



# The Impact of Servant Leadership on Organizational Excellence in Sports Institutions in Misan Province

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| Abstract   |
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| <p><b>Objectives.</b> The objective of this research is to identify the impact of practicing servant leadership on achieving organizational excellence in sports institutions within Maysan Governorate. Specifically, the study aims to recognize the level of practicing servant leadership in these sports institutions, determine the level of organizational excellence, and explore the nature of the relationship between servant leadership practices and organizational excellence in the sports clubs of Maysan Governorate.</p> <p><b>Materials and Methods.</b> The researcher utilized the descriptive methodology, applying its various steps and procedures to suit the nature of the study. The research population consisted of sports specialists working in sports clubs across Maysan Governorate. The research sample was selected randomly and included specialists from clubs such as Naft Maysan, Maysan, Dijlah, Al-Amara, Al-Risala, Al-Mashrah, Al-Amir, Al-Maimouna, Ali Al-Gharbi, Al-Majr, and Ahrar Maysan. The total sample comprised 50 specialists for the survey phase and 239 specialists for the main research phase, allowing for comprehensive coverage and robust data collection.</p> <p><b>Results.</b> The research findings indicated that the level of estimation of the servant leadership variable among the research sample was moderate overall. Among the dimensions of servant leadership, the variable of persuasion received the highest level of estimation, indicating it is the most recognized aspect of servant leadership among sports specialists. Conversely, the empowerment variable received the lowest estimation, suggesting that efforts to empower team members are less emphasized within these institutions.</p> <p><b>Conclusion.</b> In conclusion, the study highlights the moderate practice of servant leadership within sports institutions in Maysan Governorate, with particular strengths in persuasion but notable weaknesses in empowerment. The findings underline the importance of adopting a servant leadership style by officials in sports clubs to drive organizational excellence. To enhance leadership practices, the study recommends organizing training courses for managers and sports specialists focusing on the principles and applications of servant leadership.</p> |
| Keywords : Servant Leadership, Organizational Excellence, Sports Institutions.   |

**Introduction**

Sporting clubs are recognized as vital sporting institutions where management philosophies fluctuate and develop due to several influential factors, most notably changes in management teams, the evolving practical experiences within different sports disciplines, and the increasing variety of the competitive landscape. As a result, revising and updating standard management principles within each club has become an imperative necessity to ensure their sustainability and growth. Operating within a dynamic and competitive environment, sports clubs are driven to adopt innovative ideas and management techniques aimed at enhancing performance, addressing emerging challenges, and achieving desired outcomes that foster institutional excellence.

Excellence within sports clubs is conceived as a comprehensive framework that integrates all activities and technologies associated with contemporary management. Its purpose is to elevate performance and achievement to levels that allow organizations to surpass their competitors. However, excellence does not occur by accident or through mere wishful thinking; it is realized through the collective and coordinated efforts of individuals at all organizational levels. Attaining such organizational excellence requires the presence of proficient leadership capable of establishing foundational standards, providing the necessary elements for the successful implementation of plans and programs, and aligning the organization's strategic objectives and future vision within an integrated policy framework that governs its operations. Furthermore, it is essential for organizations to function within flexible structures that can respond effectively to both external and internal changes, thus meeting performance standards and achieving their strategic goals.

Within this context, leaders of sports clubs bear a critical responsibility to facilitate tasks and lead their teams toward achieving results that distinguish them from competing institutions. In line with this notion, Asma Mahmoud Ma'arouf (2012) emphasizes that the concept of servant leadership is not new; it finds its roots in early Islamic teachings, as illustrated by a narration from Anas ibn Malik: "The leader of a people is their servant," a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This highlights the deep historical foundations of leadership centered on service to others.

The researcher argues that leadership within sports institutions requires further advanced investigation, especially considering the evolving views of the Ministry of Youth and Sports leadership, which increasingly go beyond the traditional frameworks of inclusive and competitive sports. To better meet the growing demands placed on sports institutions, there has been a shift towards incorporating investment and marketing perspectives into the

sports industry. Consequently, leadership strategies must also evolve, embracing contemporary concepts such as servant leadership and transformational leadership to foster organizational growth and excellence.

