



SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO PERFORMANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research article is to provide a specific description of the relationship between servant leadership and individual, team and organizational performance. Methodologically, a rigorous three-phase systematic literature review process has been followed to identify relevant information to answer the review questions. In this way, the results are presented and disseminated in a descriptive manner. It has been found that the studies are mostly quantitative, focused on studying the relationship between servant leadership and performance at the individual level, followed by organizational performance and few studies focused on team performance; with a growing interest in multilevel performance; there is a greater presence of mediating variables than moderating variables in the research. Although there is much interest in the subject, it is believed that it is little studied, mainly in team performance and moderating variables. The study contributes with specificity by addressing the effect it has on performance at the individual, team and organizational levels. In addition, new topics for further research are raised.*

Keywords: *Servant leadership, individual performance, team performance, organizational performance, systematic literature review.*

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are made up of individuals who design, execute and evaluate actions that allow them to achieve their objectives at the institutional level and at the level of the people who make up the organization. The challenge is to harmonize both aspirations in such a way that a good performance is achieved. This is achieved at the level of individuals, teams or areas and throughout the organization. The preponderant element to achieve it, is leadership, which has become an essential part of the management of people, teams and organizations; leadership has as its main characteristic to develop a vision, determine the direction, adequately communicate the vision, using motivation and inspiring followers, promoting new approaches as results (Holten et al., 2019). There are various leadership styles, some focused on achieving organizational goals and others focused on the well-being of people; within the latter group is servant leadership (Mcquade et al., 2021).

Servant leadership is an essential style to achieve good performance on different levels, because it empowers followers with the sole purpose of obtaining high performance in the organization, promoting communication between managers and workers and, at the same time, allows achieving the natural aspirations of followers (Avolio et al., 2009; Ehrhart et al., 2004; Liden et al., 2008). Although the practice of servant leadership dates back to antiquity, it was not until 1970 that its formal study began, based on the contributions of Robert Greenleaf (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), who argues in his essay: a servant leader must first behave and act as a servant, because leadership is born as the natural feeling to support others, and then aspire to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). Specifically, this leadership is oriented to others, prioritizes the needs and interests of the followers, leaving in second place those of the leader, resulting in them being able to show concern for others inside and outside the organization, in the community in which they live (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014). This leadership approach has become the most effective means to provide a solution to the various problems that arise in the modern world workplace, managing to satisfy the needs of belonging that worker have (Neubert et al., 2016).



Although it is true that in the last two decades there has been considerable interest in studying servant leadership and the number of publications has increased exponentially, there is still a call for further research, since very little is known about its explicitness, background and effects (Mcquade et al., 2021). Among the studies presented, there are some literature review studies (Eva et al., 2019; Langhof & Guldenberg, 2020; Mcquade et al., 2021), in which a general review of servant leadership is made; however, it is still pending to go deeper in more detail, mainly, how servant leadership explains performance. In that sense, the present research contributes with the literature review taking servant leadership as an exogenous variable and performance as an endogenous variable, because many research works, express the great potential that servant leadership has on performance at the individual level (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Stollberger et al., 2019), at the team level (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021; Holtzhausen & de Klerk, 2018; Xu & Wang, 2020), at the organizational level (Batool et al., 2022; Kimakwa et al., 2021; Politis & Politis, 2018) and at different levels at the same time (Giolito et al., 2021; Liden et al., 2014; Tuan, 2021). The objective of this research is to provide a specific description of the relationship between servant leadership and performance, as well as the variables that moderate and mediate it. The systematic literature review, as well as the discussion that will be generated, will give more elements of judgment to know in a more detailed way the current state of this relationship, at the same time it will be possible to identify new gaps that are to be studied (Eva et al., 2019). The contribution of the present work will allow academics to have a greater analysis of the various methodologies that have been applied in the study of this relationship, the results found, the mediating and moderating variables. For this purpose, it has been divided into three parts, according to the methodology of systematic literature reviews (Tranfield et al., 2003); in the first part, the methodology applied is presented; then, the main findings are reported and discussed, to address the review questions; finally, the implications of the study for the academic world, the limitations, the conclusions and the presentation of gaps to be addressed in future research are considered.

1. METHODOLOGY

When conducting the systematic literature review, the most relevant information that has been written on a given topic must be identified by implementing established methodological approaches and procedures (Jahan et al., 2016). These processes follow review protocols that are previously specified, which include a series of tests developed for that purpose. In that sense, the processes should be unique, algorithmic, and should add value (Tranfield et al., 2003). These protocols allow other interested researchers, by following the same procedure, to easily replicate the study, and lead to the same results each time they are repeated (Mcquade et al., 2021).

