

Mediating Role of Reflective Leadership Skills on the Relationship between Servant Leadership and Organizational Climate

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ABSTRACT

Poor organizational climate is a critical threat to the education sector. This study examined the mediating role of reflective leadership skills in the relationship between servant leadership skills and organizational climate. Using a predictive research design, data were collected from 314 randomly selected public school teachers from the Schools Division Office of Davao Occidental and analyzed through mediation analysis. The findings indicate that reflective leadership skills strongly (58.2%) and partially mediate the relationship between servant leadership and organizational climate, thus supporting the General Systems Theory. Future studies may explore additional leadership styles and organizational factors that influence school organizational climate, while school leaders and educational authorities are encouraged to enhance leadership development through targeted training, reflective practices, coaching, and the provision of adequate resources.

Keywords: Mediating role of reflective leadership skills, servant leadership, organizational climate

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Setting

Poor organizational climate remains a significant issue in many educational institutions worldwide, reflecting ongoing and persistent challenges in school environments (Sharma & Gupta, 2025). An unhealthy organizational climate continues to be a critical concern within institutions, indicating systemic difficulties in fostering a positive and supportive work environment (Liu et al., 2021). Similarly, Fang and Qi (2023) affirmed that negative organizational climates constrain young teachers' sense of autonomy and belonging. Furthermore, Meditamar (2024) observed that such conditions persist across various institutions, underscoring the enduring prevalence of unfavorable workplace environments in education.

From a global perspective, in the United States, an unfavorable organizational climate continues to persist, with teachers reporting difficulties in sustaining confidence in classroom management, student engagement, and instructional practices (Zhou, 2023). Similarly, in Pakistan, research conducted in the Sheikhpura District revealed the continued existence of weak organizational climate dimensions, highlighting ongoing concerns regarding teacher performance and institutional support (Shad et al., 2024). In Nigeria, studies conducted at Ojukwu University (COOU), Anambra State, have likewise demonstrated the persistence of detrimental organizational climates, which create challenging working conditions for educators (Obi & Okeke, 2025).

In the Philippine context, some schools in Bohol have been reported to exhibit unfavorable organizational climates, which are associated with low teacher engagement and reduced performance (Manla, 2021). Similarly, in the SOCCSARGEN region, some schools experience weak organizational climates characterized by persistent conflicts, ineffective communication, and diminished trust within the school community (Sailila et al., 2024). A comparable situation is evident in the Davao Region, where some schools continue to face consistently ineffective organizational climates, thereby hampering efforts to achieve quality and equitable education for students (Villan & Quines, 2025).

A poor organizational climate is widely recognized as a critical barrier to educational effectiveness, leading to reduced teacher collaboration, limited inclusivity, decreased motivation and job satisfaction, diminished

organizational performance, and ultimately lower student achievement (Zahra & Sajjad, 2025; Surahman, 2020). If left unaddressed, these persistent challenges may result in systemic consequences, including declining student outcomes, heightened teacher burnout, and increased turnover rates, thereby underscoring the urgent need to strengthen organizational climate. Despite the proliferation of studies, the issue remains theoretically and empirically unresolved, as existing research often relies on single-factor approaches and examines leadership, reflective practices, or organizational outcomes in isolation, highlighting a lack of integrative frameworks (Alj & Bouayad, 2024). To address this limitation, the present study adopts a comprehensive model that positions servant leadership as an antecedent, reflective leadership as a mediating mechanism, and organizational climate as an outcome, offering a more relational and process-oriented perspective. Moreover, the limited availability of empirical studies that simultaneously examine these variables within educational settings represents a significant research gap that this study seeks to address (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023), thereby reinforcing its originality and contribution to the field.

Significance of the Study

This study highlighted the global importance of servant leadership in fostering positive and collaborative school climates through reflective leadership practices. It contributes to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8, and 16 by promoting quality education, teacher well-being, and ethical and participatory institutions. The findings offer valuable insights and guidance for school leaders and policymakers in enhancing teacher engagement, strengthening trust, and improving organizational effectiveness. In alignment with the vision and mission of Holy Cross of Davao College, this study reinforces the formation of values-driven and competent leaders who are committed to transformative and inclusive education.

