

How can servant leadership arouse toinnovative work behavior?**Shofia Amin^{1✉}, Zulfina Adriani², Fitri Widiastuti³**

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Abstract

This study examined the role of servant leadership in encouraging innovativework behavior of civil servants through increased employee engagement. This study used a quantitative method by distributing a list of questions to 116 Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN) from several institutions in Jambi City. The primary data were analyzed using SEM-SmartPLS. The results showed that servant leadership had no significant positive effect on innovative work behavior, but servant leadership positively affected employee engagement. Moreover, employee engagement also has a significant positive impact on innovative work behavior. Thus, employee engagement is a complete mediation in the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. The results indicated that innovative behavior could be increased by enhancing employee engagement stimulated by servant leadership.

Key words: Aparatur sipil negara; employee engagement; innovative work behavior; servant leadership

INTRODUCTION

Various changes that co-occurred from the revolution era 4.0, society era to the prolonged COVID-19 period have forced many institutions to change strategies to achieve their vision, mission, and goals. Limited space for movement due to health protocol instructions in tackling and preventing COVID-19 makes all institutions need to adapt and be flexible to the current situation. The situation includes changing policies from work from the office to work from home and changing services from face to face offline to meet virtually online.

The rapid changes force institutions to be innovative to obtain sustainable competitive advantages. Innovations are made in terms of the products or technology used and in the form of services reflected in employees' innovative work behavior in providing services (Bustinza, Gomes, Vendrell-Herrero, & Baines, 2019). Innovative work behavior was defined by Yuan and Woodman (2010) as an employee's intentional introduction or application of new ideas, products, processes, and procedures to their work role, work for unit, or organization. In other words, innovative work behavior starts from initiation, development, and realization to implement new ideas that support changes in products, services, processes, and work methods. There will be novelties from various aspects that come from employees' creativity in carrying out their duties with innovative behavior.

Although there have been many studies investigating the antecedents of employee's innovative work behavior (Yuan & Woodman, 2010), the process of forming innovative behavior involving multiple factors remains unclear. Models that describe the formation of innovative behavior either through direct linkage of antecedents and outcomes or through mediator variables that are appropriate to the context have still made gaps for researchers. For example, the relationship between the leadership style of Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN), who are service-oriented towards increasing the innovative work behavior of civil servants has not been much researched.

Previous studies found that the factors influencing innovative work behavior are interactions between personal characteristics, leadership styles, and organizational management systems (Su Lyu, Chen & Zhang, 2020). Some academics even argue that innovative work behavior depends on leadership style (Schuckert, Kim, Paek, & Lee, 2018). Various leadership styles such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, empowerment leadership, entrepreneurial leadership, and others have been studied to influence performance improvement with multiple variations of respondents. However, the leadership style for ASN has not been widely studied. Following the role of ASN as planners, implementers, and supervisors of the implementation of general government tasks and national development through the implementation of policies and professional public services, to carry out this role requires community service. Therefore, a leadership style that prioritizes serving is deemed suitable in fostering and managing ASN.

Servant leadership is a type of leadership that emphasizes service and employee satisfaction (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn & Wu, 2018). By having servant leadership, leaders become role models who can influence subordinates or employees to develop their positive behavior that is also service-oriented (Lemoine, Hartnell & Leroy, 2019). In carrying out a satisfactory role as a public servant, a sense of work engagement is also needed that involves cognitive, emotional, and physical characteristics in carrying out their duties with vigor, dedication, and absorption. By having a high work engagement, it is expected that when employees provide services, they do it sincerely. Therefore, to increase innovative work behavior, work attitudes are also influenced. One of the work attitudes that is believed to increase innovative work behavior is employee engagement.

As noted by previous studies, poor engagement appears to be a worldwide problem (Albrecht et al., 2015; Zeeshan et al., 2021). Eighty-five percent of worldwide employees are either not engaged or actively disengaged at work (Gallup, 2017). Similarly, the 2017 Trends in Global Employee Engagement

Survey noted that only about 25% of employees are highly engaged, while 37% are actively disengaged (Hewitt, 2017). Thus, to improve the level of engagement among employees, it is essential to have a better practical and theoretical understanding of the antecedents and underlying mechanisms that increase and explain employee engagement in the organization (Zeeshan et al., 2021).

