



## **Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship Between Servant Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour of the Public Sector Employees in Sri Lanka**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to identify the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour among public sector employees in Sri Lanka. Quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing both primary and secondary data collection methods. A structured questionnaire was administered to 108 development officers selected through systematic sampling. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and the Hayes SPSS PROCESS to test the indirect effect of the study variables. The results of the study depict; that the mediating effect of employee engagement has a partial and significant impact on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour. Although there is limited literature on this topic, this study is important given the research context. Hence, the novelty of this study emphasizes the importance of cultivating strong servant leadership behaviour to direct employee engagement as well as organizational citizenship behavioral culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership (SL) is prioritizing the individual's needs rather than organizational goals (Smith et al., 2004). Liden et al. (2015) stated that leaders who are concerned about followers' needs before their own needs act as servant leaders. Therefore, this leadership is differed than other leadership approaches (Liden et al., 2015). Eva et al. (2019) stated that servant leaders can affect followers' behavioral outcome, performance, and attitudinal outcome regarding followers. If employees have the right kind of leadership, it can improve the talent of the workforce by developing employees, sharing status and power, and, as leaders, being concerned about individuals beyond self-interest (Drury, 2004). Tran and Truong (2021) stated that SL is more suitable for the public sector, enhancing OCB more than other leadership styles. Ying et al. (2020) stated that SL is important in influencing employees do extra role as servant leaders prioritize the followers' needs and identify the followers' responsibilities to the society. Employee Engagement (EE) refers to the set of positive attitudes of employees that improve their commitment, contribution, and passion for working for the organisation (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021). According to Kahn (1990), engagement refers to the physical, emotional, and cognitive expressions individuals make during role performance. Among outcomes of SL, attitudinal outcome shows a positive relationship between SL and employee engagement (Coetzer et al., 2017).

Wagner and Harter (2006) stated that engaged employees show more productivity and are loyal to the organization. George and Joseph (2015); Rurkkhum and Bartlett (2012) studied the relationship between EE and OCB in employees who work in travel organizations, and it proved that there is a positive influence of EE on OCB. The public sector is one of the major sectors in Sri Lanka, planning and implementing policies and regulations that affect the country's economic activities. This sector is important to the country and community as it provides public goods and services that benefit people to fulfill their needs and wants. Considering the public sector, they are playing a massive role in the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka by providing public goods, and essential infrastructure, which influences improving the economic development, growth and well-being of people in the country (Central Bank Report, 2021).

According to Yalinga and Samarakoon (2018), the government recruited graduates to utilize human resources effectively to develop activities

of the country as well as to provide solutions to the unemployment of graduates in Sri Lanka. Unemployed graduate recruits are permanent Development Officers (DOs) in government offices. They are mainly recruited to do office and field-related work. Many DOs are making their fullest contribution to government service by providing their knowledge, skills, and abilities to support the government in delivering better service to the nation. However, it is a problem whether all DOs contribute well to their job and whether they are loyal to the job and the organization. As the government spends a significant amount on wages and salaries for government employees, it needs to determine whether it is getting an effective workforce to achieve the sustainable development goals from its existing workforce. DOs are providing substantial support to continue social and other services in Sri Lanka. In most cases, they are doing more than in their job description. As the DOs play a vital role in giving good service in many sections like land section, account section, social services section, establishment section in a Divisional Secretariat Office (DSO), it is necessary to identify the relationship between SL and OCB from DOs who work in DSOs who work under the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs.

According to Nilwala, Gunawardana and Fernando (2017), divisional secretariats provide administrative services to the area by providing the benefits of quality benchmarking. In addition, the work of DOs provides excellent services to the community and helps uplift government services in Sri Lanka. Due to a lack of adequate empirical findings to show the relationship between SL and OCB, it is necessary to find empirical evidence from DOs who work under the Ministry of public administration and home affairs, Sri Lanka. Hence, the main research objective is to identify the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour of development officers in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the following specific objectives were expected to be achieved.

- i. To investigate the impact of SL on OCB among DOs working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.
- ii. To investigate the impact of SL on EE among DOs working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.
- iii. To investigate the impact of EE on OCB of DOs working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

- iv. To investigate the mediating effect of EE on the relationship between SL and OCB among DOs working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Organization Citizenship Behavior is performing an extra role voluntarily by individuals which is beyond their normal job duties (Organ, 1990). According to Organ (1998), OCB is an action done by individuals voluntarily depicted as extra-role behaviors which are not recognized and rewarded formally by the organization. OCB is influenced to many positive outcomes to organization. It influences individual, team performance and effectiveness of the organization (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Either there are many dimensions proposed by many researchers in their studies, or Organ (1988) introduced five dimensions to measure the OCB in organizations. According to this Organ (1988), Altruism, Courtesy, Conscientiousness, Sportsmanship and Civic virtue were selected as dimensions to measure OCB in this study.