Statement of the problem

The study determined the mediating role of reflective leadership skills on the relationship between servant leadership and school organizational climate. Specifically, the following objectives were pursued:

1. To describe the levels of servant leadership in terms of conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, emotional healing and creating value for the community; reflective leadership in terms of self-awareness, careful observation, and flexible response; and the organizational climate in terms of teacher-principal relationship, teacher collaboration and support, teacher morale and school climate, and student influence and school activities;
2. To determine the significance of the correlation between servant, reflective leadership, and the organizational climate;
3. To determine the significance of the direct effect of servant leadership on organizational climate controlling for reflective leadership;
4. To determine the significance of the indirect effect of servant leadership on organizational climate through reflective leadership; and
5. To determine the significance of the total effect of servant leadership on organizational climate.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho1: Servant leadership and reflective leadership do not significantly correlate with organizational climate.

Ho2: The direct effect of servant leadership on organizational climate controlling for reflective leadership, is not significant.

Ho3: The indirect effect of servant leadership on organizational climate through reflective leadership is not significant.

Ho4: The total effect of servant leadership on organizational climate is not significant.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded on the General System Theory (GST) of Von Bertalanffy (1956), which posits that a system must be viewed as an open system one that has both inputs and outputs. The open-system approach identifies and maps the repeated cycles of input, transformation, output, which represent how organizations continuously adapt their work and maintain balance within their environment.

In relation to this study, servant leadership as a predictive variable functions as the input and encompasses conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, emotional healing, and creating value for the community. Moreover, reflective leadership as a mediating variable represents the transformation or process and includes self-awareness, careful observation, and flexible response. Finally, organizational climate as a criterion variable serves as the output and is characterized by teacher-principal relationship, teacher collaboration and support, teacher morale and school climate, and student influence and school activities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