The results of this study are the models used to improve innovative work behavior through the link between servant leadership and employee engagement of ASN. With this model, it is hoped that it can give insights and contribute inputs for relevant institutions in improving the innovative work behavior of ASN performance.

Literature Review

The modern economy has shifted from a driven growth of factors and investment to innovation-driven growth (Yang et al., 2020). Regarding this situation, organizational innovation is a must. Especially for organizations engaged with the service sector, employees' innovative behavior in providing services can leave an imprint on customers' minds and be an indicator of customer satisfaction that impacts organizational performance.

Unlike creativity, innovation not only sparks new ideas but continues to implement stages of these ideas in new procedures, practices, and products. Meanwhile, creativity is only limited to the creation of ideas (Anderson et al., 2014). Thus, employees can generate innovative work behavior and require the support of other parties such as leaders, organizational policies, funding, and others. In line with the Componential Theory of Individual Creativity (Amabile,

1997), it is assumed that people with typical capacities can be creative in work if there is an intersection between their components of expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation. The higher the level of each of the three components, the higher the creativity. Then, the extent to which they will produce creativity is influenced by individual characteristics and the work environment around them, including leadership behavior (Amabile et al., 2004).

In another opinion, Anderson et al. (2014) explained that three factors influence a person's creativity and innovation, such as individual factors, task contexts, and social contexts. Individual factors are related to traits, values, thinking styles, self-concepts and identity, knowledge and abilities, and psychological states on creativity. Task contexts refer to job complexity, goals and job requirements, and rewards provided as appreciation. Meanwhile, social contexts consist of leadership and supervision components, customer influences, and social networks. Although they did not mention servant leadership, they emphasized that leadership support is the essential factor that influences creativity and innovation.

Servant leadership style is believed to be a contributing factor in stimulating innovative work behavior. Motives, modes, and mindsets are three aspects of servant leadership that distinguish it from other leadership styles (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, van Dierendonck, & Liden, 2019). The servant leadership motive is to serve, that is, servants as leaders, not leaders as servants. It means that the leader prioritizes providing services accompanied by having a self-concept, character, and psychological maturity. The servant leadership model reflects an acknowledgment that each individual has unique, different needs, interests, desires, goals, strengths, and limitations. Thus, servant leadership provides services that focus on employees' growth in psychological well-being, emotional maturity, and ethical policies. The servant leadership mindset describes a person who is trusted. Therefore the leader is responsible for individual development and other resources. For this reason, previous studies theorized that servant leadership could facilitate employees' extra-role behaviors, including innovative behaviors.

Empirical studies found that servant leadership positively influences numerous behavioral outcomes mainly related to extra-role behaviors, such as innovative behavior (Cai et al., 2018), citizenship behavior (Chiniara and Bentein, 2018), voice behavior (Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2018), and creative behavior ((Liden et al., 2015) Liden et al., 2014). Based on theoretical studies and previous research support, the first hypothesis proposed is:

H1: Servant leadership has a positive effect on work behavior innovative.

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) defined employee engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." The terms employee/work engagement are interchangeably conceptualized as an overarching construct comprising physical, cognitive, and emotional energies and manifested as a state of devoting all the energies towards work to make a difference (Mackay, Allen, & Landis, 2017). Servant leaders stimulate positive energy levels in employees and significantly increase engagement through high-quality relationships and social interactions (De Clercq, Bouckennooghe, Raja & Matsyborska 2014:206).

Unfortunately, the factors driving the innovative work behavior of public sector employees are still little researched (Danaei, & Iranbakhsh, 2016; Li & Hsu, 2016).

When leaders focus on helping employees grow, the employees will increase feelings of vigor, dedication, and absorption at work. In return for heightening the fulfilling and positive work-related state of mind experienced by engaged employees, they will improve their organizational performance. Previous research showed that servant leadership is a strong predictor of employee engagement, as servant leaders satisfy employee needs (Van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, De Windt & Alkema, 2014;

van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). Highly engaged employees are characterized by their vigor, dedication, and absorption in the workplace. The higher employee engagement scores were reported for organizations with more servant leaders (Whorton, 2014).