Supporting this perspective, Jamal Mohamed Ali (2009) asserts that the stagnation observed in the sports sector is not primarily due to a lack of financial resources, facilities, organizations, or personnel. Instead, it stems from fundamental deficiencies in sports management, both in terms of quantity and quality. Effective management, exemplified by capable leadership, can mobilize funds, build facilities, optimize available resources, and recruit the human capital necessary for executing strategic plans. Competent leadership serves as a unifying force dedicated to the sustained development of the sports sector, highlighting the essential role of leadership quality in achieving institutional success.

In light of this background, the research aims to determine the impact of practicing servant leadership on achieving organizational excellence within sports institutions in Maysan Governorate. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) assess the level of servant leadership practice in these institutions; (2) determine the level of organizational excellence achieved; (3) examine the nature of the relationship between servant leadership practices and organizational excellence; and (4) predict which dimensions of servant leadership most significantly affect organizational excellence in this context.

To guide the research, the following questions were posed:

- 1) What is the level of servant leadership practice in sports institutions in Maysan Governorate?
- 2) What is the level of organizational excellence in Maysan Governorate sports institutions?
- 3) What is the relationship between the level of servant leadership practice and organizational excellence in sports institutions in Maysan Governorate?
- 4) Is it possible to predict the dimensions of servant leadership practice that affect organizational excellence in sports institutions in Maysan Governorate?

**Materials and Methods**

**Study Participants.**

The study targeted sports specialists working within sports clubs located in the Maysan Governorate. Participants were randomly selected from clubs including Naft Maysan, Maysan, Dijlah, Al-Amara, Al-Risala, Al-Mashrah, Al-Emir, Al-Maymouna, Ali Al-Gharbi, Al-Majr, and Ahrar Maysan. The research sample comprised two groups: a survey sample of 50 specialists used to assess the clarity, reliability, and validity of the instruments,

and a main study sample of 239 specialists for the final data collection and analysis. The participants represent a diverse group of sports administrators, coaches, supervisors, and support staff integral to the operation and management of these clubs.

**Study organization.**

The study adopted a descriptive research methodology, following structured procedures designed to accurately describe the phenomena of servant leadership and organizational excellence within the sports institutions of Maysan Governorate. A preliminary survey was conducted between October 10, 2024, and October 20, 2024, to validate the data collection tools. Findings from this preliminary study confirmed that the measurement instruments were clear, suitable for the participants' comprehension levels, and scientifically sound regarding validity and reliability. Following validation, the primary data collection phase was conducted from August 8, 2024, to August 20, 2024, utilizing two instruments: the Servant Leadership Scale (21 items across 5 dimensions) and the Organizational Excellence Scale (19 items across 4 dimensions).

**Statistical analysis.**

Data collected during the study were processed and analyzed using **SPSS statistical software**. The following statistical techniques were employed:

- 1) **Pearson's correlation coefficient:** Used to test the internal consistency validity between items and their respective dimensions, as well as between dimensions and the overall scales.
- 2) **Cronbach's alpha coefficient:** Used to determine the reliability (internal consistency) of the measurement instruments.
- 3) **Arithmetic mean and standard deviation:** Calculated to describe the central tendency and dispersion of responses.
- 4) **Percentages:** Employed to interpret the levels of servant leadership practices and organizational excellence. The results from the survey sample confirmed the scientific integrity of the measurement instruments, ensuring the robustness of the main study's findings.

