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Workplace Happiness as a Mediator Between Servant Leadership and Affective Commitment in Healthcare Sector

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Abstrak

- **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh *servant leadership* terhadap *affective commitment* melalui *happiness at work* sebagai mediasi baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung.
- **Desain/metodologi/pendekatan:** Metode yang digunakan yaitu kuantitatif dengan penyebaran kuesioner untuk melakukan *collecting data* pada responden dalam hal ini adalah perawat. Sampel penelitian ini yaitu sebanyak 81 responden dengan teknik *random sampling*.
- **Temuan:** Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa *servant leadership* berpengaruh positif tidak signifikan terhadap *affective commitment* dan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap *happiness at work*. *Happiness at work* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap *affective commitment*. Secara tidak langsung, *happiness at work* memediasi secara positif dan signifikan pada hubungan *servant leadership* dan *affective commitment*.
- **Batasan penelitian/dampak:** Penelitian ini memiliki beberapa keterbatasan, yaitu menggunakan metode *cross-sectional* yang hanya mengandalkan data pada satu titik waktu serta dilakukan terbatas pada sektor rumah sakit. Selain itu, penelitian ini hanya mempertimbangkan beberapa konstruk yang mempengaruhi kebahagiaan dalam bekerja dan komitmen afektif, dengan fokus utama pada *servant leadership*.
- **Implikasi praktis:** Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini juga dapat dijadikan sebagai bahan masukan kepada rumah sakit dan pimpinan di lingkungan rumah sakit terkait pentingnya peran pemimpin khususnya *servant leadership* dalam meningkatkan *happiness at work* dan *affective commitment* karyawan.
- **Keaslian/nilai:** Hasil penelitian ini dapat memberikan kontribusi penting terhadap keilmuan khususnya pada bidang manajemen sumber daya manusia dan menjadi salah satu bahan kajian terkait *servant leadership*, *happiness at work*, dan *affective commitment*.
- **Jenis makalah:** Makalah penelitian.

Kata Kunci: *Servant leadership, affective commitment, happiness at work.*



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Abstract

- **Purpose:** *This study aims to analyze how servant leadership influences affective commitment through happiness at work both directly and indirectly.*
- **Design/methodology/approach:** *The quantitative method used was administering questionnaires to collect data from the respondents of the case nurses. The sample of this study consisted of 81 respondents selected using a random sampling technique.*
- **Findings:** *The results revealed that servant leadership has a positive but insignificant effect on affective commitment and a positive and significant effect on happiness at work. Happiness at work has a positive and significant effect on affective commitment. Happiness at work positively and significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment.*
- **Research limitations/implications:** *This study has several limitations, including the use of a cross-sectional method that relies on data collected at a single point in time and the focus on the hospital sector. In addition, this study only considers a limited number of constructs influencing happiness at work and affective commitment, with a primary focus on servant leadership.*
- **Practical implications:** *Practically, the results of this study can also be used as input to hospitals and leaders in the hospital environment regarding the importance of the role of leaders, especially servant leadership, in increasing employee happiness at work and affective commitment.*
- **Originality/value:** *The results of this study can provide important contributions to science, especially in the field of human resource management, and can become one of the study materials related to servant leadership, happiness at work, and affective commitment.*
- **Paper type:** *Research paper.*

Keywords: *Servant leadership, affective commitment, happiness at work.*

Introduction

The quality of hospital services is largely determined by the performance and commitment of healthcare professionals, who serve as the frontline in the healthcare delivery system. In recent years, hospital organizations in Indonesia have encountered complex challenges, including increasing demands for service quality, heavier workloads among healthcare workers, and pressures to adapt to changes in healthcare systems. These circumstances require hospital organizations to focus not only on service outputs but also on the psychological conditions and well-being of employees, with happiness at work emerging as a strategic factor influencing employee behavior and commitment. Happiness at work refers to a positive psychological state experienced by individuals in performing their jobs, reflected in satisfaction, engagement, and emotional well-being (Wahyanto et al., 2019). Previous studies have demonstrated that happy employees tend to be more successful, optimistic, and approachable, while simultaneously creating value through higher productivity and engagement (Met et al., 2023). When employees experience happiness, they are more satisfied with their work environment,

relationships, and tasks, which in turn enhances motivation, productivity, and retention (Jotheshwari & Paramasiva, 2019).

Although happiness at work has been extensively examined across various organizational sectors, studies that specifically situate this variable within the context of hospitals in Indonesia remain relatively limited. Most prior research has predominantly focused on non-healthcare sectors or has been conducted in developed countries (Merchant et al., 2021), thereby failing to fully capture the organizational dynamics of hospitals in developing nations, which are characterized by distinct work pressures, resource constraints, and service complexities. This condition creates a significant research gap that warrants further investigation, particularly in understanding the factors that can enhance happiness at work among healthcare professionals in Indonesia.

In the hospital context, particularly at Dr. Soetomo General Hospital, happiness at work refers to a condition in which healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, and other staff, experience satisfaction, joy, and well-being in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. However, empirical findings indicate that healthcare workers often face high work pressures, complex service demands, and risks of emotional exhaustion, all of which may reduce their level of workplace happiness. Several studies have highlighted that heavy workloads constitute one of the dominant factors influencing the well-being of healthcare professionals (Weissman et al., 2007; Özer et al., 2023). This phenomenon underscores the need to identify organizational factors capable of maintaining the psychological stability of healthcare workers in order to sustain the quality of hospital services.

Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated that a positive work environment can enhance the effectiveness of team collaboration and the quality of healthcare service coordination (Graziotin & Fagerholm, 2019; Kukunuru et al., 2019). However, most of these studies have primarily emphasized general workplace factors (Lukan et al., 2022; Rugulies, 2019), while the role of leadership as a strategic mechanism in shaping workplace happiness among healthcare professionals has not been comprehensively explored, particularly within hospital organizations in Indonesia. Leadership plays a crucial role in cultivating organizational culture, providing emotional support, and fostering interpersonal relationships, all of which can significantly influence employee well-being.

Moreover, several studies have indicated that healthcare professionals continue to face limitations in organizational support and recognition of their work contributions, which may potentially reduce workplace happiness and organizational commitment (Babic et al., 2020; Sari & Prasadjaningsih, 2023; Sharif et al., 2020; Werdecker & Esch, 2021). This condition reinforces the urgency of investigating leadership models that can enhance the psychological well-being of healthcare workers and strengthen employees' emotional attachment to their organizations.

This study also draws upon the recommendations of previous research, particularly Babic et al. (2020), which emphasized the need for further exploration of the impacts and consequences of happiness at work across diverse organizational contexts. In addition, a review of the literature reveals that studies on happiness at work within hospital sectors in developing countries, especially Indonesia, remain limited, with greater attention having been devoted to organizational contexts in

developed nations, such as hospitals in Iran, the banking sector in Germany, and educational institutions in Malaysia (Babic et al., 2020; Kortsch et al., 2022; Wan Mohd Yunus et al., 2021). This empirical gap highlights the necessity of conducting research that can explain the mechanisms underlying the formation of happiness at work within Indonesian hospital organizations, which are characterized by distinct work cultures and healthcare delivery systems.

In addressing this research gap, the present study adopts the servant leadership approach as a factor predicted to enhance employees' workplace happiness (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023). The concept of servant leadership, introduced by Graham (1991), emphasizes the leader's orientation toward serving the needs of subordinates. Leaders who practice servant leadership prioritize the well-being and development of their subordinates as their foremost concern (Liden et al., 2008). This leadership style places the interests of subordinates above the personal interests of the leader and fosters working relationships built on trust and emotional support (Elche et al., 2020; Song et al., 2022).

Within the hospital organizational context, servant leadership is considered highly relevant, as the characteristics of healthcare services demand leadership that emphasizes empathy, service orientation, and interpersonal support (Demeke et al., 2024; Silver & Martin, 2022; Aij & Rapsaniotis, 2017). Nevertheless, research examining the relationship between servant leadership and happiness at work, as well as its implications for the affective commitment of healthcare professionals in Indonesian hospitals, remains very limited. Affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to their organization, which plays a crucial role in sustaining performance and loyalty among healthcare workers.

Previous studies have shown that servant leadership can enhance psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, and employee happiness through emotional support and professional development of subordinates (Murari & Gupta, 2012; Susanto et al., 2023; Swanson et al., 2022). In addition, servant leadership contributes to the establishment of a positive work culture by fostering values of trust and collaboration (Whittington, 2017) and has been found to strengthen employees' affective commitment (Clarence et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the integrative relationship between servant leadership, happiness at work, and affective commitment within the context of Indonesian hospital organizations has not been extensively examined empirically, thereby opening research opportunities that offers both theoretical and practical contributions.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the influence of servant leadership on affective commitment through happiness at work as a mediating variable. The study is expected to provide empirical contributions to enrich the literature on human resource management in the healthcare sector, particularly in explaining the mechanisms through which employee commitment is fostered via service-oriented leadership approaches. Furthermore, the findings of this study are anticipated to serve as a strategic foundation for hospital management in designing leadership policies that can enhance the psychological well-being of healthcare professionals and strengthen organizational commitment.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Literature Review

Servant Leadership

In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf (1904–1990) introduced the concept of servant leadership through his seminal work *The Servant as Leader* (Greenleaf, 2008). Greenleaf's central focus in his research and observations on servant leadership was to foster the development of a more compassionate and humane society. According to Greenleaf, the primary responsibility of an effective leader is to prioritize the needs of others above personal success. Genuine leadership, in his view, emerges from individuals whose foremost motivation is a sincere desire to serve others (Achen et al., 2019).

By definition, servant leadership refers to a managerial style that transcends personal gain, demonstrates strong enthusiasm in serving employees, and emphasizes employee growth (He et al., 2023). In line with this, Westbrook and Peterson (2022) argue that servant leadership is characterized by leaders who emphasize service. It begins with an inherent desire to serve others and places service at the core of leadership practice. As an additional benefit, making this deliberate choice provides leaders with purpose and drive in guiding others (Ngah et al., 2023; Muzakki et al., 2026). Serving and fulfilling the needs of others is the principal aim of servant leaders, which ideally should constitute the primary incentive for leadership itself (Liden et al., 2014; Muzakki et al., 2025). The attitudes of those surrounding the leader are ultimately shaped by this approach, with the expectation that they will adopt similar attitudes to serve effectively. Empirical studies have demonstrated that leaders who implement servant leadership styles are able to enhance employee commitment and performance (Dahleez et al., 2021; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022). Higher levels of servant leadership have been shown to increase employees' willingness to remain with the organization and to deliver their best contributions to organizational success.

