 2020), the relationship between SSL and employee engagement is still unexplored. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge by examining the relationship between SSL, job satisfaction, and organizational engagement. Specifically, this study explores whether SSL behaviors add to organizational engagement through the mechanism of job satisfaction of employees within an organization.

The context of our study is specifically workplaces situated within the banking industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the aim of improving organizational processes within such workplaces for better employee and organizational outcomes. The data was collected from a sample of employees within the banking sector in Saudi Arabia. This study has wider implications for both the Saudi banking sector and other professional contexts, as it provides valuable insights into the impact of SSL. The findings should motivate management to adopt increased SSL behaviors to positively impact the job satisfaction and organizational engagement of their employees, which in turn correlates with better individual and organizational outcomes.

Literature Review

Self-sacrificial Leadership (SSL)

The literature shows that morality is foundational to SSL, and SSL is crucial for ethical decision-making. Ethical activities not only benefit individuals, but have wider benefits for an organization, or the “greater good” (Sachdeva et al., 2015). The key principle of SSL is when a leader sacrifices their interests to expend resources to serve their employees (McKenna & Brown, 2011), which is regarded as a significant characteristic of highly effective leadership (De Kremer & van Knippenberg, 2004; 2005).

SSL demonstrates the leader's dedication to their team above themselves and their own interests, contributing to the personal and professional development of the team. The literature illustrates the potential for leaders displaying SSL to motivate their employees to engage in more positive behaviors that improve their overall effectiveness within the organization (De Kremer et al., 2009; Li, Zhang, & Tiang, 2016). There has been recent research into the benefits of SSL on employee organizational outcomes (Li et al., 2016; Mostafa & Bottomley, 2020). Leaders possessing high-quality self-sacrificial leadership skills, including constructive thinking strategies (Houghton & Jinkerson 2007), were reported to have higher job satisfaction levels than those who worked for leaders lacking these skills. According to Li et al. (2016), SSL helps individuals fulfill their basic psychological needs, making employees feel a high level of

job satisfaction. We would suggest that leaders in the banking sector who display effective self-sacrificial leadership abilities will be better able to positively impact their employees' job satisfaction. Thus,

H₁: There is a positive relationship between SSL and job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Engagement

Job satisfaction is a popular concept within organizational behavioral research and is often defined as an employee's attitude towards their work, including their work environment and the overall degree to which they enjoy their job (Iverson & Maguire, 2000). Another definition provided by Spector (1997) is that job satisfaction is the balance between employees' likes and dislikes about their job and how that impacts their overall view of their job. Lent (2004) posits that job satisfaction is a determinant of whether an individual is satisfied or happy with their job. Job satisfaction is deemed to have a positive effect on employee organizational engagement. Promoting employee job satisfaction is important as it improves employee well-being, which results in employees being happier and more fulfilled in their roles within an organization, which is theorized to promote a more effective workplace environment (Satuf et al., 2018). A survey study with 140 full-time employees at an Islamic bank in Indonesia indicated that job satisfaction positively affected organizational commitment and mediated the effect of transformational leadership on organizational citizen behaviors and organizational commitment (Maharani et al., 2017).

The relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement can be justified through social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). When employees feel satisfied with their job because of the status attached to being part of the organization or because of certain job facets, in turn, they reciprocate it with positive attitudes and behaviors, including employee engagement (Azim et al., 2021). In line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we argued that employees who possess a high level of job satisfaction are expected to pay back their company by putting more effort into attaining organizational goals and exhibiting a high level of engagement. Hence, we propose a positive impact of job satisfaction on the organizational engagement.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement.

SSL and Organizational Engagement

Organizational engagement refers to the employee's attitude towards their organization and role, enabling them to dedicate themselves to their work. Employees with high work engagement are more willing to invest time and effort in their work and show stronger perseverance when facing difficulties at work (Perwira et al., 2021). The authors posit that it is critical for employees to have a high level of work engagement in an organization, as low levels of work engagement lead to poorer commitment and outcomes.

