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Exploring the Impact of Servant Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

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ABSTRACT

Available data indicate a relationship between Servant Leadership (SL) and Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) among workers. Still, the exact linkages that explain this association are not well understood, especially in the context of a developing country setting such as the case of Pakistan. Most of the data in the current study comes from societies of Western origin; the impact of these behaviours by culture is not considered. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to test the relationship between SL and IWB in the context of Pakistani firms. It also assesses the role of perceived organizational support (POS) in this relation. This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional research approach to meet its objectives. In total, 480 employees from various organizations in Pakistan completed the survey. Data were collected using four standardized scales: the Servant Leadership Scale, Employee Innovative Behaviour Scale, and the Perceived Organisational Support Scale. To analyse the part played by these variables, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used. Regression analysis was also conducted to examine the mediators of POS. The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis indicated that SL was positively correlated with IWB at $p < .05$. Employing hierarchical multiple regression analysis, it was established that SL is a positive determinant of IWB. POS acted as a partial mediator between the variables, but it was negatively related to IWB.

Introduction

The contemporary economy has shifted its primary driver of corporate success from conventional growth drivers, such as capital, to innovation. Companies must utilize innovation to maintain their competitive edge in this environment; therefore, workers are crucial to this process (Yuan & Zhou, 2015). Many individuals felt, as we neared the twenty-first century, that businesses would need innovation if they were to stay competitive internationally (Mahmood & Mubarik, 2020).

Employees, especially intellectual workers, emerge as innovators. Fostering Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) among their employees, companies want to release their creative potential (Afsar & Umrani, 2019; Edghiem & Mouzughi, 2018). Employee proactive behaviours are highly influenced by the leadership style (Yao et al., 2014). With a special focus on Servant Leadership (SL), which is relatively underexplored, recent studies have highlighted the influence of various leadership qualities on employee behavior. Research indicates that SL increases employee performance, responsibility, and creativity via organisational culture and a supportive work environment (Newman et al., 2018). Still lacking, nonetheless, the psychological processes by which SL shapes creative behaviour (Eva et al., 2019).

Although earlier studies have linked SL to employee creativity, several routes lead to creative behaviour, and therefore, further study on how SL could inspire this behaviour is necessary (Zhu & Zhang, 2020). In this connection, perceived organisational support (POS) might operate as a mediator allowing staff members to participate in creative projects and take calculated risks (Sun, 2019). Emphasising staff development and building trust, servant leaders may improve POS and therefore inspire innovative behaviour (Karatepe et al., 2020).

Although current research indicates a favourable relationship between SL and IWB among workers (Wang et al., 2022), knowledge of this dynamic within Pakistan's particular cultural setting, which varies from Western studies, suffers significant gaps (Baety & Rojuaniah, 2022; Luo, 2023). Further investigation is needed, especially regarding the cultural elements that influence SL's effect and the diverse sectors that comprise Pakistan's economy (Ali et al., 2023). By filling these gaps, further research may provide insightful analysis on how SL can promote IWB across various industries.

Although there is evidence that SL and IWB are positively correlated among workers, further research is needed to understand the underlying processes of this relationship. In the link between SL and IWB, this research seeks to explore the mediating function of POS.

Only a limited amount of study has looked specifically at the dynamics of IWB and SL in Pakistan. Due to their Western origins, most of the research now in existence ignores any cultural implications of these behaviours. Employee reactions to SL may differ in Pakistan due to its collectivistic culture, which contrasts with individualistic societies.

In today's competitive worldwide marketplace, innovation plays a vital role in determining organizational success. Exploring the elements that encourage IWB among employees in Pakistan, with a specific emphasis on SL and its influence. This research has the potential to enhance the Pakistani workforce and boost the national economy's competitiveness.

Research mainly focuses on SL and IWB in Western settings. Exploring these concepts in the distinctive cultural setting of Pakistan may unveil new perspectives on how SL impacts employee behaviour. Furthermore, the research delves deeper than just establishing a connection between SL and IWB. It delves into the mediating role of POS. Understanding how

SL creates a supportive environment that empowers employees to innovate can help organizations develop specific strategies to foster IWB. Understanding this information is essential for leaders to customize their approach according to their organizational context.

Research Questions

1. Is there a positive relationship between SL and IWB among employees in Pakistan?
2. Does POS mediate the relationship between SL and IWB among Pakistani employees?

Research Objectives

1. To observe the direct influence of SL on IWB among Pakistani employees.
2. To investigate the mediating role of POS in the relationship between SL and IWB.