Employee Engagement is the level of commitment and enthusiasm of a worker towards their job. According to Kahn (1990), EE is concerned that employees are provided their full dedication to the job, organization and stakeholders. If the employees are completing their work with dedication, vigor and absorption, it can be considered as EE (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Zeeshan et al. (2021) stated that employees show EE when they are satisfied with their work and understand their jobs. Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) stated that EE is the most important criterion for organizational success. According to Thomas and Rowland (2014), EE is considered as organizational success factor with implications for competitive performance. However, some scholars used work engagement measures as proxies for employee engagement. Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) were famously used as a dimension for measuring EE. They are: 1. Vigor (energy, resilience, willingness to invest effort), 2. Dedication (sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, inspiration) and 3. Absorption (being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work) (Hewlin et al., 2017; Byrne et al., 2016; Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Davardoost & Javadi, 2018).

Servant Leadership is combined with two concepts, which are serve and lead. Greenleaf (1977) was the first one to identify the importance of SL.

McClellan (2010) stated that Greenleaf completely converted the thinking pattern of leadership scholars by introducing this leadership style. Servant leadership can be stated as a people-centered leadership style (Choudhary et al., 2013). In SL, it focuses on people's needs rather than organizational needs (Smith, Montagno & Kuzmenko, 2004). SL is different from other leadership styles due to its fulfillment of individual needs first, prior to organizational needs (Van Dierendonck, 2011). By having effective SL in an organization, there is a social exchange between followers and the organizational leaders. Hunter et al. (2013) stated that social exchange theory can be used for SL, as leaders are focused on serving the needs of their subordinates, and similarly, subordinates also focus on serving the needs of their leader in the organization. Giving positive benefits to the followers can lead to positive outcomes for them to develop the organization. Many researchers identify multiple dimensions for measuring SL across different contexts. SL can be conceptualised as a collection of several-dimensional constructs (Liden et al., 2008). According to them, Emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowerment, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically are the seven widely used dimensions identified by Liden et al. (2008).

### **Empirical Findings between SL and OCB**

Demissie, Alemu and Tensay (2024) found that employees perform extra-role behaviours beyond their job descriptions, influenced by leaders' servant leadership behavior. Mathur and Negi (2014) found in their studies that SL has a positive influence on OCB. If the organization has strong and friendly leadership, it influences to employees' feelings to work for the organization by giving their full commitment. If the leader fully supports followers' development, employees also willingly go above and beyond their job descriptions. This impacts increasing OCB among organizational employees. Gnankob, Ansong and Issau (2022) stated that SL has a positive and significant impact on OCB and public service motivation. Harwiki (2016) also found that SL significantly impacts OCB, organizational commitment, organizational culture and employee performance. Hamdan, Al-Zubi, and Barakat (2020) found a positive correlation and a significant impact of SL on OCB among employees in Jordanian Islamic banks operating in Jordan. Accordingly, based on the past literature, the following hypotheses can be positioned;

H<sub>1</sub>: There is an impact of servant leadership on organizational citizenship behaviour of development officers working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

### **Empirical Findings between SL and EE**

According to Carter and Baghurst (2013), SL supports increasing trust and development of employees by empowering employees. When the leader motivates employees to develop and makes employees feel a sense of belonging to the organization and being valued, the employee tends to work more than the basic expectation. As employees are attached to the organization by heart, it influences to increase their performance and motivate to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Blanchard & Hodge, 2003). As SL has a good characteristic, this influences to employee behaviour to work hard. Greenleaf (2008) stated that servant leaders can influence followers' emotions by connecting with followers' needs before their own. This influences an increase in EE, as employees are motivated to perform well in their job duties. According to Carter and Baghurst (2013) also found in their studies that SL is strongly affected by EE. Ling et al. (2017) stated that many researchers focus on quantitative analysis. Considering the relationship between SL and EE, Carter and Baghurst (2013) report a positive impact. This depicts that SL has a positive influence on EE in an organization. As a result, the second hypothesis is derived as follows;

H<sub>2</sub>: There is an impact of servant leadership on employee engagement of development officers working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

### **Empirical Findings between EE and OCB**

According to Sobia et al. (2018), engaged employees are a valuable asset to the organization which influence on organizational growth. When the employee is engaged at work, their OCB is increased as they are motivated to complete their responsibilities and work for the organization more than their job description. EE can be considered as a predictor for OCB (Rich et al., 2010). Previous researchers have found a positive relationship between EE and OCB. According to Saks (2006), EE and OCB are positively related. Rurkkhum and Barlett (2012) also found that EE has a positive impact on every component of OCB. Mohamed Raid et al. (2019) reported a direct and positive relationship between