Happiness at Work

According to Semedo et al. (2019), happiness at work is regarded as an individual's subjective experience in evaluating whether they perceive themselves as happy, taking into account the extent to which they believe or disbelieve in such perceptions. Happiness functions as a causal mechanism that generates numerous positive states in the workplace and constitutes the core of positive organizational psychology (Money et al., 2008). Workplace happiness encompasses multiple dimensions, including work engagement and job satisfaction, which in turn lead to several favorable organizational outcomes (Fisher, 2010). Gavin and Mason (2004) argue that happiness and positive states among individuals in the workplace contribute significantly to organizational success and commitment. Atashpour (2007), in a comparative study of lifestyle, mental health, and happiness between female high school instructors and housewives, identified a significant relationship between depression and happiness. However, the relationship between physical symptoms, social performance disturbances, and happiness in both groups did not reveal statistical significance. Research conducted by Bahrami and Mokhtari (2004), involving a survey of students at the University of Isfahan, demonstrated a significant inverse relationship between happiness and perfectionism. Similarly,

Dibaeian and Karami (2007) examined the relationship between the search for meaning and happiness using a random sample of 204 students aged 18 to 22 from Alameh Tabatabaee University. Employing the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHI), a meaning-seeking questionnaire, and correlational methods, they concluded that there exists a significant relationship between happiness and the search for meaning, as well as between meaning-seeking and life satisfaction, positive creativity, health, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Ramirez-Garcia et al. (2019) identified several distinctive indicators of happiness in the workplace. These include employees' perceptions of receiving fair rewards, experiencing a positive organizational and unit climate, and deriving enjoyment from their work. Furthermore, happiness at work is characterized by employees' sense of internal stability and their ability to find satisfaction in performing their tasks. Ramirez-Garcia et al. (2019) further emphasized that workplace happiness is also manifested when employees experience internal stability within their organizations, maintain professional stability, and derive enjoyment from their work, particularly when they are able to perform their duties effectively. According to Bataineh (2019), the impact of workplace happiness can be observed in employees' positive moods, which are directly associated with enhanced creativity and proactivity in subsequent workdays.

Affective Commitment

Mishra and Upadhyay (2022) define organizational commitment as the extent to which individuals identify themselves with a particular organization and its objectives, as well as the degree of their willingness to remain members of that organization. Employees with strong commitment are generally reluctant to withdraw from their work, even when they experience dissatisfaction, as they exert additional effort to sustain a sense of attachment and loyalty to their employer (Lim et al., 2017). Individuals can continue working within an organization despite dissatisfaction with their current position, provided they remain dedicated to the organization as a whole. Employees who demonstrate high levels of organizational commitment tend to exhibit maximum engagement in their tasks (Pitaloka & Putri, 2021), assume responsibility for their obligations, and display loyalty and sustained dedication to the organization in which they work (Setyawan et al., 2022).

Tett and Meyer (1993) proposed that organizational commitment can be categorized into three distinct dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment encompasses elements such as employees' emotional attachment to the organization and their belief in its fundamental principles. Continuance commitment reflects the perceived economic benefits of remaining with an organization compared to the potential costs associated with leaving it entirely. Normative commitment involves the decision to remain employed within an organization based on moral or ethical considerations.

This study focuses on affective commitment, which, according to Yukongdi and Shrestha (2020) and Prastikawati et al. (2023), is defined as an emotional attachment to an organization. Similarly, Meyer et al. (1993) and Eliyana et al. (2019) describe affective commitment as the emotional bond demonstrated by employees toward their organization. To remain engaged within an organization, employees must possess a strong affective connection. In other words, employees

who embrace organizational values and exhibit affective commitment derive satisfaction from being part of the organization (Allen & Meyer, 2000). Consequently, employees with strong emotional ties to their organization are less likely to consider leaving (Yukongdi & Shrestha, 2020). Among the three components of organizational commitment, affective commitment provides the most relevant response to individual behavior within organizations. Several scholars, including Ngah et al. (2023) and Iqbal et al. (2023), have examined the antecedents and consequences of affective commitment, highlighting its central role in shaping employee attitudes and organizational outcomes.

Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

The Influence of Servant Leadership on Affective Commitment

The influence of servant leadership on affective commitment has received considerable attention in management and leadership research (Iqbal et al., 2023). Servant leadership is characterized by dimensions such as empowerment, attentiveness to subordinates' needs, and a strong orientation toward service (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023). By emphasizing the importance of addressing individual needs, servant leaders foster stronger emotional bonds between leaders and subordinates (Dahleez et al., 2021). Moreover, servant leadership empowers employees and provides support for both personal and professional growth (Ngah et al., 2023), thereby cultivating a sense of engagement and positive emotional connection with the organization.

Previous studies have consistently associated servant leadership with favorable organizational outcomes, including performance, innovation, and employee commitment (Khan et al., 2022; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022). For instance, Ngah et al. (2023) reported that servant leaders encourage active participation and involvement of subordinates in decision-making and task execution. This participatory approach enhances employees' sense of belonging and strengthens their emotional attachment to the organization. Their findings further indicate that servant leadership exerts a positive and significant influence on employees' affective commitment, which subsequently contributes to organizational citizenship behavior. Based on these theoretical and empirical insights, the first hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on affective commitment.

The Influence of Servant Leadership on Happiness at Work

The impact of servant leadership on workplace happiness has been the subject of several studies. Research has demonstrated that servant leadership exerts a significant influence on happiness at work, with emotional salary and employee well-being serving as mediating factors (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023). Furthermore, servant leadership affects human resource behavior by enhancing employee happiness and encouraging improved performance (Alahbabi et al., 2021). The characteristics of servant leaders are also believed to foster greater employee happiness and job satisfaction, underscoring the positive effects of servant leadership on workplace well-being (Pérez et al., 2023). Overall, the literature suggests that servant leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing

happiness at work, which in turn contributes to improved employee performance, job satisfaction, and affective commitment.

Other studies have highlighted that servant leadership promotes fairness and transparency in decision-making (Clarence et al., 2021). Employees who perceive fair treatment are more likely to experience happiness and satisfaction in their work environment. In addition, servant leadership supports employees' personal and professional growth (Whittington, 2017). A sense of achievement and self-development can further contribute to higher levels of workplace happiness. Consistent with this, Pérez et al. (2023) and Gonzales-Macedo et al. (2023) reported that higher levels of servant leadership exert a positive and significant effect on happiness at work. Based on these insights, the second hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on happiness at work.