Literature Review

Servant Leadership

In the past, leaders' priorities were mostly servicing themselves. However, Servant Leadership (SL) turns this emphasis to helping subordinates. Emphasising the needs and development of their subordinates, Greenleaf, the SL pioneer, underlined that good leaders should give them a top priority (Greenleaf, 1970, 2002). As Walker (2015) points out, SL focuses on training staff members. Integrating interpersonal, moral, and spiritual activities that empower followers, this paradigm advances an all-inclusive approach to leadership (Eva et al., 2019). Leaders who satisfy the demands of their subordinates inspire their staff members to be more involved and dedicated to the organisational objectives (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Thus, SL seeks to achieve organisational goals through service to staff members, rather than a charismatic or authoritative approach.

There are no grounds for concern that SL may be ignoring organisational interests. SL places a strong emphasis on community service and seeks to develop staff members who genuinely value the company (Liden et al., 2008). Studies find that SL may improve work satisfaction (Bibi, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023) as well as employee well-being (Jin et al., 2017). SL has also been linked to improved employee performance (Martinez & Leija, 2023), increased organisational productivity (Laub, 2018), and greater creativity and IWB (Cai et al., 2018).

Innovative Work Behaviour

The Latin word "innovates" suggests providing fresh ideas or enhancing already produced works. This verb yields the word "innovation". Defining innovation as the process of inventing and implementing new goods, services, or processes as well as generating new markets, Schumpeter (1934) was among the first academics to investigate innovation. Scholars began to view innovation primarily in terms of technology during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, although Marquis (1969) regarded innovation as a change in technological practices, Schmookler (1957) defined "technical change" as the creation of commodities or services using creative approaches or processes.

By the 1980s, the definition of innovation had expanded to encompass the creation of fresh ideas in tandem with technological developments. In 1983, Amabile defined innovation as the successful application of fresh ideas within a company (Amabile, 1983). According to Urabe et

al. (1988), innovation involves the implementation of new ideas, as well as their development, thereby promoting profit for companies, employment creation, and economic progress.

Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) refers to the activities of workers in introducing fresh and useful ideas into their company's operations and services. Amabile (1996) defined IWB as the method by which people create, recognise, and implement fresh ideas to address issues. Kleysen and Street (2001) similarly described IWB as the deliberate introduction and use of fresh ideas to solve problems within a company. Lambriex-Schmitz et al. (2020) found that IWB entails not only the generation of fresh ideas but also their encouragement and implementation.

Perceived Organizational Change

In today's highly competitive world, it is essential that the needs and desires of workers be addressed as a top priority. The goal of doing this is to keep them as employees and to make them more lucrative for the firm. When it comes to any firm, it is of the utmost importance to design programs and policies that are appealing and appealing to personnel (Davidescu et al., 2020). Over the past few years, businesses have become more aware of this truth, and they are emphasizing the need to provide a supportive atmosphere for their workers to keep them on board for a longer period (Lee et al., 2022). According to Pahuja et al. (2024), the function of human resources in a business is the most crucial factor for attaining a competitive edge.

Elrehail et al. (2020) conducted research and concluded that the primary goal of companies in the modern era is to enhance their competitive advantage over industry competitors. Utilizing human resources in a manner that is both effective and efficient is necessary to achieve this goal. This is because it is difficult for rivals to replicate the human resource skills and practices that a firm employs. To get it, firms need to recruit people who are both talented and valued (Fareed et al., 2022). Through the management programs and policies that they implement, organizations should make themselves seem more desirable and attractive to their workforce. The staff turnover rate will decrease as a result. The retention of personnel who possess the necessary knowledge, professionalism, positive attitude, and requisite skills has become an increasingly significant factor for competitive firms over the last couple of decades (Bernard, 2018). A growing number of businesses are becoming increasingly concerned and vigilant about managing their personnel and utilizing them effectively to gain a long-term competitive advantage (Elrehail et al., 2020).

It has been suggested by Islam et al. (2013) that the most important factor in determining the exceptional performance of a business is the presence of valued and experienced personnel. Employers must thus place a high priority on retaining these individuals to fulfil their goals. It is possible to ensure that workers will remain with the company if the working atmosphere is one that is upbeat, encouraging, and emphasizes the group's efforts (Zhenjing et al., 2022). The degree to which an employee feels that the company is supporting them is one component of an atmosphere that is supportive and encouraging in the workplace. According to Riggle et al. (2010), this refers to the employee's perception of the organization's support. A company places a high value on the attitude of its employees because of the value they provide to the company. Therefore, firms must make substantial investments in initiatives like these, which have the potential to enhance employees' perceptions of the support they receive from the company (Li et al., 2022).