The present research was framed within the three-step process proposed by Tranfield et al. (2003), these were verified in other academic studies (Harrison et al., 2019; Sawyerr & Harrison, 2020). The steps of the process used comprise: a) planning the review; b) conducting the review; and c) reporting and dissemination. The following is an account of each of the steps followed and answers the questions posed.

2. STAGE ONE: PLANNING THE REVIEW

Before initiating the review process, a panel of specialists in servant leadership issues was consulted and gave their favorable point of view in order to address the relationship between servant leadership and performance. As well, such protocol was guided by a scoping study and comprehensive narrative literature review.

Review questions:

In order to be able to know the scope of the topic, a study was carried out, which allowed determining three review questions:

1. At what level of performance does the development of the literature focus when explained by servant leadership?
2. What are the main moderating and mediating variables between the relationship between servant leadership and performance?



3. What are the main research gaps in the relationship between servant leadership and performance?

3. STAGE TWO: CONDUCT OF THE REVIEW

Guided by the research protocol for systematic literature reviews, we opted for a manual and electronic search of databases. For this purpose, generic words were used in the web pages. Initially, the Google Scholar page was used to identify the main sources of information, as it is the most generalized and used by the main publications in the world, which made it possible to clearly identify the databases that present the server leadership, substantially reducing the search.

The repositories, the recognized, academically accepted databases that were consulted in the search for information, were: a) Taylor & Francis online; b) Emerald insight; c) SAGE journals; d) Springer link; e) Scopus; f) Web of science; and g) Elsevier. These sources have already been used in previous systematic literature review studies (Clark et al., 2019; Mcquade et al., 2021). In these databases, search strings were applied, which facilitated identifying the most relevant information for the present investigation:

- Search string 1: Servant leadership AND performance (in the title).
- Search string 2: Servant leadership AND performance (anywhere).
- Search string 3: Serv** AND Lead***** AND performance (in the title).
- Search string 4: Serv** AND Lead***** AND performance (anywhere).
- Search string 5: Serve AND Lead***** AND performance (in the title).
- Search string 6: Serve AND Lead***** AND performance (anywhere).

The root used and the various search strings yielded 1786 articles. These were subjected to the inclusion and exclusion criteria; 112 duplicates were also found and eliminated. Subsequently, the rigorous quality review was applied as proposed by Harrison et al. (2016). This process poses the assurance of articles that report unequivocal findings that are based on arguments and evidence, as well as articles that are referenced and suitable, in addition to the selection of abstracts. The process allowed the selection of 65 articles from peer-reviewed journals and empirical studies. This was followed by manual collation using reference and citation lists. Relevant articles from this search were filtered using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which allowed 10 articles to be eliminated from the list. Finally, 55 articles were included in the systematic literature review, which was completed on March 25, 2022.

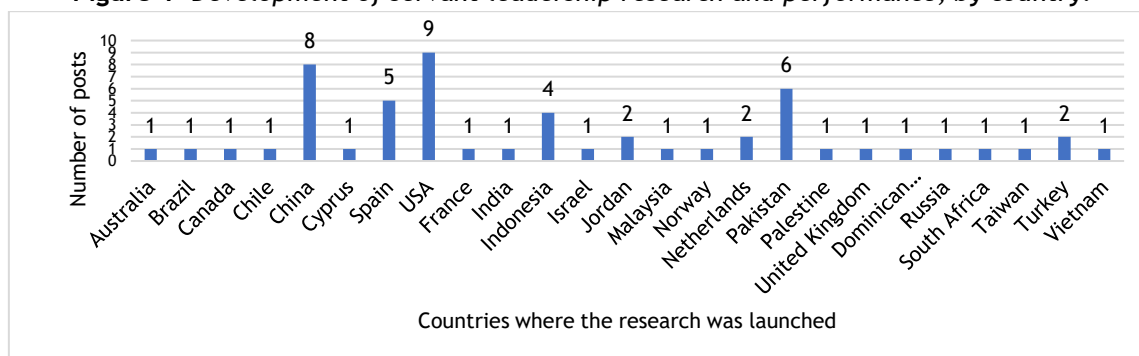
4. STAGE THREE: REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

After having presented how the literature selection was carried out, the findings of the systematic review are described and the research questions will be answered.

Geographical location

The articles analyzed were developed in different parts of the world; however, the United States stands out with nine studies, followed by China with eight, Pakistan with six, Spain with five and Indonesia with four. In summary, 53% of the research was focused on developed countries, while 47% was conducted in developing countries, thus demonstrating that the relationship between servant leadership and performance is of interest to researchers around the world. As shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Development of servant leadership research and performance, by country.