The Influence of Happiness at Work on Affective Commitment

The relationship between happiness at work and affective commitment has been an important focus of organizational and management studies. Previous findings indicate a significant association between the two constructs (Semedo et al., 2019). Several studies have shown that workplace happiness is positively related to affective commitment. Employees who experience happiness at work are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their organization, thereby strengthening their affective commitment (Semedo et al., 2019). Moreover, research has demonstrated that perceptions of authentic leadership and workplace happiness exert a direct influence on affective commitment, underscoring the importance of happiness at work in fostering strong emotional bonds with the organization (Abdullah et al., 2017).

In line with this, Abdullah et al. (2016) emphasized that workplace happiness constitutes a critical aspect in organizational and management studies. Happiness at work creates positive experiences and evokes emotional attachment to the organization (Semedo et al., 2019). Employees who are happy tend to develop stronger ties to their workplace. Recent studies further suggest that workplace happiness has a positive impact on employees' affective commitment (Kortsch et al., 2022). Establishing a supportive and positive work environment that nurtures happiness can serve as a foundation for cultivating strong emotional bonds with the organization. Based on these insights, the third hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Happiness at work has a positive and significant effect on affective commitment.

The Mediating Role of Happiness at Work in the Relationship between Servant Leadership and Affective Commitment

Servant leadership, which encompasses dimensions such as empowerment, attentiveness to subordinates' needs, and a service-oriented approach, is expected to exert a positive influence on both workplace happiness and affective commitment (Clarence et al., 2021; Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2023). Previous studies have examined the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance through the mediating role of happiness at work (Alahbabi et al., 2021). Their findings revealed that servant leadership has a significant positive

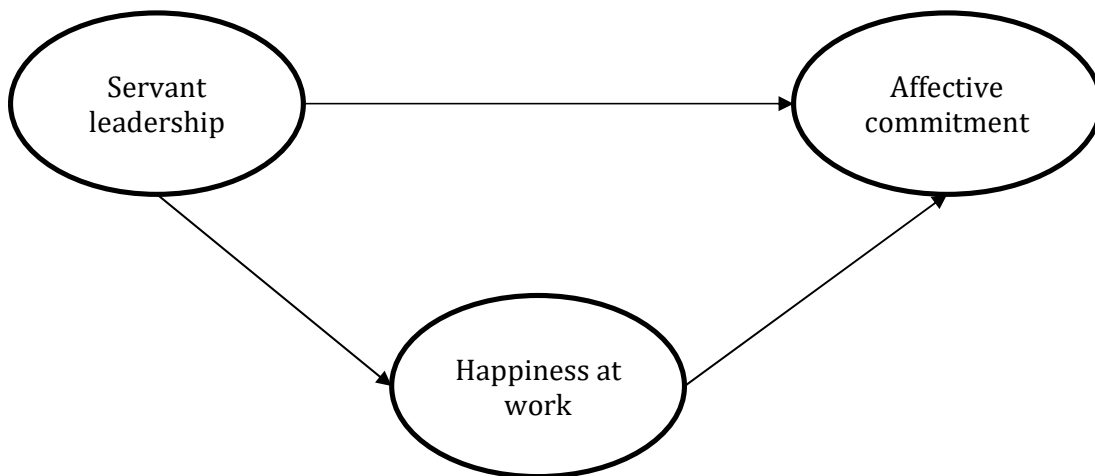
effect on workplace happiness, which subsequently enhances employee performance. Happiness at work functions as a mediator between servant leadership and affective commitment, indicating that employee happiness plays a crucial role in fostering emotional attachment to the organization (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023).

The mediating effect of workplace happiness is essential for understanding the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment, as it underscores the importance of cultivating a positive work environment to strengthen employees' organizational commitment (Bai et al., 2023; Prawira, 2021). Based on the preceding literature, it can be inferred that servant leadership significantly influences happiness at work, and when employees experience happiness, they are more likely to develop stronger affective commitment. In other words, organizations that promote workplace happiness and nurture a supportive environment can enhance employees' emotional bonds and commitment to the organization. Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Happiness at work significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment.

Based on the hypothesis development outlined above, the conceptual framework of this study is as follows:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Research Method

This study employs a quantitative approach, which emphasizes hypothesis testing, requires measurable data, and aims to produce generalizable conclusions that can explain phenomena in a systematic and verifiable manner. The quantitative approach in this study utilizes Partial Least Squares (PLS) as the statistical analysis tool. The population of this study consists of nurses at Dr. Soetomo Hospital, totaling 1,473 individuals. Based on calculations using the Slovin formula, the minimum sample size required is 64 nurses, selected through a random sampling technique.

In this study, servant leadership refers to a managerial style that prioritizes the well-being of employees, demonstrates strong enthusiasm for serving them, and focuses on their personal and professional growth. The indicators used are adapted from the seven dimensions of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (Liden et al., 2014; Yasir & Jan, 2023), examples of indicators include; Supervisors are aware when something is wrong with work-related matters; Supervisors prioritize career development; Employees can seek assistance from supervisors when facing personal problems; and Leaders emphasize the importance of contributing back to society.

Happiness at work in this study is conceptualized as the subjective experience of hospital employees in evaluating whether they feel happy within their work environment and in relation to their workplace well-being. The indicators employed are adapted from the measurement scale developed by Ramirez-Garcia et al. (2019), which consists of eleven items: Employees receive fair rewards at work; The organizational climate is positive; Supervisors manage effectively; The unit-level organizational climate is favorable; Employees demonstrate high internal motivation toward their work; and Tasks within the organization are well designed.