Result

1) Level of Servant Leadership Practice in Sports Institutions in Maysan Governorate

Table 1. Ranking and Estimated Level of Servant Leadership (n=239)

| No. | Dimensions         | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage | Rank | Level    |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|------|----------|
| 1   | Altruism           | 2.060           | 0.459              | 68.667%    | 3    | Moderate |
| 2   | Empowerment        | 1.988           | 0.513              | 66.278%    | 5    | Moderate |
| 3   | Emotional Support  | 2.033           | 0.545              | 67.778%    | 4    | Moderate |
| 4   | Persuasion         | 2.120           | 0.557              | 70.667%    | 1    | Moderate |
| 5   | Authenticity       | 2.075           | 0.543              | 69.167%    | 2    | Moderate |
|     | Servant Leadership | 2.055           | 0.523              | 68.238%    |      |          |

From the table above, it is evident that the overall level of servant leadership practice was moderate, with the total mean score being 2.055 (68.238%) and a standard deviation of 0.523. The mean scores of the individual dimensions ranged between 1.988 and 2.120, with percentages between 66.278% and 70.667%, and standard deviations between 0.459 and 0.557. Among the dimensions, persuasion ranked highest, followed by authenticity, altruism, emotional support, and finally empowerment.

2) Level of Organizational Excellence in Sports Institutions in Maysan Governorate

Table 2. Ranking and Estimated Level of Organizational Excellence (n=239)

| No. | Dimensions                          | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage | Rank | Level    |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|------|----------|
| 1   | Leadership Excellence               | 1.970           | 0.433              | 65.667%    | 4    | Moderate |
| 2   | Subordinates' Excellence            | 2.048           | 0.363              | 68.267%    | 3    | Moderate |
| 3   | Organizational Strategy Distinction | 2.080           | 0.434              | 69.333%    | 2    | Moderate |
| 4   | Organizational Culture Excellence   | 2.102           | 0.412              | 70.067%    | 1    | Moderate |

|                           |       |       |         |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Organizational Excellence | 2.050 | 0.411 | 68.281% |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|---------|

The results show that the overall level of organizational excellence was moderate, with a mean score of 2.050 (68.281%) and a standard deviation of 0.411. The mean scores across the dimensions ranged from 1.970 to 2.102, with percentages between 65.667% and 70.067%.

3. Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Excellence

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients between Servant Leadership Dimensions and Organizational Excellence (n=239)

| No. | Dimensions         | Leadership Excellence | Subordinates' Excellence | Organizational Strategy Distinction | Organizational Culture Excellence | Organizational Excellence |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1   | Altruism           | 0.317*                | 0.128*                   | 0.312*                              | 0.256*                            | 0.405*                    |
| 2   | Empowerment        | 0.190*                | 0.137*                   | 0.138*                              | 0.194*                            | 0.168*                    |
| 3   | Emotional Support  | 0.309*                | 0.172*                   | 0.304*                              | 0.195*                            | 0.196*                    |
| 4   | Persuasion         | 0.145*                | 0.147*                   | 0.294*                              | 0.119*                            | 0.182*                    |
| 5   | Authenticity       | 0.138*                | 0.182*                   | 0.162*                              | 0.189*                            | 0.135*                    |
|     | Servant Leadership | 0.262*                | 0.137*                   | 0.309*                              | 0.148*                            | 0.443*                    |

There was a statistically significant positive correlation between servant leadership and organizational excellence. The strongest correlation was between overall servant leadership and overall organizational excellence ( $r = 0.443$ ). The weakest was between authenticity and organizational excellence ( $r = 0.135$ ).

4. Predicting Servant Leadership Dimensions that Affect Organizational Excellence

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results (n=239)

| Dependent Variable        | Independent Variables  | F-Value | R <sup>2</sup> |
|---------------------------|--|---------|----------------|
| Organizational Excellence | Altruism, Empowerment, Emotional Support, Persuasion, Authenticity | 18.902* | 19.7%          |

The regression analysis revealed that the intercept value was 2.247, indicating the baseline level of organizational excellence when all independent variables are zero. Among the dimensions of servant leadership, altruism had the highest regression coefficient at 0.334, followed by empowerment at 0.315, emotional support at 0.150, persuasion at 0.111, and authenticity at 0.104. All coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The model accounted for 19.7% of the variance in organizational excellence, while the remaining 80.3% can be attributed to other unexplored factors.