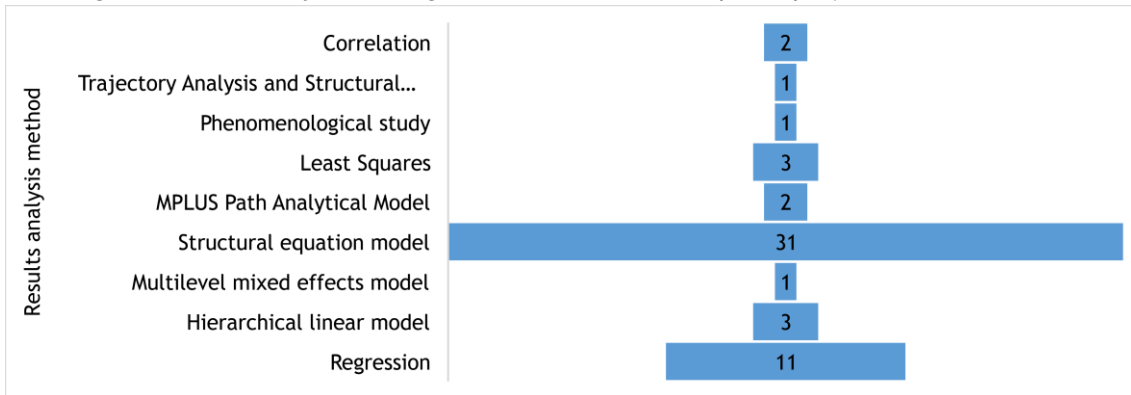




Data analysis strategy

Regarding data analysis, the studies reviewed used various strategies, the most frequent being structural equation modeling (56.4%), while 20% used regression modeling. The results are presented in Figure 2.

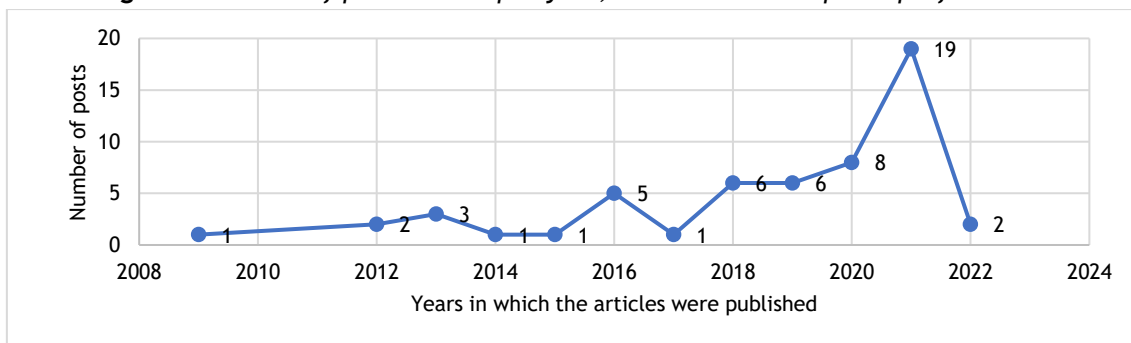
Figure 2 Data analysis strategies in servant leadership and performance research.



Publications by year

Regarding the years of publication of the selected research, a higher production can be evidenced in the year 2021 with 19 articles, followed by 2020 with 8 researches; this demonstrates the current interest in the topic. As shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Number of publications per year, servant leadership and performance



Response to the review questions

In this part, answers are given to the three questions posed in this systematic literature review.

Question 1: At what level of performance is the literature development concentrated when explained by servant leadership?

It is shown that there is considerable interest in explaining the effect of servant leadership on performance; however, the greatest production is concentrated in studying how this leadership style explains the performance of individuals, followed by performance at different levels, then organizational performance, and a smaller number of studies aimed at explaining the performance of teams, based on servant leadership. The following is a description of each group of studies and their effect on performance.

Research on the effect of servant leadership on individual performance

The main interest is focused on the study of the relationship between servant leadership and individual performance. It has been shown that servant leadership is an important catalyst in the sales force because it focuses on the well-being of subordinates, thus promoting adaptive sales behaviors, positive customer-oriented attitudes, and improved sales performance (Jaramillo et al., 2009). It has been determined that it satisfies three elementary psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness; which in turn impact the task performance of collaborators (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). Also, it has been shown to improve the service climate of workers, which is conducive to better performance in customer service (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2017). Servant leadership has been found to improve rewards and organizational culture and thus influence employee performance (Sihombing et al., 2018).