Affective commitment is defined as the extent to which hospital employees are emotionally connected to and positively bonded with the organization in which they work. The indicators used to measure affective commitment are adapted from Dahleez et al. (2021) and consist of five items, such as; A strong sense of belonging to the hospital; Feeling like part of a family within the hospital; Experiencing emotional attachment to the hospital; and Expressing satisfaction in spending the remainder of one's career at the hospital.

This study employs Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), considering two stages of evaluation: the outer model and the inner model (Hair et al., 2019). The outer model evaluation aims to ensure that the research instruments demonstrate adequate validity and reliability, thereby confirming that the indicators accurately measure the constructs. Convergent validity is assessed through the loading factor, which must exceed 0.50, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which must also be greater than 0.50. Discriminant validity is used to confirm that each construct is conceptually distinct from the others, tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, whereby the square root of AVE must be greater than the correlations among constructs. Construct reliability is measured using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, both of which must exceed 0.70. Once the measurement model meets these criteria, evaluation proceeds to the inner model, which assesses the relationships among latent constructs. The predictive strength of the model is measured using the R-Square value, categorized as strong (>0.75), moderate (0.50), and weak (0.25). The significance of relationships among variables is tested through path coefficients, with a p-value threshold of less than 0.05. Overall, SEM-PLS evaluation must begin with the outer model testing before proceeding to the inner model analysis to ensure the accuracy of hypothesis testing in this study.

A total of 81 respondents participated in this study. The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Age (Years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
17 – 25	7	8.6
26-30	12	14.8
> 30	62	76.5
Marital Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Single	14	17.3
Married	67	82.7
Education Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
High School/Vocational	0	0
Diploma (D1/D2/D3)	57	70.4
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	24	29.6
Master's Degree (S2)	0	0
Doctoral Degree (S3)	0	0
Years of Service	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1-5	23	28.4
6-10	9	11.1
11-15	12	14.8
16-20	37	45.7
Total	81	100%

Source: Processed Data (2024)

Based on the data presented above, the frequency distribution related to age shows that the majority of respondents were over 30 years old, totaling 62 respondents. This was followed by respondents aged 26–30 years, with 12 respondents, while the smallest group consisted of respondents aged 17–25 years, with 7 respondents. In terms of marital status, the study participants were predominantly married, accounting for 67 respondents, whereas 14 respondents were unmarried.

In terms of educational attainment, the distribution shows that respondents were predominantly diploma holders, with 57 respondents. This was followed by 24 respondents who held a bachelor's degree. Notably, none of the respondents reported education at the high school/vocational, master's, or doctoral levels, indicating that the workforce is largely concentrated at the diploma and undergraduate levels. Regarding tenure, the majority of respondents had worked for 16–20 years (37 respondents). This was followed by 23 respondents with 1–5 years of service, 12 respondents with 11–15 years, and 9 respondents with 6–10 years of service.

Results and discussion

Results

In this study, the researcher tested the model and hypotheses using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique. The PLS analysis consists of two stages:

evaluation of the outer model and evaluation of the inner model. The following section explains the evaluation of each model based on the results of the analysis.

The outer model evaluation aims to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments used in the research model. This process determines how well the questionnaire items measure the properties and concepts of the variables under study, as well as the consistency of the items in measuring the same variable across different times and contexts. The outer model analysis is assessed through convergent validity, construct validity, and composite reliability. The outer model is presented as follows:

Outer model

The first stage of the outer model analysis is the assessment of convergent validity. In PLS, convergent validity can be examined by evaluating the loading factor values of each indicator. The loading factor describes the correlation between each measurement item (questionnaire indicator) and its corresponding latent variable (construct). An indicator is considered to have met the criteria for convergent validity if the loading score on each path between the latent variable and its manifest variable is greater than 0.50 (Ghozali, 2008). Construct validity refers to the extent to which a test measures the theoretical construct upon which it is based. A construct is considered to have good construct validity if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value exceeds 0.50 (Abdillah & Hartono, 2016). Reliability testing is assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. A construct is deemed reliable if Cronbach's Alpha exceeds 0.60 and Composite Reliability exceeds 0.70 (Abdillah & Hartono, 2016). The results of convergent validity, construct validity, and composite reliability are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Loading Factors

Variabel dan item	Loading factor	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Affective commitment		0,883	0,967	0,974
AC1	0,941			
AC2	0,963			
AC3	0,919			
AC4	0,961			
AC5	0,914			
Happiness at work		0,788	0,972	0,976
HAW1	0,705			
HAW10	0,926			
HAW11	0,911			
HAW2	0,823			
HAW3	0,889			
HAW4	0,898			
HAW5	0,924			
HAW6	0,927			
HAW7	0,907			
HAW8	0,894			

Variabel dan item	Loading factor	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
HAW9	0,936			
Servant leadership		0,687	0,909	0,929
SL2	0,825			
SL3	0,827			
SL4	0,887			
SL5	0,837			
SL6	0,832			
SL1	0,758			

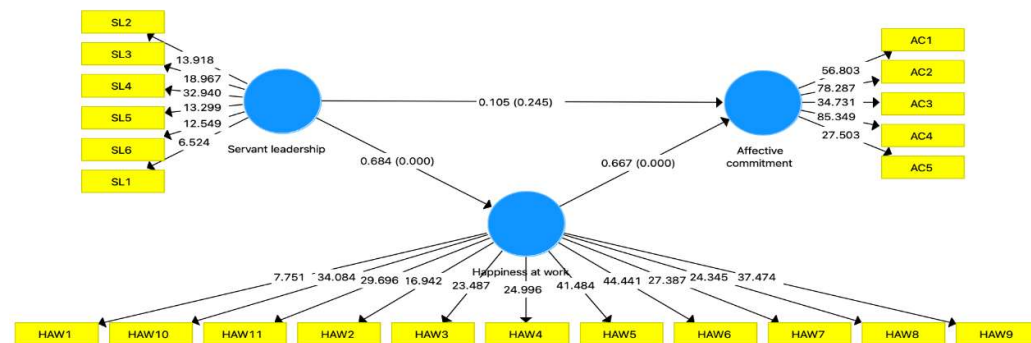
Source: Processed data using PLS (2024)