OCB and EE. Therefore, based on previous studies, the third hypothesis was formulated.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is an impact of employee engagement on organizational citizenship behaviour of development officers working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

### **Mediating Effect of EE on the Relationship between SL and OCB**

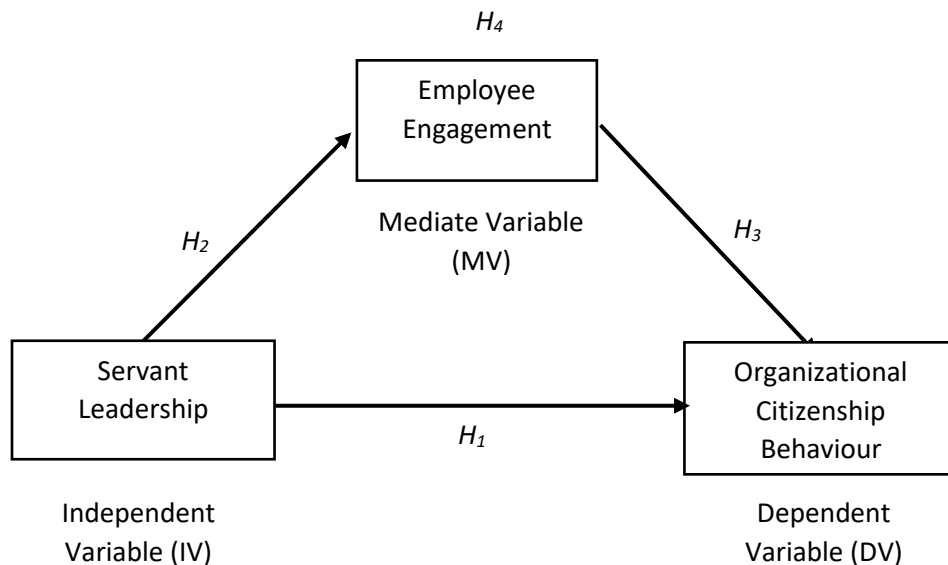
Fong and Snap (2013) stated that, if the employees are empowered to work autonomously, it positively influences organizational outcomes as leaders are motivating their followers to think and work creatively. According to Albrecht and Andreetta (2010), leaders' empowering behavior towards their employees provides a positive organizational outcome. It influences positively on employee engagement (Mendes & Stander, 2011) and organizational citizenship behavior (Sanne, 2010). According to Khan et al. (2021), SL is positively influenced by EE in various mediators like empowerment, leader-centered, job-centered, team-centered, positive organizational climate, team cohesion, employee-centered, challenging task, etc., and some factors like working environment hinder the relationship. With reference to the relationship between EE and OCB, supportive leadership and EE are directly positively related to OCB (Ariani, 2014). Mohamed Raid et al. (2019) found in their study as relationship between EE and OCB has a direct and positive impact. Li et al. (2010) stated that individuals perform well when there is a good social exchange relationship between supervisors and employees within organizations. Further, the theory of social exchange explains human relationships and workplace interactions as transactional, based on cost-benefit analysis (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964). According to this perspective, individuals engage in relationships or exchanges when they perceive the rewards (benefits) to outweigh the costs (effort, risk, or sacrifices).

Generally, in an organizational context, employees form relationships with employers, leaders or colleagues on the basis of reciprocity. When employees perceive support, fairness and recognition, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive work behaviours such as commitment, trust and organizational citizenship behaviour.

Social exchange theory posits that if one party gives something good, the other party should reciprocate (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Accordingly, an increase in EE affects OCB. Chon and Zoltan (2019) explained

that servant leaders prioritized the needs of the followers despite their own needs and provided fair treatment, and employees show organisational citizenship behaviour in return. Considering the impact of SL and OCB, it is logically described that SL affects OCB through EE. Accordingly, people are motivated to give service reciprocally when they receive something favorable. It shows that SL increases EE, and when EE increases, it improves the OCB of employees in organizations. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is positioned as follows:

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Instruments and Measures

The three main variables of the conceptual framework are operationalized in Table 1.