Likewise, servant leadership improves workers' trust in the organization, reducing the intention to be late to work, improving the creative level and increasing performance in the recovery of services (Karatepe et al., 2019). It improves supervisor leadership by increasing workers' prosocial motivation and extending workers' job performance (Stollberger et al., 2019). It has been found that longer supervisions, decrease the effect of servant leadership on job satisfaction, propitiating a decrease in the job performance of collaborators (Thompson et al., 2019). It also facilitates proactive performance, when it comes to customer service (Ye et al., 2019).


Servant leadership directly influences workers' work engagement, affective commitment and job satisfaction; moreover, it indirectly impacts job performance (Aboramadan et al., 2020). It negatively affects employees' self-reported performance (Bayram & Zoubi, 2020). So also, it has positive effects on job satisfaction and adaptive performance of workers (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020). It explains affective trust, workers' performance and organizational citizenship behavior; and to a lesser extent cognitive trust (Saleem et al., 2020). It has also been found that the dimension of servant leadership is linked to people's values, is positively related to academic performance, while the other dimensions have no major relationship (Gultekin & Dougherty, 2021).

Servant leadership style positively influences task performance (Khattak & O'Connor, 2021). It has significant impact on innovative behavior and job performance; further mediating the relationship between these variables (Kül & Sönmez, 2021). Improves employees' family performance (Li et al., 2021). It has positive effects on self-efficacy and benevolence values, as well as indirectly influences employee performance (Mujeeb et al., 2021). It favorably explains supervisory behavior on family support, work engagement and self-care; in addition to subordinates' job performance and on their work-family balance, indirectly (Rofcanin et al., 2021).

Other studies found that it influences innovation self-efficacy and worker productivity (Sudarmo et al., 2021). Furthermore, that it positively affects job role performance, also knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment (Tripathi et al., 2021). Finally, it positively impacts on employee engagement; furthermore, on employee performance and punctuality (Yagil & Oren, 2021). Further details are given in Table 1.

Table 1 *Influence of servant leadership on individual-level performance*

Author and year	Title	Contribution
Jaramillo et al. (2009)	"Examining the impact of servant leadership on sales force performance"	Servant leadership improves the salesperson's performance and increases business sales.
Chiniara & Bentein (2016)	"Linking servant leadership to individual performance: Differentiating the mediating role of autonomy, competence and relatedness need satisfaction"	Servant leadership satisfies the needs of autonomy, competence and relationship, which affect task performance.
Linuesa-Langreo et al. (2017)	"New Strategies in the New Millennium: Servant Leadership as Enhancer of Service Climate and Customer Service Performance"	Servant leadership influences the service climate and therefore customer service performance.
Sihombing et al. (2018)	"The effect of servant leadership on rewards, organizational culture and its implication for employee's performance"	Servant leadership directly affects rewards and organizational culture and these in turn affect employee performance.
Karatepe et al. (2019)	"Servant leadership, organisational trust, and bank employee outcomes"	Servant leadership increases trust in the organization and indirectly reduces the intention to be late for work, increases creative performance and service recovery performance.