Table 2 shows that most of the loading factor values for each indicator are greater than 0.50, with the exception of one item, SL7, which has a value below 0.50. Consequently, this item must be removed from the model as it does not meet the validity criteria. Overall, the loading factor results indicate that the indicators in this study are statistically valid and can be used to measure the constructs. Furthermore, the table demonstrates that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables in the research model exceed 0.50, confirming good construct validity. In addition, all constructs in this study achieved Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.60 and Composite Reliability values greater than 0.70, which indicates that all constructs are reliable. This implies that each construct in the research model possesses internal consistency in terms of instrument reliability testing.

Inner model

The structural model (inner model) testing was conducted to predict causal relationships among variables and to test the proposed hypotheses. This analysis was carried out by examining the values of the coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficients, and parameter estimates. Once significant relationships among variables were identified, the hypotheses regarding the constructs in this study, namely servant leadership, psychological capital, happiness at work, and affective commitment, were evaluated. Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure in PLS. The results of the bootstrapping analysis are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Path Diagram of the Inner Model (PLS)



Source: Processed data using PLS

Coefficient of Determination

The analysis of the coefficient of determination was conducted to measure the extent to which the model is capable of explaining the variance of the dependent variables (Ghozali, 2014). The value of the coefficient of determination ranges between zero and one. A smaller R-square value indicates that the variance of the dependent variable is very limited, whereas a value approaching one suggests that the independent variables are able to provide nearly all the information required to explain and predict the dependent variable. The R-square values obtained in this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Affective commitment	0,552	0,540
Happiness at work	0,468	0,461

Source: Processed Data using PLS (2024)

Based on the R-square values presented in Table 3, after being converted into percentages, the coefficient of determination for each variable can be interpreted as follows. The variable affective commitment obtained an R-square value of 55.2%, which means that the independent variables in the model explain 55.2% of the variance in affective commitment, while the remaining 44.8% is explained by other variables outside the research model. Meanwhile, the variable happiness at work achieved an R-square value of 46.8%, indicating that the independent variables in the model account for 46.8% of its variance. The remaining 53.2% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Hypothesis Testing

The next step in the analysis is hypothesis testing, which was conducted by estimating the path coefficients. These coefficients were evaluated based on the T-statistics values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. Path coefficient estimation provides statistical evidence of the relationships among latent variables. An item is considered significant if the T-statistics score exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 at the 5% significance level. In addition, the parameter coefficients indicate the direction of influence, whether positive or negative, as reflected in the original sample values. These coefficients also show the magnitude of the effect of independent variables on dependent variables (Ghozali, 2008). The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Path Coefficients

Direct effect	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
Servant leadership -> Affective commitment	0,105	1,165	0,245
Servant leadership -> Happiness at work	0,684	7,240	0,000
Happiness at work -> Affective commitment	0,667	6,881	0,000
Indirect effect			

Direct effect	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
Servant leadership -> Happiness at work -> Affective commitment	0,456	4,564	0,000

Source: Processed Data using PLS (2024)

Table 4 demonstrates that servant leadership exerts a positive yet statistically non-significant influence on affective commitment. This is evidenced by the parameter coefficient value of 0.105, with a p-value of 0.245, which exceeds the threshold of 0.05. Accordingly, these findings do not support Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, the results indicate that servant leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on happiness at work. This is reflected in the parameter coefficient value of 0.684, with a p-value of 0.000, which is below the threshold of 0.05. Based on these statistical calculations, it can be concluded that servant leadership positively and significantly influences happiness at work within the sample of this study, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2.

The findings further reveal that happiness at work exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on affective commitment. This is evidenced by the parameter coefficient value of 0.667, with a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. These results support Hypothesis 3. Moreover, the final set of findings demonstrates that happiness at work positively and significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment. The significant mediating effect is indicated by the path coefficient value of 0.456 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. Accordingly, these results provide empirical support for Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

The Influence of Servant Leadership on Affective Commitment

The hypothesis testing results reveal that servant leadership exerts a positive yet statistically non-significant effect on affective commitment. This outcome does not align with the proposed hypothesis of the present study, which posited that servant leadership would have a positive and significant influence on affective commitment (Khan et al., 2022; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022; Ngah et al., 2023). However, the findings are consistent with the study conducted by Prawira (2021), which similarly reported that servant leadership has a positive but non-significant effect on affective commitment. This discrepancy may be attributed to contextual factors specific to hospital work environments. Although servant-oriented leaders emphasize the well-being and development of medical staff, the unique characteristics of hospital settings may attenuate this impact. Hospitals are frequently characterized by high levels of pressure, strict time demands, and heavy workloads, all of which can undermine the emotional well-being and job satisfaction of staff members (Huhtala et al., 2021).

Although servant leadership may foster interpersonal relationships and provide individualized support, such efforts may not be sufficient to overcome systemic challenges inherent in hospital environments (Trastek et al., 2014). Moreover, employees' emotional attachment to the organization may be more strongly influenced by other factors, such as organizational culture, career

development opportunities, compensation, and recognition of performance. Collectively, these elements may play a more dominant role in shaping affective commitment, particularly within high-pressure contexts such as hospitals (Mohd Isa et al., 2016; Mosadeghrad et al., 2008; Sharma & Dhar, 2016).