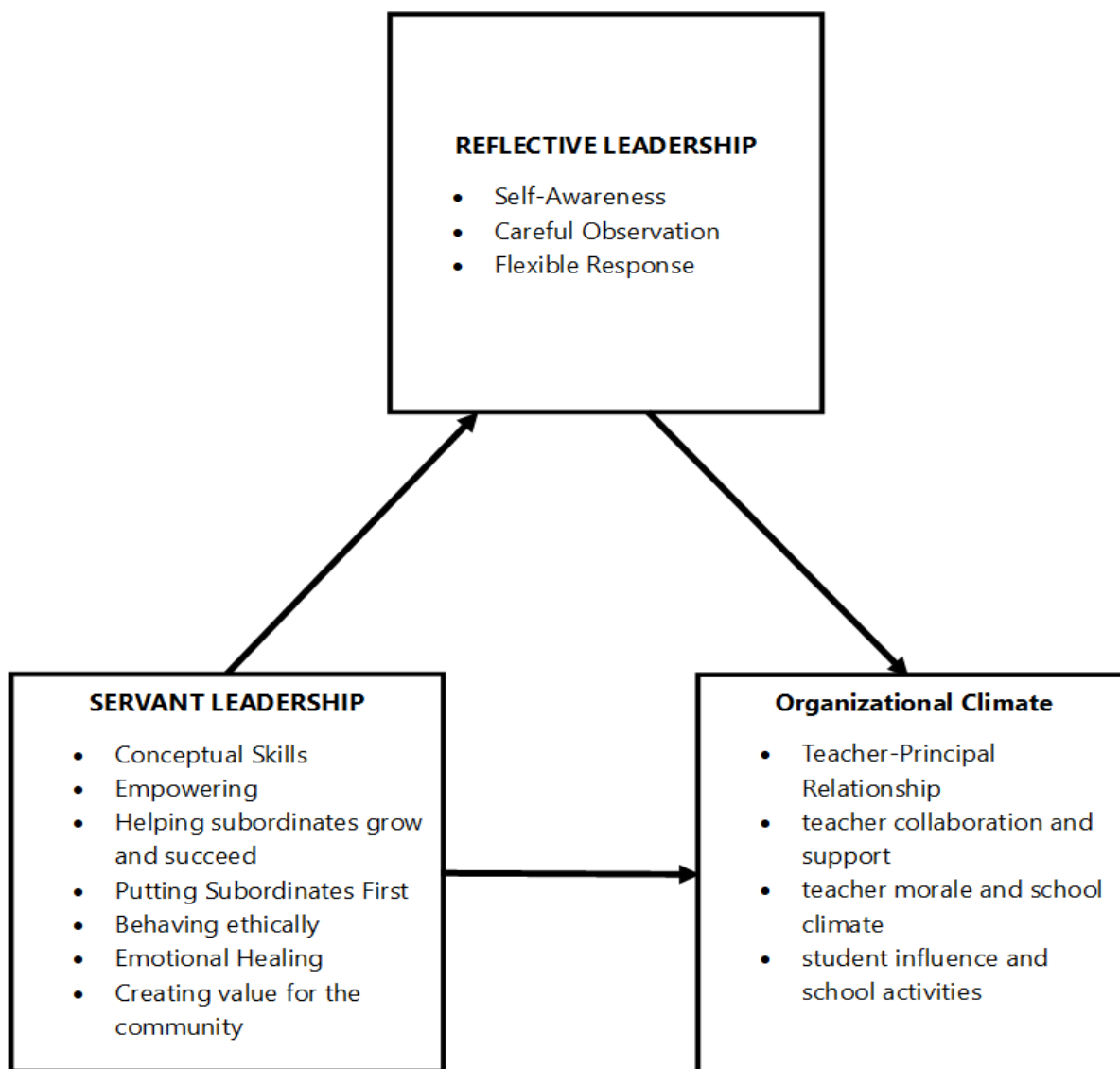


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlined the research methodology, detailing the research design, locale, sample and sampling technique, as well as the data gathering technique and data analysis technique.

Research Design

This study employed a predictive research design, which focuses on forecasting future outcomes by analyzing patterns in existing or historical data, complementing traditional research that explains past events and using statistical models to generate predictions (Sghir et al., 2022). It is appropriate for the present study because it enables researchers to anticipate trends, support evidence-based decision-making, and implement early interventions, particularly in education and the social sciences (Khalil & Ebner, 2023). Its advantages include the ability to uncover hidden patterns in large datasets, provide forward-looking insights, enhance strategic planning, and improve decision-making accuracy by emphasizing prediction rather than mere description (Shmueli et al., 2023).

Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Davao Occidental, with a specific focus on the Don Marcelino District. This district was purposively selected due to its diverse range of school settings and leadership practices, which provide a rich and varied context for the research. The study was carried out from the perspective of teachers, who served as the primary respondents and are best positioned to evaluate the influence of leadership behaviors on the school environment. This approach enabled the researcher to comprehensively examine teachers' perceptions of how servant leadership indirectly influences organizational climate through the mediating role of reflective leadership skills. The insights generated are contextually relevant and directly applicable to informing strategies aimed at enhancing teacher collaboration, motivation, and overall school performance across the Davao Occidental Division.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The respondents of this study consisted of 314 teachers employed in the Department of Education during the School Year 2025–2026. This number was obtained from a total population of 469 teachers, with the sample size determined using the Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error to ensure adequate representation of the target population. Considering the scope of the study, proportionate stratified random sampling was utilized. According to sampling principles, this technique allows researchers to obtain representative samples from different subgroups within a population by ensuring proportional distribution across identified strata (Pershina & Dolgih, 2025). In this study, teachers were categorized according to their respective schools, and respondents were randomly selected in proportion to the size of each group to ensure balanced representation. Teachers handling learners with disabilities who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate, and those who provided consent were included as respondents in the study..

Data Gathering Technique

In this study, a survey was utilized as the data-gathering technique. A survey is a research method wherein data are collected from participants through a structured set of questions, typically in the form of questionnaires or interviews. It may be administered to a sample or to the entire population, and the collected data are analyzed statistically to identify trends, relationships, and differences among variables within the group (Goodfellow, 2023).

There were three adapted and modified questionnaires employed in this study, namely: the Servant Leadership Skills scale developed by Bambale (2013), consisting of 26 items with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.985; the Reflective Leadership Skills scale by Namgyal (2022), consisting of 20 items with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.987; and the Organizational Climate scale by Zahra and Sajjad (2025), consisting of 24 items with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.987.

Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis techniques employed included descriptive, correlation, and mediation analyses. Descriptive analysis facilitates the organization and summarization of large amounts of data, making it easier for researchers to understand patterns in real-world contexts while improving efficiency across various fields of

study (Costa, 2024). Under this analysis, the mean and standard deviation were utilized as statistical measures. Moreover, correlation analysis examines the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous variables (Rizk, 2023). In this study, the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient was employed as the statistical tool.