Stollberger al. (2019)	et	“Serving followers and family? A trickle-down model of how servant leadership shapes employee work performance”	The manager’s servant leadership enhances the supervisor’s leadership, achieving prosocial motivation of workers and thus increasing their job performance.
Thompson al. (2019)	et	“Servant leadership, span of control, and outcomes in a municipality context”	Servant leadership attenuates its impact on worker satisfaction by having longer supervisions, thus resulting in less favorable worker performance.
Ye et al. (2019)		“Servant leadership and proactive customer service performance”	Servant leadership promotes proactive customer service performance.
Aboramadan al. (2020)	et	“Servant leadership and academics outcomes in higher education: the role of job satisfaction”	Servant leadership directly affects work commitment, affective commitment and job satisfaction and indirectly affects job performance.
Bayram & Zoubi (2020)		“The effect of servant leadership on employees’ self-reported performance: Does public service motivation play a mediating explanatory role?”	Servant leadership negatively affects self-reported performance of public servants.
Kaya Karatepe (2020)	&	“Does servant leadership better explain work engagement, career satisfaction and adaptive performance than authentic leadership?”	Servant leadership positively affects job satisfaction and adaptive performance of workers.
Saleem et al. (2020)	et al.	“Impact of Servant Leadership on Performance: The Mediating Role of Affective and Cognitive Trust”	Servant leadership strongly affects affective trust and weakly affects cognitive trust; while it predicts workers’ performance and organizational citizenship behavior.
Gultekin Dougherty (2021)	&	“The Relationship between Servant Leadership Characteristics of School Teachers and Students’ Academic Achievement”	The people values dimension correlates significantly with academic performance.
Khattak O’Connor (2021)	&	“The interplay between servant leadership and organizational politics”	Servant leadership positively influences employees’ task performance.
Kül & Sönmez (2021)		“The effect of nurse managers’ servant leadership on nurses’ innovative behaviors and job performances”	Servant leadership influences innovative behavior and job performance; it also mediates the relationship of innovation and job performance.
Li et al. (2021)		“How do servant leadership and self-esteem at work shape family performance in China? A resource gain development perspective”	Servant leadership influences employees’ family performance.
Mujeeb et al. (2021)	et al.	“Do Servant Leadership Self-Efficacy and Benevolence Values Predict Employee Performance within the Banking Industry in the Post-COVID-19 Era: Using a Serial Mediation Approach”	Servant leadership accounts for self-efficacy and benevolent values; and through both influences’ employee performance.
Rofcanin et al. (2021)	et al.	“Servant leadership and family supportiveness: Looking into employees’ work and family outcomes”	Servant leadership influences family supportive supervisory behavior, work engagement, self-care; indirectly on subordinate job performance and employee work-family balance.



Sudarmo et al. (2021)	“Servant leadership and employee productivity: a mediating and moderating role”	Servant leadership has positive effects on innovation self-efficacy and employee productivity.
Tripathi et al. (2021)	“Does servant leadership affect work role performance via knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment?”	Servant leadership positively influences job role performance, knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment.
Yagil & Oren (2021)	“Servant Leadership, Engagement, and Employee Outcomes: The Moderating Roles of Proactivity and Job Autonomy”	Servant leadership improves commitment and thus employee performance and punctuality.

Research on the effect of servant leadership on team performance

There is little research that focuses on the study of the relationship between servant leadership and team-level performance; however, it has been found that it directly impacts the integration of team behavior and indirectly on team performance (Sousa, 2016). Likewise, it has been found to negatively predict perceived leader-member differentiation and indirectly on task performance and citizenship, service-oriented behavior (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018). It was also moderately strongly correlated with team performance (Holtzhausen & de Klerk, 2018). It supports in the integration of members in the team-member exchange, and indirectly influences the prosperity of the collective (Xu & Wang, 2020). It has been found to have a positive impact on team social resources (trust in the team leader, trust in the team, and team cohesion), service culture, and team service performance (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021). More details in Table 2.

Table 2 Influence of servant leadership on team-level performance

Author and year	Title	Contribution
Sousa (2016)	“Introducing a Short Measure of Shared Servant Leadership Impacting Team Performance through Team Behavioral Integration”	Servant leadership positively impacts team behavior integration and team performance indirectly.
Chiniara & Bentein (2018)	“The servant leadership advantage: When perceiving low differentiation in leader-member relationship quality influences team cohesion, team task performance and service OCB”	Servant leadership negatively predicts perceived leader-member differentiation, and indirectly predicts team task performance and service-oriented citizenship behavior.
Holtzhausen & de Klerk (2018)	“Servant leadership and the Scrum team’s effectiveness”	Servant leadership correlates moderately strongly with team performance.
Xu & Wang (2020)	“How and When Servant Leaders Enable Collective Thriving: The Role of Team-Member Exchange and Political Climate”	Servant leadership positively impacts member integration in team-member exchange and collective prosperity.
Christensen-Salem et al. (2021)	“Communal solidarity in extreme environments: The role of servant leadership and social resources in building serving culture and service performance”	Servant leadership positively impacts team social resources, servant culture, and team service performance.

Research on the effect of servant leadership on organizational performance.

It has been found that servant leadership affects high performance organizational factors, and at the same time enables the achievement of higher organizational performances (de Waal & Sivro, 2012). Servant leadership behavior by the CEO of the organization has a positive effect on organizational performance (Peterson et al., 2012). A moderate positive effect on organizational learning and indirect effect on organizational performance (Choudhary et al., 2013). This leadership style is less instrumented in universities; that is, it is not prevalent in university students (Stoten, 2013). It directly affects the servant climate and indirectly on organizational performance (Huang et al., 2016).