Based on respondents' feedback, the findings indicate that employees consistently receive assistance from their supervisors when encountering problems, whether work-related or personal. In addition, employees reported that they have been provided with meaningful career development opportunities in their current workplace. Equally important, hospital leaders have emphasized the significance of contributing back to society. These aspects are reflected in the practice of servant leadership within the hospital context, which in turn fosters employees' affective commitment.

The findings of this study further indicate that although servant leadership tends to enhance employees' affective commitment, its influence is neither sufficiently strong nor consistent within the examined sample. Servant leadership, which emphasizes serving others, fostering employee development, and creating a supportive work environment, is theoretically expected to strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the organization (Khan et al., 2022; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022). However, the present results suggest that, in the hospital context, this leadership approach may not be adequate to significantly increase employees' affective commitment. The lack of statistical significance may be attributed to several factors, including individual differences among employees, variations in organizational culture, or external conditions that shape the relationship. Thus, while servant leadership demonstrates positive potential, its effect on affective commitment may require additional contextual or organizational factors to become more pronounced and statistically significant in influencing employees' emotional commitment.

In addition, the finding that servant leadership exerts a positive yet non-significant influence on affective commitment within a sample predominantly composed of married employees may be explained by differing priorities and responsibilities among this group. Married employees often carry greater family obligations, which may lead them to focus more on stability and family well-being than on workplace dynamics or leadership styles (Nolan et al., 2000). Although they value the supportive and caring approach inherent in servant leadership, its impact on their emotional attachment to the organization may not be sufficiently strong, as their commitment is divided between professional responsibilities and family obligations (Lee et al., 2006).

The Influence of Servant Leadership on Happiness at Work

The hypothesis testing results of this study indicate that servant leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on happiness at work. These findings are consistent with the studies conducted by Pérez et al. (2023) and Gonzales-Macedo et al. (2023), which revealed that higher levels of servant leadership exert a positive and significant influence on employees' happiness at work. Servant leadership enables employees to perform more effectively, enhances engagement, and reduces burnout (Kaltiainen & Hakanen, 2022). In addition, it is associated with feedback-seeking behavior, which further supports employees' growth and motivation (Qin et al., 2021). Nevertheless, this relationship requires careful

consideration, as servant leaders may also be vulnerable to manipulation by employees who exploit their supportive and empathetic approach (Fatima et al., 2021).

The responses obtained in this study further reveal that when employees experience servant leadership, where leaders prioritize the interests of subordinates above their own and grant employees autonomy in handling difficult situations, this positively influences their happiness at work. Happiness at work is characterized by a positive work environment encompassing both physical and psychological aspects, such as comfortable workspaces and a supportive organizational culture. Respondents also highlighted that the organizational climate within their units is favorable, enabling employees to enjoy their work. These conditions illustrate how servant leadership contributes to fostering happiness at work by creating an environment in which employees feel valued, supported, and empowered.

Previous studies have emphasized that happiness at work refers to the attainment of employee well-being through a balance of factors that contribute to workplace satisfaction, one of which is servant leadership (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023; Muzakki & Herryanto, 2023). Individuals who experience moderate to high levels of positive emotions and attitudes are considered happy, as positive affect encompasses experiences, feelings, moods, and favorable attitudes toward work (Fisher, 2010). One of the underlying reasons employees feel content with their work environment is the presence of leaders who practice servant leadership, prioritizing the needs of their subordinates and fostering a supportive organizational climate (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023).

In line with these findings, Hamid (2024) also reported that supportive leader behaviors can enhance followers' resources, which ultimately improve their well-being (Harju et al., 2018). More specifically, the presence of a leader who demonstrates care, empathy, and support for others—namely, servant leadership—provides followers with additional resources (Khan et al., 2022). These resources are often invested in positive attitudes that exceed minimum expectations (Halbesleben et al., 2014), such as engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment (Ling et al., 2017). Collectively, these components represent fundamental elements of higher-order attitudinal outcomes, namely happiness at work (HAW).

Similarly, Halbesleben et al. (2014) emphasized that leadership styles oriented toward service and employee development significantly enhance employees' happiness at work. Servant leadership, which prioritizes attention to employees' needs, empowerment, emotional support, and the creation of a positive work environment, fosters feelings of being valued and cared for among staff members (Alahbabi et al., 2021). When leaders demonstrate genuine concern and actively strive to develop both individual potential and team well-being, employees tend to feel more motivated, satisfied, and happy in their work (Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015). Happiness at work not only improves employees' psychological well-being (Misra & Srivastava, 2022) but also positively impacts their productivity and engagement, ultimately benefiting the organization as a whole (Coo & Salanova, 2018; Muzakki & Herryanto, 2023).

The Influence of Happiness at Work on Affective Commitment

The hypothesis testing results of this study demonstrate that happiness at work has a positive and statistically significant effect on affective commitment. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Semedo et al. (2019), which revealed that when employees experience happiness in the workplace, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the organization, thereby strengthening affective organizational commitment (Lilius et al., 2008). Gavin and Mason (2004) further argue that happiness at work enables employees to perceive their jobs as meaningful, viewing them as a mission rather than merely as “work.” This perception, in turn, fosters stronger affective attachment to the organization and greater commitment to enhancing organizational performance (Abdullah et al., 2017).

Building on previous findings, Abdullah and Ling (2016) demonstrated that happiness functions as a causal mechanism that generates various positive moods in the workplace. According to Money et al. (2008), happiness constitutes the core of this domain, with multiple variables contributing to workplace happiness, such as job engagement and job satisfaction.