Lastly, mediation analysis decomposes the overall effect of a variable into two components: the indirect effect, which occurs through one or more intervening variables known as mediators, and the direct effect, which represents the portion of the outcome not explained by these mediators (Celli, 2022). The beta coefficients were utilized to estimate the direct, indirect, and total effects of the determinant variables.

Furthermore, the matrix presented below illustrates the scale, descriptive levels, and corresponding interpretations for each variable included in the study. It is utilized to describe the levels of servant leadership skills, reflective leadership skills, and school organizational climate.

Scale	Level	Servant Leadership Skills	Reflective Leadership Skills	Organizational Climate
1.00 – 1.74	Very low	Very Poor	Very Poor	Very Negative
1.75 – 2.49	Low	Poor	Poor	Negative
2.50 – 3.24	High	Good	Good	Positive
3.25 – 4.00	Very high	Excellent	Excellent	Very positive

In this study, the interpretation of the r-values was based on a standard correlation scale, with significance tested at the 0.05 level of confidence. The following scheme was used to describe the strength of the relationships among the variables.

Computed r

Descriptive Interpretation

+/- 1.00	Perfect Correlation
Between +/- 0.75 – +/- 0.99	High Correlation
Between +/- 0.51 – +/- 0.74	Moderately High Correlation
Between +/- 0.31 – +/- 0.50	Moderately Low Correlation
Between +/- 0.01 – +/- 0.30	Low Correlation
0.00	No Correlation

This study applied a standard descriptive framework for interpreting Pearson r-values, primarily based on Guilford (1956), and adopted the guidelines of Cohen (1988) and Hair et al. (2019) to evaluate the magnitude of the beta (β) coefficients.

β Value Range	Strength of Relationship
$\pm 0.00 - \pm 0.09$	Very Weak
$\pm 0.10 - \pm 0.29$	Weak
$\pm 0.30 - \pm 0.49$	Moderate
$\pm 0.50 - \pm 0.69$	Strong
± 0.70 and above	Very Strong

The standard measure for the interpretation of the strength of the mediation is as follows:

Proportion Mediated	Interpretation
<0.20	Weak Mediation
0.20 – 0.50	Moderate Mediation
>0.50	Strong Mediation

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to established ethical guidelines in research to protect the rights and well-being of all participants. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained, ensuring that participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. In addition, strict measures were implemented to uphold the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents' identities, and all data were used solely for research purposes. The consensus across research and practice affirms that informed consent is the primary mechanism for upholding individuals' autonomy and self-determination (Sandu, 2021). Furthermore, the study underwent review and approval by the Ethics Board of Holy Cross of Davao College and the Society of Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE), ensuring compliance with both institutional and ethical research standards.

RESULTS

Included in this chapter are the results of the descriptive, correlation, and mediation analyses. Also, the summary of findings is presented.

Descriptive Results

Shown in Table 1 are the descriptive statistical results of the study. Contained in the table are the variables involved, namely: servant leadership skills, reflective leadership skills, organizational climate, and their respective indicators. It contains the number samples, standard deviation, mean, and corresponding descriptive level.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (N=314)

Variables	N	Standard Deviation	Mean	Descriptive Level
Servant Leadership Skills	314	.39	3.63	Very High
Emotional Healing	314	.48	3.58	Very High
Creating Value for The Community	314	.40	3.66	Very High
Conceptual Skills	314	.42	3.64	Very High
Empowering	314	.43	3.64	Very High
Putting Subordinate First	314	.45	3.62	Very High
Behaving Ethically	314	.44	3.62	Very High
Helping Subordinate Grows and Succeed	314	.45	3.62	Very High
Reflective Leadership Skills	314	.40	3.66	Very High
Self-awareness Skill	314	.42	3.65	Very High
Careful Observation Skills of the Principal	314	.44	3.64	Very High
Flexible Responses Skill of the Principal	314	.40	3.69	Very High
Organizational Climate	314	.35	3.68	Very High
Teacher - Principal Relationship	314	.41	3.6	Very High
Teachers' Collaboration and Support	314	.400	3.68	Very High
Teacher Morale & School Climate	314	.370	3.72	Very High
Principal's Leadership Style	314	.395	3.70	Very High
Student Influence School Activities	314	.405	3.65	Very High