Servant leadership positively affects organizational performance, moderated by organizational strategy and structure (Eva et al., 2018). A near-zero relationship between servant leadership and

agency problems; moreover, in the case of female leaders allows a decrease in agency problems, contrary to male leaders who increase it (Politis & Politis, 2018). It positively explains the behavior of work commitment and organizational performance, measured through workers' satisfaction and retention (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019). In addition, it has positive effects on the financial performance of firms (Hartnell et al., 2020). It explains organizational performance directly, and indirectly through innovativeness (Hernández-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020).

In addition, it positively explains organizational performance in hospitals (Daswati et al., 2021). It influences service innovation, competitiveness and corporate sustainability (Hutabarat et al., 2021). Positively impacts social enterprise performance, through meaningful work, well-being and worker engagement (Kimakwa et al., 2021). It strongly and directly predicts creativity and psychological resilience and indirectly to organizational sustainability (Batool et al., 2022). Further details are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Influence of servant leadership on organizational performance

Author and year	Title	Contribution
de Waal & Sivo (2012)	"The Relation Between Servant Leadership, Organizational Performance, and the High-Performance Organization Framework"	Servant leadership factors explain high organizational performance factors and at the same time generate higher organizational performance.
Peterson et al. (2012)	"CEO servant leadership: exploring executive characteristics and firm performance"	CEO servant leadership behavior positively affects organizational performance.
Choudhary et al. (2013)	"Impact of Transformational and Servant Leadership on Organizational Performance: A Comparative Analysis"	Servant leadership has been found to moderately impact organizational learning, thus indirectly affecting organizational performance.
Stoten (2013)	"Servant leadership in English sixth form colleges: what do teachers tell us?"	Servant leadership is less favorable in college students.
Huang et al. (2016)	"The impact of CEO servant leadership on firm performance in the hospitality industry"	Servant leadership has a direct effect on servant climate and indirectly on organizational performance.
Eva et al. (2018)	"Creating strategic fit: Aligning servant leadership with organizational structure and strategy"	Servant leadership explains organizational performance; however, the relationship is moderated by strategy and organizational structure.
Politis & Politis (2018)	"Examination of the relationship between servant leadership and agency problems: gender matters"	Servant leadership and agency problems is a near-zero relationship; female servant leadership decreases agency problems; and male servant leadership increases agency problems.
Alafeshat & Tanova (2019)	"Servant Leadership Style and High-Performance Work System Practices: Pathway to a Sustainable Jordanian Airline Industry"	Servant leadership positively impacts organizational performance, as measured by employee satisfaction and retention; it also explains employee commitment behavior.
Hartnell et al. (2020)	"Does Servant Leadership's People Focus Facilitate or Constrain Its Positive Impact on Performance? An Examination of Servant Leadership's Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects on Branch Financial Performance"	Servant leadership positively explains the financial performance of companies.
Hernández-Perlines & Araya-Castillo (2020)	"Servant Leadership, Innovative Capacity and Performance in Third Sector Entities"	Servant leadership positively influences organizational performance directly, as well as indirectly through innovativeness.
Daswati et al. (2021)	"Effect of servant leadership on the performance of a regional general hospital"	Servant leadership significantly explains organizational performance in hospitals.



Hutabarat et al. (2021)	“Servant Leadership, Business Transformation, and Corporate Competitiveness”	Servant leadership influences service innovation and corporate competitiveness and sustainability.
Kimakwa et al. (2021)	“Social Entrepreneur Leadership and Social Venture Performance: How are They Related?”	Servant leadership positively impacts the performance of social organizations, mediated by the meaningful work, commitment and well-being of workers.
Batool et al. (2022)	“The effect of servant leadership on organizational sustainability: the parallel mediation role of creativity and psychological resilience”	Servant leadership strongly explains creativity and psychological resilience directly and indirectly organizational sustainability.

Question 2: What are the main moderating and mediating variables between the relationship between servant leadership and performance?

The research analyzed included moderating variables. In the relationship of servant leadership and individual performance, sales experience (Jaramillo et al., 2009), duration of supervision (Thompson et al., 2019), approval of contingent self-esteem by others (Ye et al., 2019), self-esteem tradition and gender (Li et al., 2021), perceived organizational support (Rofcanin et al., 2021), corporate work culture (Sudarmo et al., 2021); and proactivity and autonomy (Yagil & Oren, 2021). In the relationship of servant leadership and team performance, moderation of political climate has been studied (Xu & Wang, 2020). In the relationship of servant leadership and organizational performance, shared intensity (Huang et al., 2016); strategy and organizational structure (Eva et al., 2018) are held as moderating variables. In the relationship of leadership and performance at different levels, the moderating variables studied were competitive climate (Peng & Chen, 2021), manager organizational embodiment and owner organizational embodiment (Wang et al., 2018), customer orientation and political skill (Varela et al., 2019), individual- and business-level power distance orientation, team member sharing and individual team member sharing (Giolito et al., 2021); and sex and female team gender role commitment (Lemoine & Blum, 2021).