**Table 01:** Operationalization of Main Variables

Constructs	Measurement Indicators	Scale	Source	Questions
Servant Leadership (Independent Variable)	Emotional Healing			
	Creating value for the community			
	Conceptual Skills			
	Empowering	Likert Scale (Scale 1- 5)	Liden et al., (2008)	Q7-Q20
	Helping subordinates to grow and succeed			
	Putting subordinate's first			
Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (Dependent Variable)	Behave ethically			
	Altruism			
	Courtesy	Likert Scale (Scale 1- 5)	Organ (1988)	Q30-Q39
	Conscientiousness			
Employee Engagement (Mediate Variable)	Sportsmanship			
	Civic virtue			
	Vigor	Likert Scale (Scale 1- 5)	Schaufeli et al. (2002)	Q21-Q29
	Dedication			
	Absorption			

## Research Design

The research design of this study is descriptive research. As this research is focused on identifying the mediating impact of EE on the relationship between SL and OCB of DOs in the government sector, it focuses on identifying the impact of variables in a natural setting. This study is a descriptive study based on testing a hypothesis. A self-administered questionnaire (Google form) was used to collect data from respondents based on a five-point Likert scale. The study analyses the seven dimensions of servant leadership (Emotional healing, creating value for community, Conceptual skills, Empowering, helping subordinates to grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, Behave ethically), five dimensions of OCB (Altruism, Sportsmanship, Consciousness, Courtesy, Civic Virtue) and three dimensions of EE (Vigor, Dedication and Absorption). The conceptual framework of Figure 1 explains direct and indirect relationships among the study variables.

## **Research Context and Unit of Analysis**

This research context was selected as the Sri Lankan government sector provides the main services to the country, and development officers are performing huge tasks to provide services to the nation. According to this study, individuals are the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis of this research is Development Officers who work in Divisional Secretariat Offices in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

## **Research Setting**

As this is a quantitative study, it is conducted in a natural environment where no variables are controlled under any conditions. Therefore, this research is non-contrived, as it is conducted in a natural work environment, and it is minimal research, in which variables are not controlled and events are studied as they normally occur.

## **Data Collection**

Primary and secondary data sources were used to collect data. As a collection strategy, a primary data survey approach was used through closed-ended questionnaires (Google form). The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic information, SL as the independent variable, EE as the mediating variable, and OCB as the dependent variable. It was designed including five-point Likert scale to get respondents' opinions, where 5 represents "Strongly Disagree" and indicates "Strongly Agree". Secondary data were gathered using journal articles, books and government reports.

## **Population and Sampling**

The theoretical population of this study comprised all development officers in Sri Lanka's government sector. The study population included all development officers who work in DS offices (only office workers) in Southern Province under the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs. Systematic probability sampling was applied. The researcher selected a sample from the population at regular intervals, representing three major districts: Galle, Matara and Hambantota. A random starting point from the population was selected, and then every 10th employee was selected for the sample. The sample size of this study is 5% of development officers from 51 DS offices in

Southern Province. The Google link was shared with the selected members through e-mail and WhatsApp.

### **Instrument Reliability and Validity**

Reliability concerns the consistency over time in administering the instrument to the same respondents and the consistency across the question items (Sekaran, 1992; Opatha, 2003). As noted by Sekaran and Bougie (2013), several types of reliability tests were used to assess the quality of the measures. Internal consistency was considered, and Cronbach's alpha for the overall value of SL was 0.940 for 14 items. The Cronbach's alpha value of the overall OCB was 0.916 for 10 items. EE was 0.897, including its 9 items. Moreover, a reliability coefficient above 0.7 (extremely reliable) is statistically acceptable for a study (Nunnally, 1978).

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

154 questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms as part of the survey. 108 respondents replied, reporting a 70% response rate. Data were coded, cleaned, and handled for missing values and outliers to ensure the accuracy of the study's conclusions. Frequencies and descriptive analyses were conducted to present the main characteristics of the sample. The data analysis part was basically divided into three. The first part includes the demographic importance, secondly measures the perception of the respondents towards the three main variables, third analyzed the relationships among the variables, i.e., predictor, mediator and outcome relationships through the Pearson product-moment correlation technique and multiple regression analysis. Finally, the fourth hypothesis was checked for the mediating effect of employee EE on the relationship between SL and OCB. Indirect effects were measured using the Hayes SPSS PROCESS macro.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Demographic Information of the Sample**

44.4% of respondents are male, and 55.6% are female in the sample. According to age distribution, 19.4% respondents are under the age category of "21-30 years", 45.4% of respondents are under the age category of "31-40

years”, which is the highest number out of the three age categories, and 35.2% of respondents are under the category of “41-50 years”.

The majority, 72.2% of the sample, is married, and 27.8% are unmarried. While 94.4% of development officers hold degree qualifications, others hold postgraduate qualifications. The level of experience indicates 6.5% of the sample has “less than 1 year” of working experience in the current organization. 60.2% of the sample falls into the “1-5 years” category. The “5-10 years” category accounts for 32.4% of the sample. However, there is only one respondent from the sample who has “More than 10 years”, which indicates 0.9% of the data set, which shows the lowest value.