Recent empirical studies have explored the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior in various contexts, including Pakistan. For instance, Ahmad et al. (2021) investigated the intrarelationship of corporate social responsibility at the employee level (CSR-E), servant leadership, and innovative work behavior in the Pakistani healthcare sector during a crisis. Their findings revealed that servant leadership partially mediates the relationship between CSR-E and IWB, highlighting the role of leadership in fostering innovation even under challenging conditions. Similarly, Khan et al. (2022) examined how servant leadership triggers innovative work behavior among knowledge workers in Pakistan's service industry, identifying psychological empowerment and job crafting as sequential mediators. These studies underscore the positive impact of servant leadership on IWB but do not directly address the mediating role of POS.

In a broader context, Ekmekcioglu & Öner (2024) explored the mediating role of POS between servant leadership and innovative work behavior in Turkish technopark companies. Their results indicated that POS significantly mediates this relationship, suggesting that employees' perceptions of organizational support are crucial in translating servant leadership into innovative behaviors. However, while these studies provide valuable insights, they do not fully address the specific cultural and organizational dynamics of Pakistan, particularly in relation to POS as a mediator.

The current study aims to fill this gap by investigating the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior in Pakistani organizations. By doing so, it provides new insights into how perceptions of organizational support influence the effectiveness of servant leadership in promoting innovation, particularly in a collectivistic cultural setting where group harmony and support are highly valued.

While existing studies have established a positive link between servant leadership and innovative work behavior (Ahmad et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022), they have primarily focused on mediators such as CSR-E, psychological empowerment, and job crafting. The role of POS as a mediator remains underexplored, especially in collectivistic cultures like Pakistan. This gap is significant because POS reflects employees' beliefs about the organization's commitment to their well-being, which can enhance the impact of servant leadership on innovation. The current study addresses this gap by explicitly testing POS as a mediator, thereby differentiating itself from prior research. Furthermore, by focusing on Pakistan, this study contributes to the understanding of how cultural factors may influence the SL-IWB relationship, as most existing research has been conducted in Western contexts (Ekmekcioglu & Öner, 2024).

Hypotheses Development

Servant Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour

Yoshida et al. (2014) stated that SL has a favourable impact on workers' IWB by offering a protected and inspiring atmosphere for workers to express their views. According to Panaccio et al. (2015), SL influences workers' innovative working behaviours since it focuses on the requirements of the followers and creates a social interchange. According to the findings of Krog and Govender (2015), the relationship between the SL and innovative thinking was mediated by employees' perceptions of their own empowerment. Within the context of commercial banks in Pakistan, Rasheed et al. (2016) discovered that the association between

SL and IWB is positive. In their study, Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) concluded that IWB is improved when workers consistently display their creative ability via the use of SL, hence acquiring the faith and confidence of their. According to Opoku et al. (2019) SL can enhance innovative performance in workers by improving followers' perceptions of their own status. According to Wang et al. (2019), one's selflessness is beneficial for innovative behaviours. As for serving others and thriving at work, team support is found to have a moderating effect. There is evidence that SL can enhance workers' IWB especially if the work setting is knowledge-based (Iqbal et al., 2020). As noted by Khan et al. (2021), SL can positively influence creative behaviours at two stages of the innovation process: innovation, as well as implementation. This is because SL is used as a resource by the worker, and it is found to have the capability to build trust in followers. Some of the benefits of SL, as identified by Zeng and Xu (2020), include its positive influence on the self-image of followers and its promotion of innovation. Furthermore, Zhu and Zhang (2020) suggest that SL promotes innovative behaviour by establishing a method for knowledge sharing. The moderating effects of features of employee identity and learning goal orientation are also reported to help explain this influence. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: *Servant leadership has positive relation with innovative work behaviour.*

Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

According to Eisenberger et al. (1986), POS helps workers meet their responsibilities by increasing the expectations people have about the effort they will put forth. An employee is said to have POS when they carry out their work responsibilities in a manner that contributes to the accomplishment of the organization's objectives (Maan et al., 2020). According to Eisenberger et al. (1986), the degree of POS strengthens workers' bonds to their companies and encourages them to engage in extra-role behavior with the expectation of receiving a reward for their actions. According to Eisenberger et al. (1997), the situation is reversed when companies fail to consider the well-being and efforts of their people, alongside their performance and dedication. POS motivates workers to improve their dedication to the company, work harder than expected, and reduce negative behaviour against the organization (Chung, 2017). This is accomplished by stimulating the urge for complementation inside the workers' mind.