Measuring the relationship of servant leadership and individual performance are customer orientation, customer-directed role and adaptive sales (Jaramillo et al., 2009); autonomy, competence and relationship satisfaction needs (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016); service climate (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2017), reward and organizational culture (Sihombing et al., 2018), organizational trust (Karatepe et al., 2019), supervisor leadership and employee prosocial motivation (Stollberger et al., 2019), job satisfaction (Aboramadan et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2019), harmonious passion and customer orientation (Ye et al., 2019); work engagement (Aboramadan et al., 2020; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Rofcanin et al., 2021; Yagil & Oren, 2021), affective commitment (Aboramadan et al., 2020), public service motivation (Bayram & Zoubi, 2020), affective and cognitive trust (Saleem et al., 2020) leader trust (Khattak & O'Connor, 2021); innovative behavior (Kül & Sönmez, 2021), family work facilitation (Li et al., 2021), self-efficacy and benevolence values (Mujeeb et al., 2021), self-care and family-supportive supervisory behaviors (Rofcanin et al., 2021); innovation self-efficacy (Sudarmo et al., 2021), knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment (Tripathi et al., 2021).

The mediating variables that have been studied in the servant leadership and team performance relationship are team behavior integration (Sousa, 2016), leader trust based on cognition and affect (Holtzhausen & de Klerk, 2018), team member exchange (Xu & Wang, 2020), team cohesion and perceived differentiation (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018), social resources and service culture (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021). The mediating variables in the relationship of servant leadership and organizational performance were high performance organization factors (de Waal & Sivro, 2012), organizational learning (Choudhary et al., 2013), service climate (Huang et al., 2016), worker engagement (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019; Kimakwa et al., 2021), supportive climate, goal achievement climate and organizational citizenship behavior (Hartnell et al., 2020), innovativeness (Hernandez-Perlines & Araya-Castillo, 2020), innovation service (Hutabarat et al., 2021), meaningful work and worker well-being (Kimakwa et al., 2021), creativity and psychological resilience (Batool et al., 2022).



Variables mediating the relationship of servant leadership and multilevel performance are service climate (Hunter et al., 2013), service culture and employee identification with the store (Liden et al., 2014), self-efficacy and group identification (Chen et al., 2015), employee organizational identification and employee perception of organizational support (Otero-Neira et al., 2016), public service motivation (Schwarz et al., 2016), supervisor servant leadership and proactivity (Varela et al., 2019), team goal clarity and team process clarity (Bilal et al., 2020), individual employee flourishing, business unit employee flourishing and revenue growth (Giolito et al., 2021), prosocial motivation and follower servant leadership (Lemoine & Blum, 2021), knowledge sharing and collaborative culture (Nauman et al., 2021), caring climate and work engagement (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021), green self-identity and pro-environmental team behavior (Siddiquei et al., 2021), and green climate and green workmanship (Tuan, 2021).

Question 3: What are the main research gaps in the relationship between servant leadership and performance?

In recent years, there has been an increase in the study of servant leadership and its effects on performance (Eva et al., 2019; Mcquade et al., 2021); there is still much research to be done on this relationship. From the literature review, it is clear that the quantitative approach has been chosen; however, being a variable that explores, mainly, the behaviors of human beings, it is necessary to turn the interest towards qualitative research, using techniques and instruments that allow delving into the person's motivations, desires and intentions for the practice and preaching of servant leadership. Likewise, there are gaps to be investigated in the relationship between servant leadership and the performance of work teams, since the leader must work together with his followers and they must work as a team, in such a way that allows them to enhance their competencies to achieve better performance. Similarly, few moderating variables have yet been included in the leadership and performance relationship, so more studies that incorporate these variables should continue to be included; furthermore, that continue to include mediating variables, which allow building a model that explains servant leadership, its antecedents, its effects, its moderations and mediations (Eva et al., 2019). It remains to be further explored in research in various contexts, mainly in the public and social sector, in developing economies that would be an important enhancer to achieve to cover gaps of various kinds; in addition, to address complex problems such as health, education, poverty, security, migration, among others (Osborne, 2018).