**Table 02:** Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
SL	108	1.86	5.00	4.0172	.56546	.320
EE	108	1.56	5.00	4.0288	.57008	.325
OCB	108	2.10	5.00	4.2111	.54418	.296
Valid N (list wise)	108					

Note: A Five-point Likert scale was used to measure items of all responses.

Source: Survey data (2023)

Table 02 illustrates respondents' perceptions of SL, EE, and OCB. As illustrated, the mean values of the three main variables are above 4. It implies that the general mean value towards the perception of development officers is favorable. The standard deviation of each variable is below 01. It certifies that the dispersion level of the respondents' ideas is very low.

## Pearson Correlation Analysis

**Table 03:** Correlation Statistics

		OCB	EE	SL
OCB	Pearson Correlation	1	.700**	.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	108	108	108
EE	Pearson Correlation	.700**	1	.845**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	108	108	108
SL	Pearson Correlation	.725**	.845**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	108	108	108

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data (2023)

This table shows that the correlations among the research variables were in the expected direction. SL was positively correlated with OCB ( $r = .725^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and with perception of EE and OCB ( $r = .700^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ).

### Multiple Regression Analysis

There is a statistically evidence to claim that the SL and OCB have a positive relationship. The researcher used regression analysis to describe the degree to which the dependent variable changed as the independent variable varied, with the mediating variable held fixed.

**Table 04:** Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.743 <sup>a</sup>	.553	.544	.36738

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tot\_EE, Tot\_SL

The model summary of regression analysis in Table 4 shows a very strong positive correlation (R value 0.743a) between the independent variables and the dependent variable. This indicates SE and EE, and is highly related to OCB. The R Square value of 0.553 reveals that approximately 55.3% of the variation of OCB can be explained and elaborated by SL and EE. The Adjusted R (.544) is nearly identical to the R Square value, suggesting that the model is fitted. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.36738) indicates that the model's predictions are highly accurate, with a relatively low prediction error. In summary, this model explains a significant portion of the variance in OCB and provides a strong, reliable prediction of how SL and EE influence OCB.

**Table 05:** ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.515	2	8.758	64.888	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	14.171	105	.135		
	Total	31.687	107			

a. Dependent Variable: Tot\_OCB

b. Predictors: (Constant), Tot\_EE, Tot\_SL

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F(2,105) = 64.888, p < .001$ ). Thus, Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement jointly explain a significant portion of the variance in Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

**Table 06: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.231	.264		4.655	.000
	Tot_SL	.450	.118	.468	3.830	.000
	Tot_EE	.291	.117	.305	2.492	.014

a. Dependent Variable: Tot\_OCB

Table 06 of the Coefficients presents the results of the regression analysis examining the impact of SL and EE on OCB. Constant ( $B = 1.231$ ): The constant term (intercept) represents the expected value of OCB when both independent variables (SL and EE) are zero. Since  $P < 0.05$ , the intercept is statistically significant.

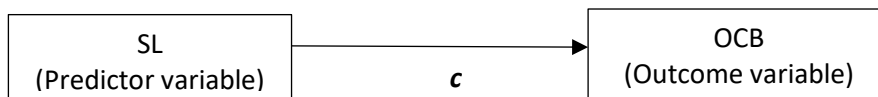
Unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.450, \text{Beta} = 0.468$ ): the unstandardized coefficient for Servant Leadership is 0.450, meaning that for every 1-unit increase in Servant Leadership, OCB is expected to increase by 0.450 units, holding EE constant. The standardized coefficient ( $B=0.468$ ) shows the SL has a strong positive effect on OCB, as it has the highest Beta value among the predictors. The T-value of 3.830 and P-value of 0.000 indicate that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.291, \text{Beta} = 0.305$ ): the unstandardized coefficient for Employee Engagement is 0.291, meaning that for every 1-unit increase in Employee Engagement, OCB is expected to increase by 0.291 units, holding SL constant. The standardized coefficient ( $B=0.305$ ) shows the EE also has a positive influence on OCB, though to a lesser degree than SL. The T-value of 2.492 and P-value of 0.014 confirm that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

