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Does Servant Leadership Stimulate Sustainable Psychology in the Workplace? The Mediating Role of Trust in Leader

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Abstract: Servant leadership is a leadership style that is considered ethical, positive, and desirable due to its compatibility in varying situations. Moreover, work engagement is a key factor that can have positive short and long-term positive outcomes. This research focuses on the role of servant leaders and their effects on employees' engagement in an academic setting. Furthermore, the role of trust as a mediator is analyzed to shed light upon this effect after the pandemic of COVID-19. As the academic sector has faced an abrupt shift to online format, this study focuses on the role of leaders in fostering wellbeing for academic staff. This research emphasizes on trust and work engagement as important elements for achieving positive employee outcomes within the context of sustainable psychology (i.e. wellbeing). Through a specified selection criteria, a sample of 138 was collected from various faculty members and analyzed by SmartPLS. Results suggest a strong role being carried by servant leaders regarding engagement of their staff. Similarly, mediating role of trust in leader is statistically significant, implying its vitality for improving work engagement in an academic setting. These results can be beneficial for researchers and practitioners in psychology, leadership, education and other fields.

Keywords: Trust in Leader, servant leadership, work engagement, organizational behavior, sustainable psychology.

Citation: Lastname, F.; Lastname, F.; Lastname, F. Title. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, x. https://doi.org/10.3390/xxxxx

Academic Editor: Firstname Lastname

Received: date
Accepted: date
Published: date

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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1. Introduction

Leadership is a source for organizations to maintain their competitive advantages [1-2], and its importance cannot be neglected as leaders' influence goes beyond their roles [3]. This steers firms towards taking actions and emphasizing on leadership practices, which are imperative for enhancing outcomes of employees [4]. Leaders can impact their followers' behavior by establishing positive environments, in which wellbeing and overall quality of life of individuals are taken into consideration. With the occurrence of COVID-19 global pandemic, many organizations had to shift their work to digital platforms. This has been vivid in the context of academia, which is the focus of this study. Various changes in this sector (e.g. shift from traditional classes to online), similar to other industries with high levels of demand and workload had an explicit impact on employees' wellbeing in this sector. As this research investigates leadership effects on employee outcomes, work engagement during online classes and/or meetings is specifically focused. Work engagement has been linked to a number of employee outcomes such as, commitment, turnover intentions, wellbeing, extra-role behavior, and performance [5,2,6,7,8,9]. In this study, it is conceptualized that by enhancing work environment (i.e. academic setting) through trust-building and focusing on work engagement,

the overarching effect can be observed as wellbeing within the context of sustainable psychology (i.e. long lasting effects).

This research focuses on servant leadership, which can be regarded as a style, in which progress, wellbeing, and values of followers are emphasized [10,11,12]. Servant leaders distinguish themselves from traditional leaders as they focus on serving others first. This establishes a notion of trust for employees as servant leaders tend to followers individually and create personal bonds that go beyond the norms of work [3]. It has been noted that servant leadership is a driver and nexus for positive work outcomes due to its characteristics. An effective leader is able to influence his/her followers not merely through work conditions but also, inspiration, connection, empowerment, trust and other psychological aspects. This has been reported by a number of studies conducted in various methods, which states a consensus among scholars regarding this matter [13,14,2,12].

Servant leadership can be considered as an ethical form of behavior with abilities suitable and adequate for times of crisis and chaos [3]. The current research builds on the recent findings in regards to servant leadership literature and aims to contribute to its understanding. In a recent study conducted by [2], it was noted that the context of leadership and work engagement require further research. In particular, servant leadership was only mentioned in their research, and positive leadership behaviors are recommended to be examined. Leader and follower relationship has outcomes that affect the work-life balance and overall quality of life of individuals [15]. This becomes more significant for employees, and vital during times of crisis. Therefore, this research focuses on servant leadership, who put the interest of their employees before their own, which can yield in positive work outcomes (i.e. work engagement) through emphasizing on building trust [16,3,12,17]. Accordingly, this study aims to contribute to the extant literature and thus, it aims to yield in beneficial results for scholars and organizations alike. Organizational psychology (in the context of sustainable psychology that focuses on long-term positive outcomes), leadership, organizational behavior, and research on leading high performance organizations after COVID-19 are among the subjects addressed by this research.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Servant Leadership and Work Engagement