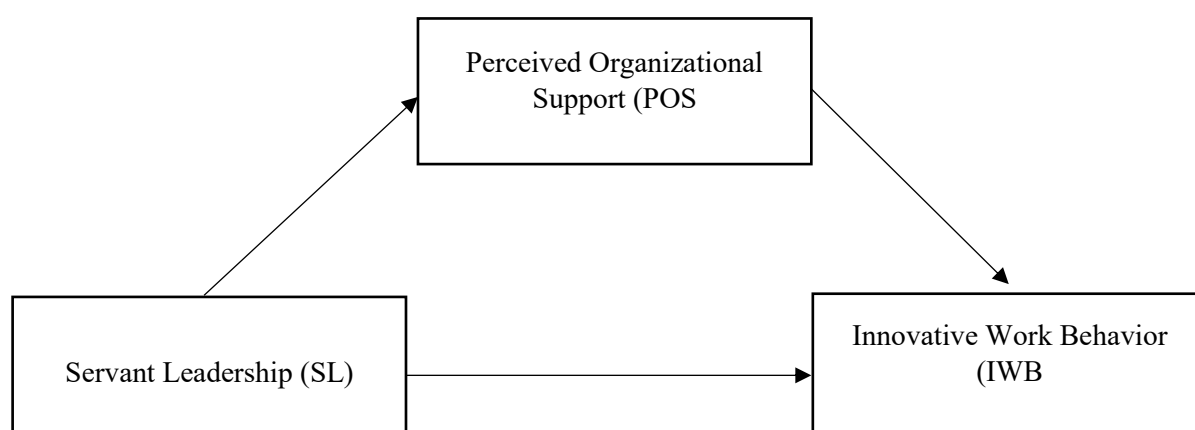
According to Gaudet and Tremblay (2017), leaders are responsible for creating an adequate working environment by providing the necessary resources. Assisting followers in their personal development, prioritizing subordinates, acting ethically, providing emotional support to people (Liden et al., 2015), caring for the well-being of members (Liden et al., 2008), and enabling followers to fulfil their full potential via relational, ethical, and spiritual connections (Eva et al., 2019) are all characteristics of servant leaders. Considering this, it is possible to propose that the distinctive characteristics of SL contribute to the feeling among workers that the business is providing significant assistance. Taking into consideration this theoretical setting, the following hypothesis is constructed:

Hypothesis 2: *Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behaviours.*

Theoretical Framework

Within the context of social identity theory, this research investigates the connection between SL and IWB in the workplace. Based on social identity theory, an individual's self-concept is shaped by their perception of belonging to a significant social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory explains how perceived identities in society influence interactions between groups through perceptions of trust and social status disparities. Therefore, even though the servant leader is not primarily concerned with impacting organizational results, particularly if those results don't align with the follower's needs, it is believed that the deep sense of connection and approval fostered by the one-on-one bond with the servant leader will motivate employees to support organizational objectives. Specifically, the argument is that servant leaders establish personalized connections with their followers, leading followers to feel like they belong to the inner circle. This fosters strong intrinsic motivation for engaging in innovative behaviour. When it comes to this topic, innovative behaviour can play a functional role by enhancing the group's image and maintaining the individual's status within the group. Figure 1 presents the model of the study.

Figure 1
Research Model



Method

Research Design

The current study employed a cross-sectional research design, utilising quantitative measures in the form of questionnaires to gather data. Subsequently, the collected data will undergo rigorous statistical analysis.

Participants

The study aimed to employ a simple random sampling method to select a representative sample of 480 employees, with an item-to-response ratio of 1:10, who are currently pursuing their careers in different private and public organizations. The inclusion criteria for participants included the age of 18 or older, the participants must be working in the organization for more than a year, they should be working under a leader, having no mental disability, and they must provide informed consent.

Measures

Servant Leadership Scale. A seven-item scale, created by Liden et al. (2015) from a 28-item scale (Liden et al., 2008), was used to successfully assess the level of servant leadership. A seven-point Likert scale was used, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90 was determined for the scale employed in this investigation (Liden et al., 2015).

Employee Innovative Behaviour. To evaluate the innovative behaviour of staff members, Scott and Bruce (1994) devised a scale consisting of six items. A 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate this characteristic, with 1 representing strong disagreement and 5 representing strong agreement. Cronbach's alpha for this metric was found to be .80.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS). The scale constructed by Eisenberger et al. (1997) consisted of eight items and was used to evaluate the POS. The employees were given a Likert scale with five points, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and asked to evaluate the degree to which they felt their company supported them. The internal consistency of the items for the sample was .88.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were given complete information about the study and gave their voluntary consent to ensure ethical behaviour. Personal information was handled with the highest level of secrecy, and privacy was preserved upon request. Potential harm to participants was reduced, and no major risks were expected. Researchers adhered to a policy of transparency, refraining from deception and withholding important information. Secure data collection and analysis were conducted to ensure confidentiality was maintained. Conflicts of interest were revealed to preserve impartiality. The research was planned to be fair and impartial, with a strong commitment to preventing plagiarism.