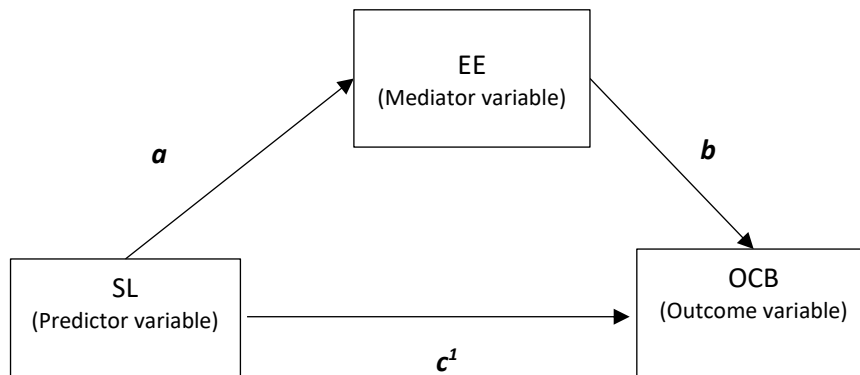
## Mediation Effect

Hayes (2017) Model 04 was used to analyze the mediation effect. To test the hypothesis, it needs to do a mediation analysis to identify the mediating effect

of EE on the relationship between SL and OCB. It shows how the third variable affects the relationship between the predictor variable (SL) and outcome variable (OCB). In the 4<sup>th</sup> model of the Hayes SPSS PROCESS macro, it first considers the direct effect between the independent and dependent variables. Then, the indirect effect between the independent variable (SL) and the dependent variable (OCB) is measured by considering the mediating variable (EE).



**Figure 2:** Direct Causality



**Figure 3:** Indirect Causality

Source: Authors' Analysis (2023)

According to Figure 2, Path  $c$  shows the direct causal effect of the predictor variable (SL) on the outcome variable (OCB). However, path  $c^1$  in Figure 3 depicts the indirect causality among the predictor (SL), mediator (EE), and outcome (OCB) variables. The results of regression align with Figure 3, as indicated in Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 according to Hayes SPSS process macro – model 4.

**Table 07:** Direct Effect of the Model

Outcome Variable: Tot_EE						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8454	.7147	.0936	265.5863	1.0000	106.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.6048	.2122	2.8509	.0052	.1842	1.0254
Tot_SL	.8523	.0523	16.2968	.0000	.7486	.9560

Source: Survey data (2023)

The model summary provides the direct effect of SL and EE. Table 07 depicts an R-value of 0.8454, which is positive and indicates a high degree of correlation. The R-squared value is 0.7147, indicating the proportion of the total variation in the dependent variable (EE) explained by the independent variable. In this case, 71.47% can be explained and is significant at the 0.0000 level ( $P < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, it shows the F-test output, which is highly significant. This depicts that a significant amount of variance can be explained in the model. In addition, Table 7 shows the coefficient value of path 'a' as 0.8523. The t-test value is 16.2968 ( $t > 1.96$ ), and the p-value is 0.0000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the direct effect of SL (independent variable) on EE (dependent variable) is significant at the 0.0000 level. The Lower-Level Confidence Interval (LLCI) is 0.7486, and the Upper-Level Confidence Interval (ULCI) is 0.9560. Since both values are positive, the model's confidence level can be accepted. This analysis described that the first part of the mediation analysis can be accepted (direct effect).

**Table 08:** Indirect Effect of the Model

Outcome Variable: Tot_OCB						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7435	.5528	.1350	64.8883	2.0000	105.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.2306	.2644	4.6549	.0000	.7064	1.7548
Tot_SL	.4504	.1176	3.8299	.0002	.2172	.6835
Tot_EE	.2907	.1166	2.4925	.0142	.0594	.5220

Source: Survey data (2023)

According to Table 08, the R value (0.7435) is positive, indicating a strong positive correlation. The R-squared value is 0.5528, indicating that 55.28% of the variation in OCB is explained by changes in SL and EE. This model shows 55.28% of variation can be seen in OCB when changing SL and OCB, and significant as p value is equal to 0.000 ( $P < 0.05$ ).

And considering the direct effect of the model through mediator (SL and OCB through EE) shows the coefficient value of 0.4504, which is significant at 0.0002 ( $P < 0.05$ ) while both LLCI and ULCI show positive values. The coefficient between EE and OCB is 0.2907, with a p-value of 0.0142 ( $P < 0.05$ ). And the test of a statistically significant t-value is 2.4925 ( $t > 1.96$ ), while the LCL (0.0594) and UCL (0.5220) are positive. The results indicate that the path 'b' is significant in this model.

**Table 09:** Total Effect of the Model

Outcome Variable: Tot_OCB						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7255	.5263	.1416	117.7730	1.0000	106.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.4064	.2610	5.3893	.0000	.8890	1.9238
Tot_SL	.6982	.0643	10.8523	.0000	.5706	.8257

Source: Survey data (2023)

In Table 09, the coefficient for the total effect is 0.6982, with  $p < 0.05$  (0.000), indicating significance. The test of statistical significance is 0.8523 (t-

value), while the lower and upper confidence interval limits (LLCI and ULCI) are 0.5706 and 0.8527, respectively, in the model. The result shows a significant effect of the model. The total, direct and indirect effects of the model can be seen in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Total, Direct and Indirect Effects of the Model

Total effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.6982	.0643	10.8523	.0000	.5706	.8257
Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.4504	.1176	3.8299	.0002	.2172	.6835
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Tot_EE	.2478	.0975	.0621	.4439	

Source: Survey data (2023)

The total effect of the model can be explained by using the following formula.