The literature also demonstrates the positive correlation between SSL and improved organizational engagement. It has been stated that organizationally engaged employees feel aligned with the organization's mission and values (Ashforth & Mael, 1996), which leads them to behave in the organization's interests (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Therefore, organizationally engaged employees are more inclined to display positive behaviors and refrain from negative behaviors (Mohammed & Shen, 2020). The literature also indicates that organizationally

engaged employees are more productive, build better relationships, and are more profitable than disengaged employees (Gupta et al., 2018). Zeeshan et al. (2021) studied Pakistani bank employees' engagement and found that servant leadership has a direct positive impact on employee engagement, therefore recommending that when banking managers employ servant leadership style when interacting with their employees, it improves employee's engagement with their organization.

Grobler and Grobler (2021) found that ethical leadership impacts employees' moral decision-making, pro-social conduct, job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation, which in turn affects their employee behavior and organizational functioning. The impact of SSL style behaviors on job satisfaction was present across both sectors, which shows the importance of this kind of leadership for creating better functioning workplace environments.

A study by Öner (2008) found that servant leadership characteristics of managers affected the organizational engagement of employees and were moderated by perceived organizational justice and employee satisfaction with the organizational climate.

Yang et al. (2021) concluded that SSL has an indirect positive influence on unethical pro-organizational behavior (which negatively affects the organization and should be avoided) of employees by positively influencing organizational identification, indicating improved organizational engagement. This is because an SSL leader cares about the needs of employees, pays attention to the growth of employees, and sacrifices themselves for the benefit of the organization, which help improve the self-esteem, sense of belonging, and psychological security of employees, thus increasing their positive organizational engagement.

A study by Ramdhani and Sawitri (2017) showed a significant positive correlation between perceived organizational support and employees' work engagement, while Dwitasari, Ilhamuddin, and Widyasari (2016) found that organizational support influences employee work engagement. A study by Aulia, Sutanto, and Choliq (2019) found that the better the perception of organizational support (such as SSL) and the employees' love of their work leads to higher work engagement. A further study (Abu Nasra & Heilbrunn, 2016) found that employees' trust in their supervisors and good levels of job satisfaction mediated the relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational citizenship behavior. Transformative leadership style is not the same as SSL but it is cited in this study due to its similarities with this type of leadership style and propose that these results could be extended to a context in which employees are subjected to SSL behaviors.

Job satisfaction is shown to impact the way in which employees interact and engage with their organization, which we believe supports the idea that it mediates SSL and organizational engagement. Leaders should also establish strong psychological attachments and bonds with their team members to motivate them to repay sacrificial behaviors by fully engaging in the organization and their day-to-day work. Azim et al. (2021) conducted a study on employees from garments industry of Bangladesh and found that job satisfaction fully mediates the positive relationship between compliance and employee engagement. Therefore, based on the above literature, both the direct and indirect relationship between SSL and organizational engagement is proposed. Hence,

H₃: *There is a positive relationship between SSL and organizational engagement.*

H₄: *Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between SSL and organizational engagement*

Methodology

The current study has used a cross-sectional study design to examine the relationship between SSL, job satisfaction, and organizational engagement. The data has been collected from employees of the banking sector of Saudi through convenience sampling. The data was collected through a survey in its original English Language. In the banking sector, Employees are educated and understand English very well, and English is the standard language used in the banking sector within Saudi Arabia (Yavas, Luqmani, & Quraeshi, 1990). The participation of respondents in the survey was voluntary, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers. A cover letter with the details of the aim of the study was also attached to the questionnaire. The survey was conducted during the official working hours of banks. Out of the total distributed questionnaires (308), 176 complete questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 57 %. This data was finally used for analysis. Partial least squares structural equation modeling using smart PLS was employed to estimate the mediation model. A seven-point Likert scale was used from “strongly disagree to strongly agree.”

The total sample comprised 135 (77%) males and 41 (23%) females. Out of the total sample (176), 73 (41.5%) were married, whereas 103 (58.5%) were unmarried. A majority of the respondents possessed a graduate degree (51%). Out of total respondents, 71 (40%) had a tenure of 2-7 years in their organization, while only 24 (13.6%) had a tenure of 14-19 years.

Measures

A five-item scale (De Cremer & Knippenberg, 2004) was employed to assess employees' perception of self-sacrificial leadership. A sample item is “My supervisor is willing to stand up for the team members' interest, even when it is at the expense of his/her own interest.”