Specifically, servant leadership skills variable obtained an overall mean of 3.63, described as very high. This indicates that the servant leadership skills of school leaders are excellent. All indicators also yielded very high ratings. The standard deviation of 0.39 indicates a high level of consistency among respondents. Moreover, reflective leadership skills variable obtained an overall mean of 3.66, which is described as very high. This implies that the reflective leadership skills of school leaders are excellent. All indicators likewise yielded very high ratings. Moreover, the low standard deviation of 0.40 implies that the respondent perceptions are highly

consistent. Lastly, the organizational climate variable obtained an overall mean of 3.68, described as very high, suggesting that the organizational climate of schools is very positive. All indicators received very high ratings. The standard deviation of 0.35 further indicates that the responses of the respondents are highly consistent.

All three variables, servant leadership skills, reflective leadership skills, and organizational climate, were rated very highly, indicating strong performance across all areas. Among them, organizational climate was rated slightly higher than both leadership dimensions, while all measures showed consistently similar perceptions from respondents.

Correlation Results

Table 2 is a correlation table. It presents the determinant and criterion variables. It shows the r-value, p-value, decision on null hypothesis, and the corresponding interpretation.

Table 2: Correlation Table (N=314)

Variables	Organizational Climate			
	r-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Interpretation
Servant Leadership Skills	.873	.000	Reject H_0	High, Significant Correlation
Reflective Leadership Skills	.893	.000	Reject H_0	High, Significant Correlation

Level of Significance: 0.05 , Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

The relationship between servant leadership skills and organizational climate obtained a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the correlation is statistically significant. The r value of 0.873 further indicates a very strong positive correlation, suggesting a substantial association between servant leadership skills and organizational climate. Similarly, the relationship between reflective leadership skills and organizational climate produced a p-value of 0.000, which is also below the 0.05 level of significance; thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result likewise confirms a statistically significant relationship. The r value of 0.893 indicates a very strong positive correlation, indicating a robust association between reflective leadership skills and organizational climate.

These findings suggest that both servant leadership skills and reflective leadership skills are positively linked to and may contribute to a more favorable organizational climate. The strength of these correlations indicates that these leadership practices could serve as critical determinants of organizational climate enhancement.

Mediation Results

Table 3 is a mediation table. It contains the path/effect, estimate Beta, standard error, Z value, p value, decision on null hypothesis and corresponding interpretation.

Table 4. Mediation Table (N = 314)

Label	Path / Effect	Estimate (B)	SE	Z-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Interpretation
A	Servant Leadership Skills → Reflective Leadership Skills	.918	.025	36.859	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
B	Reflective Leadership Skills → Organizational Climate	.494	.048	10.237	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
c'	Servant Leadership Skills	.325	.049	6.617	.000	Reject H_0	Significant

	→ Organizational Climate (Direct Effect)						
$a \times b$	Indirect Effect (Mediation)	.453	.046	9.899	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
$c + (a \times b)$	Servant Leadership Skills → Organizational Climate (Total Effect)	.778	.067	11.604	.000	Reject H_0	Significant

Level of Significance: 0.05

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Proportion Mediated: indirect effect/ total effect = .582

The table clearly indicates that the direct effect of servant leadership skills on organizational climate, while controlling for reflective leadership skills, yielded an estimated β (beta coefficient) of 0.325. The corresponding p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding suggests that the direct effect of servant leadership skills, even when reflective leadership is controlled, is statistically significant. Moreover, the indirect effect of servant leadership skills on organizational climate through reflective leadership skill yielded an estimated β of 0.453, with a p-value of 0.000, which is also below the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result indicates that the indirect effect of servant leadership skills on the dependent variable through the mediating variable is statistically significant. Furthermore, the total effect of servant leadership skills on organizational climate resulted in an estimated β of 0.778, with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, which is also below the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the total effect of servant leadership on the dependent variable is statistically significant. Lastly, the table shows that the mediated proportion is 0.582, which suggests a substantial mediation effect.