Procedure

The recruitment of participants was conducted using a simple random sampling method. Before participating in the study, participants were required to complete an informed consent form. The participants were briefed on their rights as research participants, including their right to confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the research at any point in time. Subsequently, the participants were instructed to complete a set of four questionnaires. The questionnaire took at max 10 minutes to complete. The data was systematically gathered and subsequently subjected to analysis utilising the SPSS statistical software to ascertain the interrelationship between the variables.

Analysis of Results

The data obtained from the study were subjected to analysis using the statistical software SPSS Statistics 29. The study employed Pearson product-moment correlation techniques to examine the association between narcissistic leadership and innovative behaviour. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore the potential mediating role of POS.

Results

This study was conducted to examine the impact of Servant leadership and perceived organizational support on employee innovative work behavior. For this research, a sample (N = 480) of employees was taken. For analysis of the data, the following steps were taken: (i) Cronbach's alpha was utilized to identify the reliability of the scales used in the study (ii) Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized to examine the relationship between SL, POS, & IWB (iii) Linear regression analysis was used to find out the impact of SL, and POS, on employee's IWB (iv) Mediating effect of POS (v) T.test.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 revealed the mean, standard deviation of demographic characteristics observed in the present study participants. The findings indicated that participants had a minimum age of 20 years and a maximum age of 39 years. Furthermore, the minimum work experience was 1 year, and the maximum work experience was 9 years.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviation of Age, Work Experience (N=480)

Variables	M	SD
Age	26.27	3.34
Work Experience	2.42	1.30

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The data analysis in Table 2 reveals a relatively balanced gender distribution among participants, with 271 males (56.6%) and 209 females (43.5%). In terms of education demographics, majority of the population had acquired bachelor's degree, constituting 243 individual (50.6%), the master's degree acquirement closely follows, with 227 individuals having master's degree (47.3%), only 2 individual (.4%) had done intermediate, whereas only 8 individual (1.7%) had done Ph.D. Furthermore, in terms of work industry majority of the participants working in healthcare industry, with 88 participants (18.3%), 82 individual (17.1%) working in education sector, 80 participants (16.7%) working in finance sector, 72 participants (15%) working in technology sector, 59 participants (12.3%) working in retail sector, whereas 13 participants (2.7%) working in manufacturing sector, 10 participants (2.1%) working in government sector, at last, 76 participants (15.8%) working in other sectors.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Demographic Variables of Participants (N= 480)

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	271	56.5
Female	209	43.5
Education		
Intermediate	2	0.4
Bachelors	243	50.6
Masters	227	47.3
Ph.D.	8	1.7
Industry		
Education	82	17.1
Technology	72	15.0
Healthcare	88	18.3
Finance	80	16.7
Retail	59	12.3
Manufacturing	13	2.7
Government	10	2.1
Others	76	15.8

Note. N= Number of frequencies, %= Percentage.

Psychometric Analysis

The psychometric analysis for internal consistency of the scales employed in the study is obtained by computing the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The reliability analysis was conducted to analyse the internal consistency of scales. The results of the reliability analysis revealed good internal consistency in SL, POS, & IWB. Detailed psychometric properties are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Psychometric Properties of Servant Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, Readiness for Organizational Change & Innovative Work Behaviour (N= 480)

Variable	M	SD	Ranges	α
Servant Leadership	45.78	15.07	7-49	.99
Perceived Organizational Support	26.47	11.21	8-40	.99
Innovative Work Behaviour	24.37	6.38	11-30	.99

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, α = Cronbach Alpha

Testing of Main Hypotheses

This section describes the relationship between SL, POS, & IWB among employees. To test the hypotheses, Person Product Moment Correlation, Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis, and Mediation Analysis were conducted.

Correlation Analysis

Correlational analysis, as shown in Table 4, was conducted to identify the association between the SL, POS, and IWB. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between SL and POS and IWB ($p = .00$). Furthermore, POS had a significant positive relationship with IWB ($p = .00$).