Job satisfaction was measured using a four-item scale taken from Cammann et al. (1983) and Zablah et al. (2016). An example item is “All in all, I am satisfied with my present job.” Finally, a six-item scale adopted from Saks (2006) was used to measure organizational engagement. A sample item is “One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organization.”

Results

The first stage of analysis was to examine the loadings of each item, Cronbach's alpha values, composite reliability, and average variance extracted for all variables of this study. Cronbach alpha and composite reliability are employed to assess the reliability. The PLS-SEM model is given in Figure 1. The results of Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability, as presented in Table 1, were for job satisfaction (.75, .84), self-sacrificial leadership (.88, .91), and work engagement (.79, .85), respectively. According to Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011), the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability should be higher than the threshold value of .70. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no reliability issue in the data. In the next step, convergent validity was examined using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As presented in Table 1, Results revealed that AVE values for all constructs are greater than the threshold of .50 (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016). For job satisfaction, self-sacrificial leadership, and work engagement, the AVE values were .57, .67, and .54, respectively. Finally, the discriminant validity was assessed using Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT), Fornell Larcker criterion, and cross-loadings. The results of Fornell Larcker given in Table 2 showed that the square root of

the average variance for each variable was higher than the correlation with all variables. So, discriminant validity was established. The results further showed that HTMT values (see Table 2) for all variables were less than .90. Moreover, the factor loadings (see Table 3) of all variables were higher than the cross-loadings. Hence, discriminant validity was confirmed.

Figure 1

PLS-SEM Model Showing the Relationship among the Constructs

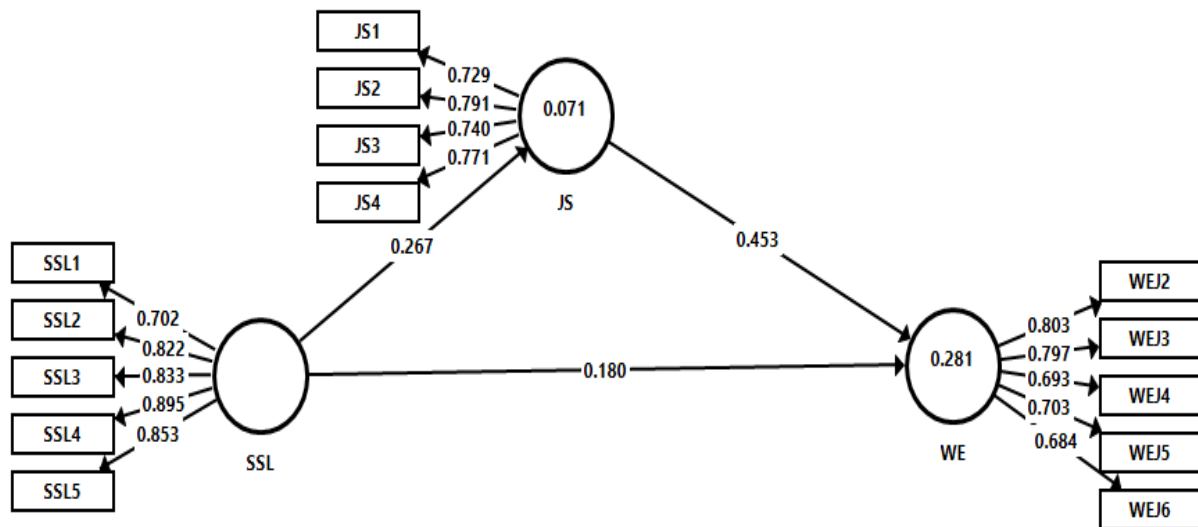


Table 1

Results of Cronbach's Alpha Values, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Job Satisfaction(JS)	JS1	.72	.75	.84	.57
	JS2	.79			
	JS3	.74			
	JS4	.77			
Self-Sacrificial Leadership(SSL)	SSL1	.70	.88	.91	.67
	SSL2	.82			
	SSL3	.83			
	SSL4	.89			
	SSL5	.85			
Work Engagement (WEJ)	WEJ2	.80	.79	.85	.54
	WEJ3	.79			
	WEJ4	.69			
	WEJ5	.70			
	WEJ6	.68			