H2: There is a positive relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement.

The leadership factor only is not enough to stimulate innovative behavior. It must balance with employees' physical and mental attachment, which is called employee engagement. Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) define engagement as a positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind characterized by strength, dedication, and absorption. Engagement is not a momentary and specific state but rather a persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on a particular object, event, individual, or behavior. Employee engagement reflects the extent to which an individual is psychologically present in their work role and role as a member of the organization, termed attention and absorption (Saks, 2006). Attention refers to the cognitive availability and the total time an employee spends thinking about and carrying out their role, while absorption is to interpret the role and refers to the intensity of an employee's focus on the role in the organization.

Being involved and psychologically bound to their work will encourage them to be more creative and innovative in completing their work assignments, especially in providing services to the community. Based on theoretical support and the results of previous research, the proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Employee engagement has a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior.

The role of servant leadership has a significant positive effect on employee engagement, as has been proven by previous researchers (Muller et al., 2019; Zeeshan et al., 2021). However, most extant studies on this relationship were conducted in the context of other leadership styles, including transformational leadership, spiritual leadership, and authentic leadership (Hunsaker & Jeong, 2020; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Nguyen, 2020; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Though servant leadership shares some similarities with those leadership styles (Bezuidenhout & Schultz, 2013; Kopperud et al., 2014; Penger & Erne, 2014; Schaufeli, 2015; Tuckey et al., 2012), it is more of an inclusive and holistic approach that covers all leadership dimensions that can improve employee engagement more effectively. Similarly, from empirical evidence, it is confirmed that servant leaders indicated leaders who give opportunities for employees to develop new skills and expertise and encourage them to achieve creative goals using their intellectual abilities and skills (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Employees who receive such resources and support are more likely to engage in productive activities (Hakanen et al., 2017).

Furthermore, when employees are engaged, they put more energy into saving their existing resources and fully utilizing current resources, which requires less effort to acquire benefits from new resources. It is, therefore, argued that employees who work under servant leaders will show greater engagement in their jobs. However, it is concluded from the literature that the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement is scarcely known (e.g., Alafeshat & Aboud, 2019; Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Kaur, 2018). Hence, the following hypothesis was postulated:

H4: Employee engagement is a mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

METHOD

Research Design

This research used a survey design. In line with the developed model, this research has descriptive and verification purposes. The descriptive purpose of the survey is to describe the main research variables, such as servant leadership as an independent variable, employee engagement as a mediator, and innovative work behavior as the dependent variable. Then, the relationship between servant leadership, employee engagement, and innovative work behavior was tested statistically.

Data source

The main data in this study is primary data obtained directly by distributing questionnaires to selected respondents online via Google forms. This study also used secondary data obtained from the literature and previous research to complement the primary data.

Data collection

The data were collected through online questionnaires to respondents who have worked as ASN for at least five years. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is about the

characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, education level, and others. The second part contains respondents' perceptions of servant leadership, employee engagement, and innovative work behavior.

Population and Sample

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes it difficult to meet face-to-face with respondents, the research team distributed online questionnaires to anticipate incomplete data filled in with a target of 150 people.

Variable Operation

To provide clear boundaries for the used variables, the operational definitions are compiled as follows:

Servant Leadership (X1) is a leadership style that prioritizes employees' needs, aspirations, and interests by providing opportunities for employees to grow and develop. Servant leadership is measured by seven indicators adapted from Liden et al. (2014): behaving ethically, empowering, putting subordinates first, creating value for the community, helping subordinates grow and succeed, conceptual skills, and emotional healing.

Employee engagement (M) is the positive attitudes of employees who are emotionally, physically, and cognitively involved in their daily work. Employee engagement is measured by the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. These three dimensions are elaborated into 9 question items adapted from Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002),

Innovative work behavior (Y) is an individual's ability to change the way of adopting new work procedures, practices, and techniques in completing tasks and work. Innovative work behavior is measured by nine indicators adapted from Eva et al. (2019).

Each variable was measured based on respondents' perceptions tested based on theoretical studies and empirical evidence from previous researchers published in reputable journals. The alternative answers provided with each score refer to a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (10).