Total effect = Direct effect + Indirect effect

$$c = c^1 + (a * b)$$

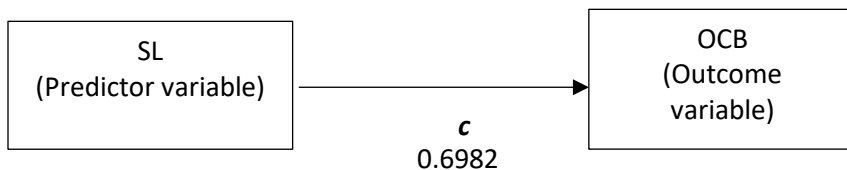
- c = Total effect of SL and OCB = 0.6982
- c<sup>1</sup> = Direct effect SL and OCB in the presence of mediator (EE)= 0.4504
- a \* b = Indirect effect SL on EE and then EE on OCB= 0.8523 \* 0.2907  
(Coefficient Beta values are considered)

Then,

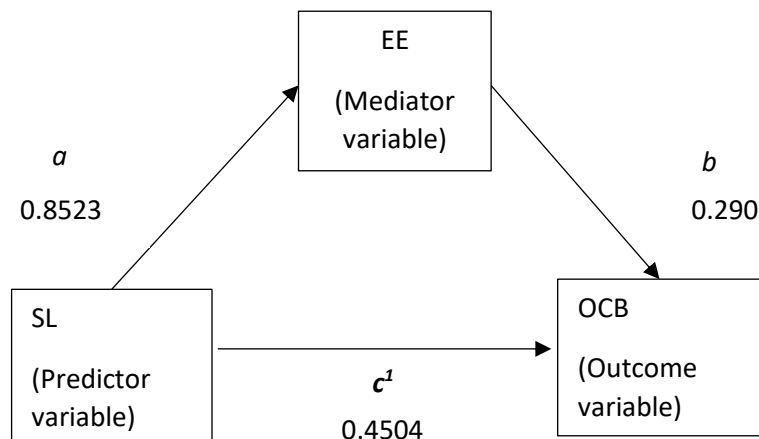
$$c = c^1 + (a * b)$$

$$0.6982 = 0.4504 + (0.8523 * 0.2907)$$

$$0.6982 = 0.4504 + 0.2478$$



**Figure 4:** Total effect of the model  
Source: Authors’ Analysis (2023)



**Figure 5:** Final mediation model of the study

**Source:** Authors' Analysis (2023)

According to the above Table 10, the relationship between SL and OCB shows the Bootstrap of lower and upper level confidence shows 0.0621 and 0.4439, respectively (LLCI and ULCI are not  $\neq 0$ ). This describes that the indirect effect of SL and OCB has a mediation effect of EE, and the effect size of the mediation is 0.2478, which is equal to the total indirect effect of the model.

And considering the direct effect shown in Table 10, the direct effect (0.4504) of the model is also significant ( $p = 0.0002$ ). And the indirect effect (0.2478) is also significant. Therefore, it shows that there is a partial mediation effect of EE on the relationship between SL and OCB. This depicts that SL impact on OCB directly as well as SL impact on OCB through EE.

In addition, the model is complementary as all values of direct and indirect effects (path a, b and  $c^1$ ) show positive values, which means direct and indirect effect has same sign (positive). According to Hair et al. (2021), complementary mediation can be identified when the direct and indirect are significant and show values in the same direction.

## Hypotheses Testing

This study examines the mediation effect of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour. This study has two forms of analysis part which measure the direct relationship between variables (Table 3), which is Pearson Correlation Coefficient is used. To identify the indirect effect, mediating analysis is used (Hayes SPSS process macro).

H1: There is an impact of servant leadership on organizational citizenship behaviour of development officers working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

According to Table 03, it shows that Pearson correlation SL was positively correlated with OCB ( $r = .725^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). The Coefficient for Servant Leadership is 0.468, indicating a positive impact on Organization Citizenship Behaviour. The P-value of 0.000 is less than the significance level of 0.05, meaning that the impact is statistically significant. Hence, H1 is accepted, confirming that Servant Leadership positively influences OCB.