Consistent with this perspective, Fisher (2010) reported that employees' happiness at work significantly enhances their emotional attachment to the organization. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, enjoy positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life, they are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the company (Kortsch et al., 2022).

Happiness at work also enhances motivation and job satisfaction, which in turn encourage employees to commit more deeply to organizational goals and values (Atan et al., 2021). Consequently, happy employees are more likely to remain loyal, motivated, and to contribute positively to organizational success, thereby fostering a productive and harmonious work environment (Omar et al., 2019; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006).

Considering employees' tenure, the majority of respondents in this study reported having worked between 16 and 20 years. Based on these findings, happiness at work exerts a positive and significant influence on affective commitment, as employees with longer tenure tend to develop stronger emotional bonds with their organizations (Wright & Bonett, 2002). Employees who experience happiness at work demonstrate high levels of job satisfaction, positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and supportive work environments (Babin & Boles, 1996; Dziuba et al., 2020). Such happiness fosters a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the organization (Waller, 2020). For employees with extensive work experience, happiness at work becomes a crucial factor in reinforcing affective commitment, as they have navigated various organizational changes and challenges over time. They perceive workplace happiness as evidence that the organization values their contributions and provides an environment conducive to their well-being. Consequently, they feel more emotionally attached and committed to continuing their contributions and maintaining loyalty to the hospital.

The Mediating Role of Happiness at Work in the Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Affective Commitment

The hypothesis testing results of this study demonstrate that happiness at work positively and significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment, thereby supporting the final hypothesis. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by López Pérez et al. (2023), which revealed that servant-oriented leaders create supportive work environments that prioritize employee well-being, ultimately enhancing workplace happiness. When employees perceive that their leaders genuinely care about their needs and personal development, they tend to experience greater satisfaction and happiness in their work (Alahbabi et al., 2023). This happiness subsequently strengthens employees' emotional attachment to the organization (affective commitment), as happy employees feel valued and supported, which increases their willingness to remain loyal and contribute to organizational success (Karadaş & Akin, 2023).

The findings of this study further highlight that happiness at work plays a crucial mediating role in strengthening the influence of servant leadership on employees' emotional attachment to the organization. In this context, servant leadership, centered on service, empowerment, and employee development, creates a supportive and satisfying work environment. When employees feel happy at work due to the care and support provided by servant leaders, these positive emotions encourage stronger affective commitment to the organization (Mohsin et al., 2023). Thus, happiness at work functions as a bridge that amplifies the positive impact of servant leadership on affective commitment. Employees who feel valued and satisfied are more likely to develop a deeper emotional bond with the organization, reinforcing their loyalty and willingness to contribute to its long-term success.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Bai et al. (2023) and Prawira (2021), which emphasize that the mediating effect of happiness at work is crucial in understanding the relationship between servant leadership and affective commitment. This highlights the importance of fostering a positive work environment to strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the organization.

Furthermore, the findings of Alahbabi et al. (2021) revealed that servant leadership has a substantial positive impact on employees' workplace satisfaction, which in turn enhances their performance. In this study, happiness at work was found to act as a mediator between servant leadership and affective commitment, underscoring the critical role of employee happiness in the development of emotional attachment to the organization (Gonzales-Macedo et al., 2023).

Conclusions

Based on the above discussion, this study concludes that servant leadership exerts a positive but non-significant influence on affective commitment, while it has a positive and significant effect on happiness at work. Furthermore, happiness at work positively and significantly influences affective commitment.

The findings of this study indicate that servant leadership does not exert a significant direct effect on affective commitment, but it has a positive and significant influence on happiness at work, which in turn strongly affects affective commitment. Theoretically, these results reinforce the perspective that employees' affective

commitment in hospital settings is more likely to be shaped through positive psychological mechanisms—such as workplace happiness—rather than through the direct influence of leadership style (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019). This enriches the servant leadership literature within the healthcare context, where employees' emotional bonds with the organization are more strongly influenced by working conditions that foster meaning, comfort, and psychological well-being. Moreover, the study underscores the role of happiness at work as a critical mediator, positioning it as a key variable in human resource development models for healthcare organizations that prioritize employees' psychological welfare.

From a practical perspective, these findings provide strategic guidance for hospital human resource management. Although servant leadership has been shown to enhance happiness at work, its effect on affective commitment is indirect. This implies that hospital HR policies and programs should not only focus on developing servant-oriented leaders but also on ensuring a work environment that fosters employee happiness. Such initiatives may include increasing job autonomy, recognizing achievements, providing emotional support, and promoting work-life balance (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018). Leadership training programs should also emphasize leaders' ability to create a positive workplace atmosphere, build trust-based relationships, and facilitate interprofessional collaboration within hospitals. By strengthening happiness at work, HR departments can indirectly foster stronger affective commitment, which is essential for retaining healthcare professionals and ensuring high-quality patient care.

This study has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, the research employed a cross-sectional design, relying on data collected at a single point in time. Consequently, causal inferences are limited, and future studies should adopt longitudinal approaches to validate and extend these findings. Second, the study was conducted within the hospital sector, which may restrict the generalizability of the results. Future research could replicate and expand this investigation in different organizational contexts and industries to examine whether similar patterns hold across diverse settings.

this study is also limited by the scope of constructs examined. Specifically, the research focused only on a few key variables influencing workplace happiness and affective commitment, both as independent and mediating constructs. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional variables that may exert stronger effects on affective commitment and workplace happiness. Moreover, this study primarily examined servant leadership as the antecedent of workplace happiness. While servant leadership provides valuable insights, subsequent research should explore other leadership styles or organizational factors that may have a greater impact on affective commitment.

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