Table 4

Inter-Correlations Among Servant Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, & Innovative Work Behaviour (N= 480)

Variables	1	2	3
Servant Leadership	-	.74**	.91**
Perceived Organizational Support		-	.63**
Innovative Work Behaviour			-
M	45.78	26.47	24.37
SD	15.07	11.21	6.38

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

A multiple hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in four steps to determine the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, work experience, and industry), SL, and POS as shown in Table 5. The results of the multiple hierarchical regression analysis in Step 1 showed that age and industry of work were significant negative predictors of IWB, whereas work experience was a significant positive predictor of IWB ($F = 10.21, p = .00$). The model variance in Step 1 was 9.8%. The results in Step 2 showed that SL ($\beta = .92, p < .000$) was found to be a significant positive predictor of IWB, while it was also found to be a negative predictor of burnout ($F = 453.38, p = .000$). The model variance in Step 2 was 75.5%. Furthermore, the results in Step 3 showed that POS ($\beta = -.12, p < .01$) was

a significant negative predictor of IWB ($F = 406.75, p = .00$). The model variance in step 3 was 1%.

Table 3

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables Servant Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, & Innovative Work Behaviour (N= 480)

Variable	B	95% CI		SEB	B	R ²	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.08	.09**
Age	-.56	-.81	-.32	.12	-.29**		
Gender	.15	-1.04	1.34	.60	.01		
Education	-.03	-1.46	1.38	.73	-.00		
Work	1.71	1.13	2.28	.29	.35**		
Experience							
Industry	-.40	-.65	-.15	.12	-.15**		
Step 2						.85	.75**
Servant Leadership	.39	.37	.40	.01	.92**		
Step 3						.86	.01**
Perceived Organizational Support	-.07	-.09	-.04	.02	-.12**		

Note. B= Unstandardized Coefficient Beta, β = Standardize Coefficient Beta, F= Variance of Mean, SE= Standardized Error, LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit, R²= Coefficient of Determination, ΔR^2 = Adjusted R Square, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Mediation Analysis

The correlation indicated a significant relationship between servant leadership, POS, and IWB. The mediating role of POS in the relationship between SL and IWB was explored as shown in Table 6 and Figure 2. The pathway ‘a’ showed the direct effect between the independent variable (SL) and mediator (POS) is significant ($\beta = .55, SE = .02, p < .00$). The pathway ‘b’ showed the direct effect between mediator (POS) and dependent variable (IWB) is significant ($\beta = -.05, SE = .05, p < .01$). The pathway ‘c’ showed the total effect of the independent variable (SL) on the dependent variable (IWB) was significant ($\beta = .41, SE = .01, p < .000$). Moreover, the results also revealed that the mediator (POS) was mediated between the independent variable (SL) and dependent variable (IWB) as c model is significant ($\beta = .38, SE = .008, p < .00$). The result showed that it was partial mediation.

Table 4

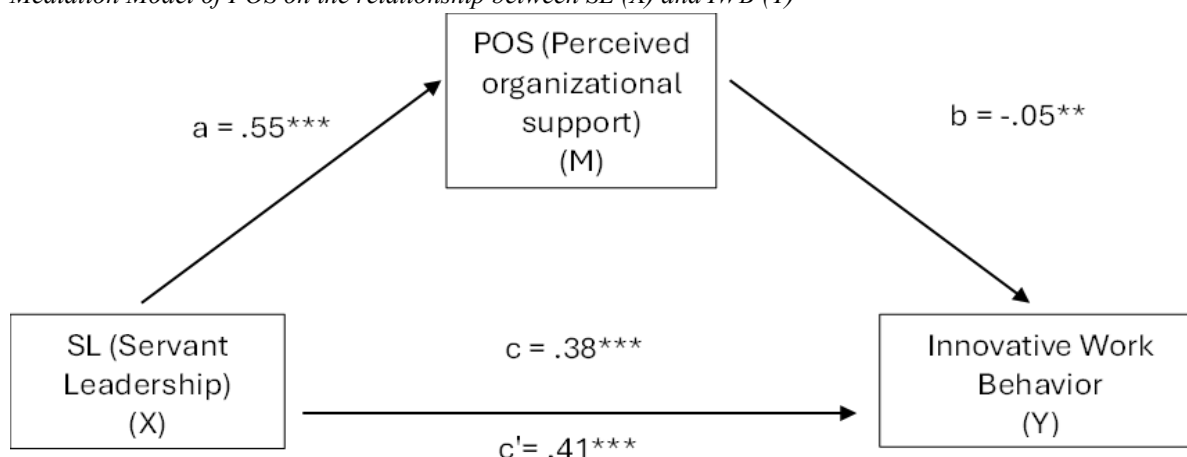
Regression Coefficients, Standard Error, and Model Summary Information for the Servant Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support & Innovative Work Behaviour among Employees Mediation Analysis (N=480)