N= 176

Table 2

Fornell–Larker Criterion of and HTMT for Discriminant Validity

Fornell–Larker Criterion			
Variables	JS	SSL	WE
Job satisfaction (JS)	.75		
Self-Sacrificial Leadership (SSL)	.26	.82	
Work Engagement (WE)	.50	.30	.73
Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)			
Variables	JS	SSL	WE
Job satisfaction (JS)			
Self-Sacrificial Leadership (SSL)	.30		
Work Engagement (WE)	.62	.33	

Note. The off-diagonal values are correlations between the construct, and the diagonal values shown in bold are the square values of AVEs.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity Based on Cross-Loading Criterion

	JS	SSL	WE
JS1	.72	.19	.40
JS2	.79	.17	.40
JS3	.74	.22	.33
JS4	.77	.21	.37
SSL1	.12	.70	.20
SSL2	.35	.82	.24
SSL3	.21	.83	.29
SSL4	.19	.89	.21
SSL5	.15	.85	.25
WEJ2	.42	.27	.80
WEJ3	.34	.18	.79
WEJ4	.33	.10	.69
WEJ5	.28	.14	.70
WEJ6	.41	.32	.68

Note. JS= Job satisfaction, SSL=Self-sacrificial leadership, WE=Work Engagement

Assessment of Model Fit

The model fit in PLS-SEM is assessed using normal fit index (NFI), χ^2 (Chi-square), exact fit criteria (d_ULS and d_G), and value of standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). According to Agasha, Kamukama, and Sserwanga (2021), a model is considered well-fitted if the value of SRMR is less than the threshold value of .10. Table 4 shows that both saturated and estimated models fitted the data on all fit indices.

Table 4
Model Fit Results

Indicators	Structural model	Estimated model
SRMR	.08	.08
d_ULS	.77	.77
d_G	.28	.28
Chi-Square	280.02	280.02
NFI	.75	.75

Analysis of Hypotheses

As shown in Table 5, the PLS-SEM results showed that self-sacrificial leadership had a positive and significant impact on employee job satisfaction ($\beta = .26, t = 3.55, p = < .05$). Job satisfaction significantly influenced employee work engagement ($\beta = .45, t = 5.68, p = < .05$). Self-sacrificial leadership had a significant effect on employee work engagement ($\beta = .18, t = 1.97, p = < .05$). Thus, all the direct relationship hypotheses (H₁, H₂, H₃) are supported. The results further revealed that the indirect effect of self-sacrificial leadership on work engagement through job satisfaction was also significant and positive ($\beta = .12, t = 2.73, p = < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis H₄ is also supported.

Table 5
Hypotheses Testing

	β	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Hypothesis H1: SSL -> JS	.26	.28	.07	3.55	.000
Hypothesis H2: JS -> WE	.45	.45	.08	5.68	.000
Hypothesis H3: SSL -> WE	.18	.18	.09	1.96	.049
Hypothesis H4: SSL -> JS -> WE	.12	.13	.04	2.72	.006

Discussion

When a leader sacrifices their interests to expend resources to serve their employees (McKenna & Brown, 2011), this can lead to highly effective leadership (De Cremer & Knippenberg, 2004, 2005). While there is no accepted consensus among academics on a singular definition of SSL, there appears to be a shared collection of principles and behaviors of SSL. Following a literature review, this study defined SSL in terms of a leader's willingness to prioritize the interests of their employees ahead of their own interests and to bear any costs associated with such behavior.

This study represents a critical investigation into the potential impact of SSL on employee organizational engagement and job satisfaction within the Saudi banking sector. It aims to show that positive correlations exist between these three concepts in order to guide organizations on how best to manage their employees to improve organizational outcomes. The study draws upon social cognitive theory, or social context theory, which seeks to understand the reasons and motivations for how and why employees behave and respond to their social environment or context (Bandura, 1986; Wood & Bandura, 1989). As this theory posits that an employee gathers and utilizes information from their social environment, which informs their behavior. This theory was used as the theoretical underpinning of this study to better understand how SSL creates a social context that leads to greater job satisfaction and organizational engagement. The study also looks at how job satisfaction affects the employee's social environment as an important mediator between SSL and organizational engagement.