Data analysis

A descriptive and verification analysis approach was used in analyzing and interpreting the data of the study. Descriptive analysis is used to describe the characteristics of respondents and research variables without testing. The analysis was done by compiling a frequency distribution table to see whether the score level of the variables is in the very low to a very high category for the servant leadership variable as the independent variable, employee engagement as a mediator, and innovative work behavior as the dependent variable. In this descriptive analysis, the researchers used SPSS software version 17. On the other hand, verificative analysis tests research hypotheses using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) with PLS Smartplus (Analysis of Moment Structures) version 22 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By distributing questionnaires from WhatsApp group for two months, only 116 questionnaires were collected from respondents who gave responses. It is understandable because most people are working from home and in the yellow zone with high levels of transmission and anxiety. The 116 collected questionnaires were selected again into 106 filtered respondents. These 106 respondents were deemed worthy for further processing.

The majority of respondents in this study consisted of men (52.83%), and the remaining 47.17% were women. The highest education of the majority of respondents is S1 (63.21%), S2 (29.25%), and D3 (7.55%). 32.08% of respondents are aged 31-35 years, 29.25% are over 46 years, 28.30% are aged 41-45 years, while the remaining 10.38% are aged 26-30 years. 50.95% of respondents have a working period of 11-20 years, and 26.41% have a tenure of 21-more than 25 years. The remaining 25.64% have a working period of 1-10 years.

Before conducting the SEM analysis, the first step was doing a confirmatory factor analysis to ensure the accuracy of the data (Goodness of Fit) by reducing several indicators that do not meet the requirements. The following table describes the loading factor for each variable.

Table 1.

Initial Model Loading Factor Value

	Servant Leadership	Employee Engagement	Innovative WorkBehavior
SL1	0.561		
SL2	0.712		
SL3	0.522		
SL4	0.837		
SL5	0.784		
SL6	0.71		
SL7	0.828		
EE1		0.526	
EE2		0.781	
EE3		0.806	
EE4		0.864	
EE5		0.838	
EE6		0.845	
EE7		0.789	
EE8		0.788	
EE9		0.766	
IWB1			0.623
IWB2			0.778
IWB3			0.799
IWB4			0.827
IWB5			0.828
IWB6			0.836
IWB7			0.852
IWB8			0.824
IWB9			0.654

In the initial data analysis, it was found that all indicators of each variable had a loading factor greater than 0.5. The model was tested using PLS software. The results showed that all outer loading values after calculations had outer loading

values > 0.5, meaning that the indicators for each variable were declared to meet the convergent validity requirements in the good category.

Result of Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

To test the outer model is done by testing the validity and reliability. Validity is measured by the Loading Factor value, which ranges from 0.5-0.8, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. The following values AVE, CA, and CR.

Table 2.

Cronbachs Alpha Value and Composite Reliability

VARIABLE	AVE	CronbachsAlpha	Composite Reliability	Information
Employee Engagement	0.615	0.919	0.934	Qualified
Innovative WorkBehavior	0.615	0.92	0.934	Qualified
Servant Leadership	0.514	0.844	0.878	Qualified

Based on the validity test results using the loading factor and AVE, all variables are declared valid. The reliability test results based on the Cronbachs Alpha and Composite Reliability values are also declared reliable.

Result of Evaluation of Structural Model (Inner Model)

The path coefficient test and coefficient determination test are carried out to examine the inner model. The path coefficient test shows how strong the independent variable's influence is on the dependent variable.