Antecedent		Consequent						
		M(POS)			Y(IWB)			
		β	SE	p	β	SE	p	
SL (X)	A	.55	.02	.00***	c'	.41	.01	.00***
POS (M)		---	---	---	b	-.05	.01	.00***
Constant	I	6.75	.88	.00***	i	10.92	.32	.00***
$R^2 = .54$					$R^2 = .83$			
$F(1,478) = 579.89, p = .000***$					$F(2,477) = 1182.46, p = .000***$			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2

Mediation Model of POS on the relationship between SL (X) and IWB (Y)



Discussion

Although there is evidence indicating a link between servant leadership and innovative work behaviour in employees, the reasons for this connection are not well-researched. Although the relationship between SL and IWB has been explored, a significant research gap remains in analyzing these dynamics in the context of Pakistan. Majority of the literature in this regard originates from Western culture. This often fails to consider the potential cultural impacts on these behaviors. Due to Pakistan's collectivistic culture, employees' reactions to SL are expected to vary greatly compared to those in individualistic societies. In Pakistan, the values of SL may be viewed in a different light due to the emphasis on group harmony and collective well-being over individual success. SL, focusing on the leader serving their team and creating a supportive and empowering environment, may be suitable for collectivistic values, leading to improved IWB. Nevertheless, this alignment must be confirmed through empirical validation.

To address this gap, the study aimed to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and IWB to determine whether SL promotes the development of IWB among employees of an organization. Considering various factors involved in an organization, organizational support was selected as the mediating factor. The study employed a quantitative approach to address these aims.

According to the first hypothesis, it was stated that there is a positive relationship between SL and IWB. The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between SL and IWB. This implies that with an increase in the adoption of SL style by an organization's leaders, the IWB is promoted among employees. This was further validated by the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. SL was found to be a significant positive predictor of IWB. This finding is consistent with those of earlier studies conducted in this area. It was noted by Yoshida et al. (2014) that SL has a beneficial influence on the innovative behaviour of workers. This is because it creates an environment that is safe and encouraging for employees to communicate their ideas. Further elaboration was provided by Panaccio et al. (2015), who stated that the focus of SL on the requirements of followers encourages a social interchange that ultimately results in more IWBs. Similarly, Krog and Govender (2015) discovered that the relationship between SL and innovative thinking is mediated by employees' perceptions of their own empowerment. As it turned out, this was true. Furthermore, Rasheed

et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between SL and IWB among Pakistani commercial banks. Based on their research, Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) concluded that people who consistently exhibit their creative abilities via SL help IWB to flourish. This helps them to earn the confidence and faith of their followers.

Opoku et al. (2019) claim that by helping employees to better understand their insider position, SL promotes creative behaviour among them. According to Wang et al. (2019), who discovered that helping others had a positive impact on the development of creative behaviour, team support was shown to be a moderating element in the relationship between serving others and innovative behaviour. According to Iqbal et al. (2020), especially in situations requiring a high degree of knowledge, SL may help individuals increase their creative work behaviour. Khan et al. (2021) advised that SL improves creative behaviour in both the phases of invention and execution. This is so because SL creates trust.

According to Zeng and Xu's (2020) research, SL has a beneficial impact on the "self-concept" of followers, which in turn stimulates IWB. Furthermore, Zhu and Zhang (2020) stated that SL encourages IWB among employees by making it easier for them to share their knowledge with one another. The findings of this research collectively lend credence to the idea that SL is a strong predictor of IWB in a variety of settings. The findings presented here contribute to the existing body of literature by establishing the existence of this link within a Pakistani context. As a result, they highlight the fact that SL is applicable everywhere in promoting creativity. As a result, this highlights the significance of organizational leaders adopting an SL style to develop an atmosphere that is conducive to innovation, which is supported by cultural and organizational settings.

According to the second hypothesis, it was stated that POS mediates the relationship between SL and IWB. Firstly, the correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between SL and POS, as well as between POS and IWB. This implies that SL promotes organizational support, which in turn promotes IWB. However, hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed a different story. It was found that perceived organisational support negatively predicts the IWB. This implies that with an increase in organizational support, IWB decreases. To further clarify this, a mediation analysis was performed. Path 'a' (SL to POS) showed a significant effect. The path 'b' (POS to IWB) showed a significant effect ($\beta = -.05, p < .001$). Whereas path 'c' was also showing a significant effect. However, examining path 'b' suggests that the mediation was partial.