5. DISCUSSION

The largest number of servant leadership studies are mainly focused on studying the relationship of servant leadership with individual performance, followed by organizational performance and to a lesser extent with team performance. The results found differ from other studies carried out, due to the fact that, for the most part, these are studies that focus generically on the study of servant leadership, its antecedents, its effects, mediations and moderations; in the case of Eva et al. (2019), focuses on the construction of a solid concept, the detailed study of the main techniques and instruments used to measure servant leadership and on building a theoretical and nomological network of servant leadership. On the other hand, Mcquade et al. (2021) has focused on identifying the characteristics and values of servant leadership, as well as the necessary skills that this style of leadership requires. While Langhof and Guldenberg (2020), seek to build a comprehensive model of servant leadership, which tries to explain the antecedents, effects, moderations and mediations, related to this construct. Previous literature reviews focus mainly on servant leadership, however, the contribution made by this research is in the field of management, by trying to synthesize the effect it generates on the performance of workers as individuals, from the work teams to increase their performance, in the organization as a whole, since the growth, development and sustainability of the organizations depend on it.

In recent years, the study of servant leadership and its effects on performance has increased (Eva et al., 2019; Mcquade et al., 2021); Much remains to be investigated about this relationship. Most of the studies have opted for the quantitative approach; However, as it is a variable that explores the behavior of the human being, it is necessary to turn interest towards qualitative research, using



techniques and instruments that allow the person to delve into their motivations, desires and intentions for the practice and preaching of servant leadership.

Likewise, there are gaps to investigate in the relationship of servant leadership and the performance of work teams, since the leader must work together with his followers and they must work together, in such a way that it allows them to enhance their skills to achieve better performance. In the same way, few moderating variables have yet been included in the relationship between leadership and performance, so more studies that incorporate these variables should continue to be included; In addition, other mediating variables must be incorporated into the studies, which allow the construction of a model that explains servant leadership, its antecedents, its effects, its moderations and mediations (Eva et al., 2019). It remains to continue exploring research in various contexts, mainly in the public and social sector, in developing economies, which would be an important enhancer to cover gaps of various kinds; on the other hand, it must be incorporated into the approach to complex problems such as health, education, poverty, security, migration, among others (Osborne, 2018).

The limitations of the research go through the non-inclusion of all the databases, which would make it possible to identify all the published research; but, the most representative information in the field of social sciences and management sciences has been used, which is the interest of this research. Another limitation is not having included studies published in lower-impact journals; however, it has been considered the most representative, in which research is published with greater rigor and by specialists with experience in the subject.

This research addresses one of the most important relationships of servant leadership, which is with performance; since, in the current context of crisis, the different organizations must look at their foundations and give greater importance to the main asset, such as people, in order to obtain achievements that allow them to continue standing firm to fulfill their mission, in the best possible way. In all cases, grow, develop and be sustainable over time; this can only be achieved by people who feel committed to the organizations to which they belong. This study allows researchers and professionals, mainly in the field of management, to have a point of reference to continue delving into this field of knowledge; and managers, inputs for decision-making on issues of leadership and performance achievements.

CONCLUSION

The great interest that servant leadership has aroused has led to deepen its study in its various relationships. The objective proposed in this article was to make a specific description of the relationship between leadership and performance at its three levels: individual, team, and organizational, identifying the variables that mediate and moderate this relationship, as well as identifying gaps. on the research. It has been found that most of the studies are aimed at measuring the relationship of servant leadership with performance at the individual level; followed by the relationship of servant leadership and performance at the organizational level, since the impacts of individual performance generate greater performance at the organizational level; to a lesser extent, the studies refer to the impact of servant leadership on team performance; These results are justified because servant leadership is mostly oriented to the service of people and therein lies its importance and its advantage over other approaches that are more oriented to the objectives of the organization. Likewise, it has been found that the studies mostly use mediating variables in the relationships studied and to a lesser extent moderating variable.


Servant leadership research, up to now, follows a rather disorderly sequence, as it is a complex problem to study, researchers address quite limited topics, which does not allow us to conclude exhaustively in relationships, because it is too extensive a field that is still missing. to be explored, for which qualitative methodologies must be used, which allow delving into the particularities of each relationship in greater detail, since the quantitative approach in many cases is obvious in its study. Therefore, it is recommended to continue delving into qualitative studies, since it will allow us to unravel better explanations of the relationships between leadership and performance. Likewise, moderating and mediating variables should continue to be included in the relationship addressed,


since it will allow finding explanations for what conditions the relationship and, above all, what variables can enhance this relationship, in such a way that it is more useful for academics in the field. advancement of theory and professionals in the implementation of management policies or in decision-making regarding the most valuable resource of the organization such as humans.

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