Multiple past studies have explored the links between employee engagement and a range of leadership styles, such as charismatic leadership (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010), transformational leadership (Vincent-Höper, Muser, & Janneck, 2012), servant leadership (de Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2014), and ethical leadership (Sarwar et al., 2020). However, despite the recognition in the literature of the importance of SSL and what appears to be a growing number of empirical studies on the subject as there is greater awareness of its positive effects when implemented well, it appears that, to date, there has been little effort made to investigate the interrelationship between SSL and work engagement, and how job satisfaction mediates that relationship. This represents a major gap in the literature to date. This study aims to contribute significant value to the literature to broaden our understanding of the effects of SSL on workplace dynamics. This study adds to the existing knowledge by examining the relationship between SSL, job satisfaction, and organizational engagement. Specifically, this study contributes to filling the research gap in the literature by exploring how SSL behaviors improve organizational engagement through the mechanism of job satisfaction of employees within an organization. The implications of this study are the positive organizational change that may lead management to encourage its leaders to adopt SSL behaviors, resulting in improved employee work engagement and job satisfaction, therefore allowing the organization to be healthier and more productive. SSL is more akin to progressive styles such as transformational leadership, rather than more traditional styles of leadership, such as transactional leadership. However, SSL is differentiated further from transformational leadership in that the leader's primary aim is to act in their employees' interests to motivate them to deliver outcomes that benefit the organization (McKenna & Brown, 2011). Although SSL does share similarities with other leadership approaches, its primary aim and overarching attribute is to motivate employees to produce positive organizational outcomes and act in the

organization's best interests. To achieve this, the leader adopts a style where they act in service of their employees and the organization (McKenna & Brown, 2011). Compared to traditional employee leadership, SSL requires a leader to both consider their employees' needs, as well as demonstrate a willingness to personally bear the associated burden or cost (McKenna & Brown, 2011).

Choi and Yoon (2005) note that in comparison to other types of leadership styles and behaviors, such as articulating and communicating an ideological goal or vision, showing high expectations and confidence in followers, taking extraordinary risks, and setting a personal example of the values inherent in the vision (Conger, 1989), sacrifice as a leadership trait has received very little recognition. Choi and Yoon (2005) further state that despite this lack of research, SSL is a crucial mode of promoting employee voluntary engagement and making their own sacrifices for the organization.

Past empirical studies have specifically chosen to report on the impact of SSL because of how different it is from traditional leadership and how it appears to generate more positive effects on employees. Similar reasons hold true for examining SSL in this study, but this study expands on the literature by showing how it specifically affects organizational engagement, which has not been investigated as far as we are aware. Analysis of the self-reported questionnaires completed by 176 Saudi banking sector employees shows all four hypotheses to be correct. The results confirm that SSL has a significant and positive direct impact on the job satisfaction experienced by the surveyed employees. In turn, both SSL and job satisfaction have a significant influence on the extent to which the employees are engaged with the organization. Further, the employees' job satisfaction plays a significant role in mediating the positive effect of SSL on their organizational engagement. Therefore, the findings of this study corroborate the previous studies' findings (Azim et al., 2021; Houghton & Jinkerson 2007; Li, Zhang, and Tian, 2016; Zeeshan et al., 2021), confirming that there is a significantly positive connection between these three concepts. There is overwhelming support for the notion that SSL facilitates better employee organizational engagement and job satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2014; Bah et al., 2020). Bah et al. (2020) noted that ethical leadership has become the focus of attention among scholars due to its positive and significant effects on employees and organizational performance. This accords with why SSL was chosen to be studied – because the growing body of literature suggests SSL, as a form of ethical leadership, is showing greater positive effects on employees in the 21st century than more traditional forms of leadership. Bah et al. (2020) also noted that more empirical studies are needed in this area to fill further gaps – that study only filled a gap by examining ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in the Sierra Leone context. The value of our study is that we are plugging further geographical gaps by showing how SSL can function in a Saudi Arabian context. This is interesting and necessary research because it is not assumed that SSL will simply work in every culture but also contributes to a body of literature that shows highly positive effects of SSL on employee productivity and engagement in numerous countries. The positive findings of Abu Nasra and Heilbrunn (2016), surveying 211 Arab teachers in the Arab education system in Israel, also found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. There are only limited studies in the literature specifically dealing with a Middle Eastern context. As far as we know, no attention has been given to the interplay between SSL, organizational

engagement, and job satisfaction as a mediator in this context and also in Saudi Arabia, so our study fills this gap.