When seen in the context of the current body of research, these findings can be understood more clearly. According to Gibney et al. (2009), the way an organization treats its employees can influence how employees perceive the organization's bias. Workers frequently personify their organization. It was proposed by Gaudet and Tremblay (2017) that leaders are perceived as representatives of the organizations they oversee by their followers. As a result, the actions and attitudes of leaders toward employees have a significant impact on the employees' perceptions of the support they receive from the firm. One of the most important factors determining the nature of the relationship between employees and their leaders is the degree to which employees identify with their leaders. According to Sonmez Cakir and Adiguzel (2020), when employees feel supported by their company, their socioemotional needs are better met, which in turn enhances their connections and standing within the organization. Through the provision of essential resources and assistance, leaders play a significant role in establishing a

supportive working environment. The concept of SL is characterized by assisting followers in their personal development, prioritizing subordinates, acting ethically, providing emotional support (Liden et al., 2015), caring for the well-being of members (Liden et al., 2008), and enabling followers to realize their full potential through relational, ethical, and spiritual connections (Eva et al., 2019), fosters a perception of significant organizational support among people who work for the organization.

The findings of this study contribute to the theoretical understanding of servant leadership, perceived organizational support, and innovative work behavior. By confirming the positive relationship between SL and IWB, the study aligns with prior research (Ahmad et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022). However, the key contribution lies in demonstrating that POS plays a significant mediating role in this relationship. This mediation effect underscores the significance of employees' perceptions of organizational support in shaping the impact of servant leadership on innovative behavior. Specifically, in collectivistic cultures like Pakistan, where group harmony and support are highly valued, POS may be particularly salient in enhancing the effectiveness of servant leadership. This finding extends the dynamic componential model of creativity and innovation (Amabile & Pratt, 2016), which suggests that a supportive work environment fosters innovation through motivating mechanisms such as meaningful work. Here, POS acts as a complementary mechanism that amplifies the effects of servant leadership.

The results have practical implications for organizations in Pakistan and similar contexts. Organizations should not only focus on developing servant leadership qualities among their leaders—such as empathy, empowerment, and a focus on follower growth—but also ensure that employees feel supported by the organization. This can be achieved through policies and practices that enhance POS, such as providing recognition, offering developmental opportunities, and ensuring fair treatment. By fostering both servant leadership and POS, organizations can create an environment conducive to innovative work behavior, which is crucial for competitiveness and adaptability in dynamic markets.

There are a few limitations to the study. First, the study focused on Pakistan culture, a collectivistic nation; the results might not be relevant to individualistic nations. The structure of the cross-sectional approach limits the ability to draw conclusions in a causal nature, and self-reported data may introduce biases. Moreover, the findings of the qualitative study might give a clearer picture of the relationship between SL and IWB.

In future research, it is suggested that more investigations be conducted on the effects of SL and IWB in many cultural contexts, and the investigations should be carried out in the longitudinal designs in an endeavour to establish causal relations. Adding other mediating factors and other sectors of the business will assist in enhancing our understanding of these dynamics.

Conclusion

This study significantly advances the understanding of how Servant Leadership (SL) fosters Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) in Pakistan's collectivistic cultural context, contributing new insights to the organizational psychology literature. The findings confirm a strong positive relationship between SL and IWB, highlighting that SL's people-centric approach, which emphasizes serving followers and fostering trust, effectively promotes employee creativity in

Pakistan. This aligns with the country's collectivistic values, where group harmony and collective well-being enhance the efficacy of SL in driving innovation. However, the partial and negative mediating effect of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) reveals a critical outcome that excessive organizational support may hinder IWB by fostering complacency or reducing risk-taking, necessitating a balanced approach to support mechanisms.

Organizations, particularly in innovation-driven sectors like IT, can leverage SL to cultivate a culture of creativity and knowledge sharing, but they must carefully calibrate POS to avoid stifling employee initiative. This study contributes to the existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence of SL's effectiveness in a non-Western, collectivistic setting, thereby addressing a gap in the literature that has been dominated by Western and East Asian studies. It also underscores the need for culturally sensitive leadership models, as the negative mediation of POS challenges universal assumptions about its role in fostering innovation.

The contribution of this study lies in its culturally contextualized analysis of SL's impact on IWB and its identification of POS's complex role as a mediator in Pakistan. By highlighting the interplay between cultural values and leadership practices, this research provides a foundation for future studies to explore additional mediators (e.g., psychological safety, organizational culture) and employ longitudinal designs to establish causality. Practically, it provides actionable insights for Pakistani organizations to foster innovation through SL while maintaining optimal levels of support, thereby enhancing workforce creativity and national economic competitiveness.

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