**Discussion**

The results indicate that servant leadership practices in sports institutions in Maysan Governorate were moderate across all dimensions. The prominence of persuasion as the highest-ranked dimension suggests that sports leaders focus heavily on influencing and convincing their teams to accept responsibilities, while empowerment was relatively less emphasized.

The researcher attributes this to the growing awareness among sports club leaders about their ethical role in society. They endeavor to build positive relationships, provide personal and psychological support, and use persuasive methods to enhance team cohesion, thus fulfilling their organizational roles effectively.

Conventional leadership models are increasingly viewed as insufficient for developing future leaders. This has led to a shift toward servant leadership, which emphasizes authenticity, altruism, persuasion, emotional support, and empowerment—essential competencies for sports organizations that maintain direct, ongoing relationships with their members.

These findings are consistent with Hamida Mohamed Al-Najjar's (2012) study, which demonstrated the positive impact of servant leadership on organizational commitment and citizenship. Regarding organizational excellence, the findings indicate moderate levels across all dimensions, with organizational culture excellence being the most prominent. This suggests that sports institutions have fostered strong cultural values that support organizational goals. Leadership excellence, however, ranked lowest, highlighting potential areas for improvement.

The results align with Khalid Mohammed Al-Thubaiti's (2016) assertion that adopting organizational excellence standards can drive developmental leaps and improve performance. Similarly, Hassan Khaled Abdul Hayassat (2017) emphasized the importance of preparing employees through performance evaluation and professional development to achieve excellence.



The significant correlations found between servant leadership and organizational excellence dimensions support the notion that leadership behaviors like altruism, empowerment, and emotional support are crucial for fostering excellence within organizations. This aligns with findings from GUPTA & PARYA (2003) and Olesia et al. (2013), emphasizing that servant leadership enhances organizational commitment and encourages innovation.

The regression analysis further supports that specific servant leadership dimensions, especially altruism and empowerment, can predict organizational excellence. This suggests that by fostering these behaviors, sports institutions can enhance performance and competitiveness.

These findings corroborate previous research by Saleh Abdul-Ridha Rashid and Laith Ali Matar (2016), as well as Rezaei et al. (2012), who emphasized the critical role of leadership in building trust, empathy, and ultimately improving organizational outcomes.

**Conclusions.**

The findings of the study revealed that the level of appreciation for the servant leadership variable among the research sample was moderate. Within the dimensions of servant leadership, the persuasion dimension received the highest rating, whereas the empowerment dimension received the lowest. Similarly, the assessment level of the organizational excellence variable among the research sample was also moderate. Among its dimensions, organizational culture excellence was rated the highest, while leadership excellence was rated the lowest. Furthermore, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between servant leadership and its dimensions with organizational excellence and its dimensions. In addition, the results indicated a statistically significant effect of the servant leadership dimensions on the overall score of organizational excellence.

Based on these findings, the researcher offers several recommendations to officials in both the Ministry of Youth and Sports and sports clubs. Firstly, it is essential to adopt the servant leadership style among sports club officials. Secondly, efforts should be made to organize training courses for managers and sports specialists focused on servant leadership practices. Thirdly, the Ministry of Youth and Sports should work to enhance the competencies of club managers, enabling them to apply servant leadership with quality and excellence. Fourthly, attention should be given to designing various incentive systems to motivate and increase the enthusiasm of sports specialists in implementing programs, activities, and events that reflect the servant leadership style. Fifthly, there is a need to review the role of human resources within sports clubs to evaluate its impact on achieving



organizational excellence. Sixthly, emphasis should be placed on models that encourage the formation of diverse work teams, recognizing their role in fostering organizational excellence. Seventhly, efforts should be directed at transforming traditional hierarchical organizational structures into more horizontal ones to increase connectivity across administrative levels and promote creativity in achieving goals. Finally, it is recommended to conduct further studies on the topics of servant leadership and organizational excellence to deepen understanding and expand practical applications in the field.

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**Conflict of interest**

Have no conflict of interest to declare.

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