The literature asserts that leaders showing strong SSL skills directly positively influence their employees' job satisfaction (Avolio et al., 2009; Hee & Mi, 2014; Houghton & Jinkerson, 2007; Roberts & Foti, 1998). Consequently, SSL is considered by many researchers to be one of the most significant characteristics of effective leadership (De Cremer & Knippenberg, 2004; 2005). Leaders displaying SSL behavior can better motivate their employees to engage in more positive behaviors that increase their value to the organization (De Cremer et al., 2009; Li, Zhang, & Tiang, 2016). However, while Chen et al. (2020) found that SSL in isolation is not necessarily a predictor of positive organizational engagement and job satisfaction, the results of this study confirm the relationship. The studies of Chen et al. (2020) and Choi and Mair-Dalton (1998) are particularly useful as they provide a different perspective on SSL despite little attention paid to it in the literature regarding the link between leader competence and the effectiveness of SSL. They found that stronger leaders displaying SSL produce better effects on their employees than weaker leaders. This is a limitation of the present study as the overall competence of the leader has not been specifically measured and considered how that may have affected the validity of our results. However, while it is acknowledged that a range of factors affects employee engagement and satisfaction within a specific organization, there is a clear correlation with SSL. The literature confirms that SSL significantly increases both job satisfaction and organizational engagement (Demirtas et al., 2017; Sarwar et al., 2020). Sharma et al. (2019) claim that SSL is vital for ensuring that employees develop positive outcomes such as organizational engagement and job satisfaction. It can be seen as an ideal form of leadership for fostering more ideal behaviors among employees. Furthermore, both the literature (Freire & Bettencourt, 2020; Grobler & Grobler, 2021; Öner, 2008) and the present study show that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between SSL and organizational engagement. Employees with high work engagement are shown to possess increased job satisfaction (Perwira et al., 2021) and promote employee job satisfaction leads employees to become more engaged with the organization they are serving. Many past studies showed a positive correlation between SSL and greater employee organizational engagement, as these leaders are able to motivate employees to feel more aligned with the organization's mission and values (Ashforth & Mael, 1996), which leads them to behave in the organization's interests (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), making them more productive employees. In past studies (Cheng et al., 2014), SSL has been shown to facilitate better organizational engagement and is mediated by an employee's desire to advance their career. This indicates that individuals with higher job satisfaction and a sense of purpose within an organization have better organizational engagement and SSL behaviors. The results of the present study corroborate this finding by showing that employees who report higher levels of job satisfaction report a positive mediating influence of SSL on their organizational engagement. Cheng et al.'s (2014) study shows a positive relationship between the three variables we are studying: SSL, organizational engagement, and a sense of job satisfaction. However, while that study was more focused on employee desire to self-regulate in their role, driven by a focus on the promotion, this study adds significant value and fills a gap in the literature by showing the mediating effect of a more holistic approach to job satisfaction rather than a promotion-based attitude, and how that encourages the interrelationship between SSL and organizational engagement.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the related literature as this study's empirical results of the self-reported questionnaires revealed that SSL is positively correlated with increased organizational engagement and job satisfaction among employees within the banking sector in Saudi Arabia. The findings show that SSL has a direct positive impact on employee job satisfaction, both SSL and job satisfaction positively affect organizational engagement, and the impact of SSL on organizational engagement is mediated by job satisfaction. The results indicate that these positive relationships result in better outcomes for both employees and their organizations through the leader demonstrating ethical, self-sacrificial leadership qualities that prioritize the needs and well-being of their team members over their agenda. Since the research undertaken by this study supports the four proposed hypotheses, it is recommended that organizations implement these principles to improve employee and management productivity, well-being, and overall success. Leaders should be trained in and perform SSL behaviors rather than adhere to traditional leadership strategies, which may not offer such benefits as this study shows. Organizations can incentivize leaders demonstrating SSL behavior and offer training programs to improve employee organizational engagement and job satisfaction.

Declarations

Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics Approval

Not applicable.

Funding Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

Citation to this article

Alshahrani, S. T. (2022). Impact of self-sacrificial leadership on organizational engagement: A psychological mechanism of job satisfaction. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 11(1), 112-126. <https://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2022.60622>

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