H2: There is an impact of servant leadership on employee engagement of development officers working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

Table 03 shows that SL and EE were positively correlated. ( $r = 0.845^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the Coefficient for Employee Engagement is .305, indicating a positive impact on Organization Citizenship Behaviour. The P-value of 0.014 is less than the significance level of 0.05, meaning that the impact is statistically significant. Hence, H2 is accepted, confirming that Employee Engagement positively and significantly influences OCB. Accordingly, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

H3: There is an impact of employee engagement on organizational citizenship behaviour of development officers working in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

According to Table 03, the Pearson correlation between EE and OCB is  $0.700^{**}$ , significant at  $p = 0.000$ . This shows that there is a positive relationship between these two variables. The coefficient between EE and OCB is 0.2907, with a p-value of 0.0142 ( $P < 0.05$ ). Further, the test of statistically significant t value is 2.4925 ( $t > 1.96$ ). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

H4: There is a significant mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour.

To test the hypothesis 4, the second part of the analysis is used (Hayes SPSS process macro – model 4). The indirect effect of SL and OCB shows that the Bootstrap LLCI and ULCI are not  $\neq$  equal to 0. This describes the relationship between SL and OCB has a mediation effect of EE. The mediation effect size is 0.2478, which equals the model's total indirect effect. In addition, according to Table 10, the direct effect (0.4504) and indirect effect (0.2478) of the model are significant, as their p-values are below 0.05. It illustrates that partial mediation is present in the model. The R-square value for the total effect is 0.5263, indicating that 52.63% of the variation in OCB is explained by changes in SL through EE. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and rejects the null hypothesis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study is to identify the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour of development officers in the government sector in Southern Province, Sri Lanka. For this, the study was empirically investigated and tested four hypotheses.

Past literature depicts that there is a significant and positive relationship between SL and OCB (Mathur & Negi, 2014; Aziz et al., 2018; Gnankob, Ansong & Issau, 2022). No negative relationship has been found in the literature between SL and OCB. Harwika (2016) also found that SL significantly impacts OCB, organizational commitment, organizational culture and employee performance. According to Elche, Ruiz-Palomino and Liuesa-Langreo (2020) stated that SL has an indirect impact on employee OCB through the mediating role of employee empathy at the individual level-and group service climate group level. In addition, Carter and Boghurst (2013) stated that servant leadership positively impacts employee engagement and contributes to employee loyalty. Canvesi and Minelli (2021) found in their study that servant leadership is positively influenced by employee engagement through various mediators, either leader-centered or organization-centered. Moreover, Ariani (2014) stated that there is a positive relationship of supportive leadership and EE with OCB directly. EE has a mediating effect on the relationship between OCB and supportive leadership. This shows that the SL has a positive impact on OCB, or there are different mediating variables. Past literature of the studies shows that the relationship between these two variables has a positive impact due to the social exchange theory. As this study also proved that there is a

positive correlation between SL and OCB, the findings of Mathur and Negi (2014); Aziz et al. (2018), and Gnankob, Ansong and Issau (2022) have the same effect. This shows that these study outcomes are similar to the findings of past literature.

## CONCLUSION

Corresponding to the study findings, it depicts those objectives and hypotheses of this study were achieved and accepted after analyzing the data given by the study sample. The study's analysis shows a positive and significant impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In addition, the EE has a partial but significant impact on the relationship between SL and OCB. This emphasizes that some of the sample population of development officers in the public sector organizations shows that SL has a positive and direct effect on OCB, while some of the sample population shows that SL affects OCB through EE (partial mediation). This describes that SL can affect the increase in the OCB of development officers who work in public sector organizations. In addition, if the organization has good servant leadership, it increases employee engagement of development officers, and this leads to an increase in OCB. This emphasizes that if the organization has good servant leadership, it increases EE and OCB. As this study found there is a partial mediation of EE on the relationship between SL and OCB, it is better for the organization as the OCB of some employees is increasing due to SL through EE. This improves the employee loyalty and commitment and improves organizational outcomes. In some cases, employees' OCB is increasing directly due to SL. However, either the SL affects OCB directly or through EE, it increases the organizational performance.

Similarly, social exchange theory was applied in this study, as the results of the study show that when one party gives something good, the other party should also give something good to another reciprocally (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that the mediating effect of employee engagement has a partial and significant impact on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour among development officers who work in divisional secretariat offices in Southern province, Sri Lanka.

## Further Research Areas

This research focused on identifying the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour. This study considers only one independent variable (SL) that affects OCB. Future researchers can investigate several variables that affect OCB. Researchers can consider moderating variables that affect the relationship between these two variables (SL and OCB). In addition, this research uses a limited sample and focuses on a single category of government employees; future researchers can conduct research with a different sample. And as this research only used one method to collect data (a closed-ended questionnaire), future researchers can collect data from different methods (triangulation methods- interviews, questionnaires consisting of closed and open questions). Moreover, the study only considers one type of government organization in Sri Lanka. Therefore, future researchers can conduct their research by considering different samples in different contexts.

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