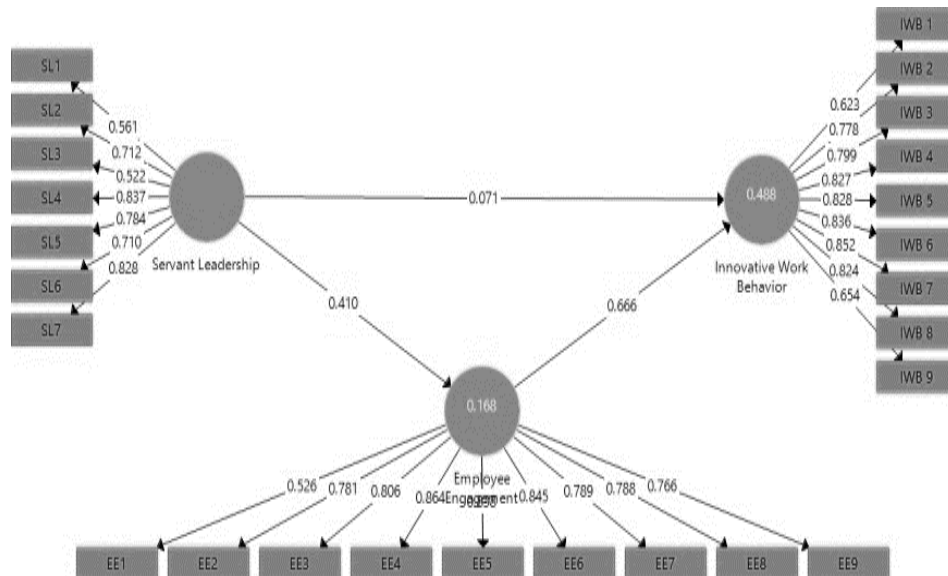


Figure 1.
Inner Model

Figure 1 showed that the largest path coefficient value is indicated by the influence of Employee Engagement on Innovative Work Behavior of 0.666. In contrast, the smallest path coefficient value is indicated by the influence of servant leadership on Innovative Work Behavior of 0.071. Based on these results, it can be concluded that all variables in this model have path coefficients with positive numbers. The results showed that the greater the value of the path coefficient on an independent variable on the dependent variable, the stronger the influence between the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Coefficient determination (R-Square) measures how much other variables influence the endogenous variable. R-Square values ranging from 0.33–0.67 are included in the medium category. However, if the result is 0.19–0.33, then it is included in the weak category. Based on the data processing that has been done using the smart PLS 3.0 program, the R-Square values are obtained as follows:

Table 3.
R-Square

Variable	R Square
Employee Engagement	0.168
Innovative Work Behavior	0.488

Based on table 3, the R-Square value of the employee engagement variable is 0.168. This value explains that servant leadership can define the variance of employee engagement by 16.8%. Thus, the effect is included in the weak category. In the innovative work behavior variable, a value of 0.488 is obtained. This value explains that servant leadership can define the variant of innovative work behavior by 48.8%. Hence, the effect is included in a moderate condition.

The goodness of fit assessment is known from the Q-Square value. The Q-Square value has the same meaning as the coefficient determination (R-Square) in regression analysis, where the higher the Q-Square, the model can be said to be better or more fit with the data. The results of the calculation of the Q-Square value are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Q-Square} &= 1 - [(1 - R^2) (1 - R^2)] \\
 &= 1 - [(1 - 0,168) (1 - 0,488)] \\
 &= 1 - (0,447) (0,466) \\
 &= 0,57
 \end{aligned}$$

Based on the results of the calculations, the Q-Square value is 0.57. The value shows that the magnitude of the diversity of research data explained by the research model is 57%. In contrast, the remaining 43% is explained by other factors that are outside the research model. Thus, from the results, this research model can be declared to have valuable goodness of fit.

Hypothesis test

Direct influence

Table 4.
Result For Inner Weights

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Employee Engagement -> Innovative WorkBehavior	0.666	0.67	0.071	9.374	0
Servant Leadership -> Employee Engagement	0.41	0.431	0.083	4.917	0
Servant Leadership -> Innovative WorkBehavior	0.071	0.082	0.09	0.787	0.431

Based on table 4, servant leadership has no significant positive effect on innovative work behavior; thus, the first hypothesis is rejected. It implies that the influence of servant leadership on increasing innovative work behavior is minimal so that it can be ignored.

Meanwhile, servant leadership has a significant positive effect on employee engagement; thus, the second hypothesis is accepted. It implies that increasing servant leadership has a significant effect on increasing employee engagement.

The third hypothesis, that is, employee engagement has a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior, is accepted. It means that an increase in employee engagement will have a significant effect on increasing innovative work behavior.

Indirect influence.