The results demonstrate that the independent variable has both a significant direct effect and a significant indirect effect on the dependent variable through the mediating variable, resulting in a significant total effect. Based on these findings, the mediation is interpreted as partial mediation, because both the direct and indirect pathways are significant, indicating that the mediating variable only partially accounts for the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the statistical results, it was specifically found that:

1. Servant leadership and reflective leadership significantly correlate with organizational climate.
2. The direct effect of servant leadership on organizational climate controlling for reflective leadership, is significant.
3. The indirect effect of servant leadership on organizational climate through reflective leadership is significant.
4. The total effect of servant leadership on organizational climate is significant.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussed in this chapter are the findings of the study. Also, the conclusion and recommendations are presented.

Servant Leadership Skills and Organizational Climate Correlation

The finding that servant leadership skills have a significant positive correlation with organizational climate aligns with and reinforces previous studies asserting that leadership behaviors play a crucial role in shaping and influencing organizational environments. The finding supports Zhou et al. (2022), who found that servant leadership fosters trust and employee engagement, which are critical determinants of a positive organizational climate. Likewise, the current finding further substantiates Hou et al. (2023), who emphasized that servant leadership strengthens collaboration and enhances overall organizational functioning, thereby supporting the assertion that leaders who prioritize service and support contribute to a more conducive and healthier organizational climate. However, this current finding contrasts with Bwalya (2023), who noted that organizational climate is shaped by multiple leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, democratic, and servant leadership, rather than by any single leadership approach. This suggests that while servant leadership is a significant contributing factor, it may not be the exclusive determinant of a positive organizational climate.

Despite these strong results, it is important to note that the very high correlation coefficient ($r = .873$) warrants careful interpretation. Extremely high correlations may indicate potential issues such as common method bias or overlapping constructs, particularly since the data were gathered using self-report surveys. To mitigate these threats to validity, the study utilized validated instruments with high reliability, applied proportionate stratified random sampling, and followed rigorous statistical procedures.

Reflective Leadership Skills and Organizational Climate Correlation

The finding that reflective leadership skills have a significant positive correlation with organizational climate aligns with prior studies highlighting the importance of reflection in leadership effectiveness. This supports Hayes (2022), who explained that reflective leaders are better able to analyze situations, adapt strategies, and foster positive work environments. Similarly, Igartua and Hayes (2021) emphasized that reflective practices improve communication and organizational outcomes, reinforcing the role of reflective leadership in creating a supportive workplace climate. Conversely, this finding contradicts Alj and Bouayad (2024), who argued that reflective leadership alone may be insufficient in the presence of structural or resource constraints.

Servant Leadership Skills and Organizational Climate as Mediated by Reflective Leadership Skills

The finding of this study, asserting that reflective leadership skills partially mediate the relationship between servant leadership skills and organizational climate, provides important theoretical and empirical insights. This supports Namgyal (2022), who emphasized that reflective practices serve as mechanisms that translate leadership behaviors into improved organizational outcomes. Similarly, Meditamar (2024) highlighted that reflective leadership enhances the effectiveness of servant leadership by enabling leaders to evaluate and adapt their actions in response to organizational needs. The mediation result indicates that servant leadership influences organizational climate both directly and indirectly through reflective leadership. The proportion mediated (0.582) suggests that more than half of the effect of servant leadership on organizational climate operates through reflective processes, underscoring the critical role of reflection in leadership effectiveness. However, this finding contrasts with Alj and Bouayad (2024), who noted that mediation effects may vary depending on contextual and environmental factors.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strongly support the General Systems Theory, which posits that inputs are transformed into outputs through internal processes. In this study, servant leadership serves as the input, reflective leadership as the transformation process, and organizational climate as the output, thereby validating the systemic relationship among the variables.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was concluded that reflective leadership strongly (0.582) and partially mediates the correlation between servant leadership and organizational climate. Thus, the General Systems Theory, which posits that input leads to output through an interacting transformation within the system, was supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, it is recommended that future studies explore additional leadership styles and organizational conditions as factors that may trace the remaining 41.8% unexplained variance in school organizational climate. Mixed-methods, longitudinal, or qualitative research designs may also be used to provide potential variables. Moreover, school leaders and educational authorities may strengthen organizational climate by providing leadership training, reflective practice sessions, coaching, and sufficient resources to support both servant leadership and reflective leadership development among school leaders. These findings imply that integrating servant leadership with reflective practices is essential for sustaining a positive and adaptive organizational climate, as it enables school leaders to make informed, responsive, and context-sensitive decisions that enhance teacher engagement, collaboration, and overall school effectiveness.

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