Table 5.
Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample(O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	PValues
Servant Leadership -> Employee Engagement -> Innovative WorkBehavior	0.273	0.291	0.071	3.862	0

Table 5 showed that the role of employee engagement as a mediator between servant leadership and innovative work behavior is significantly positive. The results indicated that to increase innovative behavior is by also increasing employee engagement. The increase in innovative work behavior must come from self-motivation as an engaged attitude towards the agency. In increasing employee engagement, a servant leadership style is influential. Servant leadership will be a role model in providing community services and creating an engaged attitude towards work and the institution.

Discussion

There are four significant results of this study that are interesting to discuss. First, the statistical test results prove that servant leadership significantly positively affects innovative work behavior. This finding contradicts the results of previous studies, which explicated that servant leadership has a significant effect on increasing innovative work behavior (Latif & Ahmad, 2020). They argued that servant leadership is a people-oriented leadership style characterized by empowerment, authenticity, humility, empathy, and interpersonal acceptance and concern for the community. Referring to social exchange theory (Blau 1964), these leadership characteristics motivate employees to show greater work responsibility, reciprocate positive deeds of their leaders with improved performance and behaviors that benefit their supervisors (Liden et al., 2015).

However, in the context of ASN, the increase in innovative work behavior is not always limited to private employees. It is because ASN already has a standard operating system, job desk, and various strict rules. Regularity in procedures, systems, and rules can standardize services, but the everyday routine can omit innovation in service. Most ASN feels more comfortable following existing procedures, systems, and rules without bothering to be creative and innovate in providing services. That is why servant leadership directly has no significant effect on increasing innovative work behavior.

Second, servant leadership has a significant effect on employee engagement. This result supports previous research, which concluded that the more leaders apply the servant leadership style, the more

engaged employees are towards leaders and institutions (Zeeshan et al., 2021; Kaur (2018); vein, Coetzer et al. (2017). The job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007, 2008, 2014) is the most widely cited theoretical model of work engagement. JD-R theory delineates how job resources (e.g., autonomy, feedback, supervisor support) and personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism, resilience) directly influence work engagement, which affects important downstream outcomes such as in-role performance and extra Role performance, creativity, and financial returns.

For ASN, there are indeed limitations to be innovative in carrying out their work. It is because of the strict procedures and regulations that they should follow. However, it does not mean that they cannot be innovative. The work procedures can continue to carry out, and innovations can be made in providing services. For example, online service that is responsive, friendly, and accurate.

Third, employee engagement has a significant positive effect on increasing innovative behavior. Leaders today strive to increase employees' physical and mental engagement because they understand that fully committed and involved

employees act as entrepreneurs for the organization. Employee engagement is considered to be a reciprocal relationship between the leader and employee. Therefore, to foster engagement, leaders, and managers must focus on creating an environment of trust where employees can openly communicate with each other about their leader's expectations and their competencies in meeting those expectations.

Finally, employee engagement fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. For ASN, the leadership style can increase employee engagement. High employee engagement can encourage innovative work behavior. This condition also proves that innovative work behavior is more influenced by the internal attitude of the employees themselves in the form of employee engagement. External factors in the form of leaders do not have a direct effect on increasing innovative behavior. External factors only play a role in encouraging an engaged attitude towards their work.

However, this research still has limitations. First, the data on leadership style only comes from one source, that is, employees. It may lead to response bias, particularly in the evaluation of leadership. Second, the data are taken simultaneously (cross-sectional). A cross-sectional study design restricts the degree to which the observations can be used to conclude cause-effect relationships. These limitations should be reduced by using longitudinal data from multiple sources in future studies.

For further research, it is suggested to use other mediating variables that become antecedents for innovative work behavior from personal resources such as self-efficacy, competency, role perception. Using different leadership styles that

may directly affect innovative work behaviors, such as empowering, authentic, and ethical leadership can also be done. Qualitative studies to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of servant leadership on increasing innovative work behavior and employee engagement can also be used as alternatives. Qualitative research may provide a more comprehensive picture of the social exchange relationship between employees and their organizations through leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

Servant leadership has an insignificant positive effect on innovative work behavior, but employee engagement significantly affects innovative work behavior. It implies that the influence of servant leadership on increasing innovative work behavior is minimal; thus, it can be ignored. Innovative work behavior can be improved by increasing employee engagement. Furthermore, employee engagement fully mediates the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

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