As a style of leadership that has been developed decades ago (1970s), it has been reported that servant leadership as a theory and concept requires further research and examination [18,12]. Servant leader by essence, aims to benefit and improve others that goes beyond their followers, and reaches the society [10]. This definition has been the main source of theoretical development of servant leadership. It is important to note that *chaos theory* has been reported as the basis for servant leadership. Decentralization, differentiation of tasks, collaboration, flexibility and adaptability of structures and processes, participation, and autonomy are among the key aspects that have been mentioned as linkages between the two concepts [19]. Accordingly, characteristics of servant leaders can be explained through chaos theory [3], which is used as the theoretical foundation of this study regarding effective leaders during crisis and chaotic times (i.e. COVID-19 pandemic). Therefore, the current research focuses on this aspect as during times of crisis, servant leaders can trigger employees' work engagement to maintain a climate of work that benefits overall wellbeing of academic staff while enhancing work environment. Notably, this is regarded as a concept within sustainable psychology in a manner that can positively impact employee outcomes in long-term. In this study, sustainable psychology is contextualized as a domain of organizational psychology that addresses lasting impacts, influences, and results of employees' behavior in education sector.

Characteristics of servant leaders allow them to create personal and meaningful bonds with their followers. These are namely, altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping,

emotional leadership, and organizational stewardship [20]. Accordingly, they have the ability to reshape strategies and systems to enhance progress [3,21]. Furthermore, a servant leader creates an atmosphere of growth for their followers, which is highly relevant and vital for the context of this study as academia as an industry requires development in a constant manner [22]. Provision of tailored assistance in times of need, learning practices, and taking responsibility are among the roles that servant leaders carry out. Flexibility and nurturing capabilities of servant leaders are derived from its characteristics and approach as noted earlier. These elements impact the work environment and employees' emotional and behavioral outcomes on a significant level, which impacts their overall wellbeing and quality of life [23,24,5]. Altruism of servant leaders enables them to maintain their focus on values of their followers as a priority. This leads to a variety of positive outcomes such as, work engagement, trust, commitment, loyalty, extra-role behavior, job satisfaction, performance, service quality, and more [25,4,12,11].

Social Learning Theory [26] states that a learning process among humans is occurred by observation and imitation. In other words, employees take their leader as role-model and thus, positive behavioral patterns can be set by servant leaders to affect organizational culture, and climate [18]. Similarly, *Social Identity Theory* [27], explains the manner in which, employees can adopt the values of their firms through sense of identification encouraged by leader and/or peers. This ensures competitive advantages for the organization, as such employees tend to exhibit higher performance, work engagement and exhibit decreased turnover intentions [28,29,2]. Furthermore, this research entails *Social Information Processing Theory* [30], which includes a social behavior "cue" for employees by interacting with leader's behavior (i.e. servant). This provides a vision for individuals to comprehend the desired organizational behavior. Building on the premise of the aforementioned theories, the current research shapes its direction by examining academic staff regarding the impacts of leadership (i.e. servant) on their behavior within the organization (i.e. work engagement). As servant leaders' characteristics are embedded to trigger engagement, and build trust, it is expected that the positive approach of such leaders can enhance the work outcome of academic staff. Thus, this research assumes servant leaders' systems and means of conduct to be in accord with the noted theories and dimensions.

Work engagement as a consensus is categorized into three distinct elements that are namely, vigor that refers to high energy alongside resilience in mentality; dedication, which is explained as inspiration, pride, enthusiasm and feeling of uniqueness; and absorption that is defined by willingness and happiness in conducting ones' work [31,32,33]. In this sense, work engagement consists of physical, cognitive, and emotional components that translate into, being physically involved, vigil cognitively, and emotionally engaged during working hours. This is crucial for academic staff (i.e. teachers) as their work engagement significantly affects the overall students' outcome. Factors such as, stress, anxiety, and loneliness can greatly impact teachers' work engagement, especially during COVID-19 pandemic and online classes [34]. This research focuses on the academic staff and their work engagement under the leadership of a servant leader as it is imperative that academic staff are engaged with their work as it influences the environment, in which students are learning. Thus, the importance of tending to academic staff regarding their needs, and wellbeing is vivid in the context of academia as it encompasses future generations and societal outcomes [34]. Building on *Self-Determination Theory* [35], servant leaders are able to encourage work engagement as they go beyond work-centered matters and address competence, connection, and autonomy in a genuine manner. Similarly, *Social Exchange Theory* evokes reciprocation that is caused by positive and influential behaviors of servant leaders. This can further provide an atmosphere that encourages work engagement by interaction, communication, bonding and concern for individuals' wellbeing [36,7,6,37]. Within the context of organizational behavior, sustainable psychology is focused in this research that encompasses work engagement as a positive outcome that has long-term effects in the organization.

Servant leaders can obtain positive organizational outcomes that goes beyond mere functionality and/or performance and affect wellbeing of employees, particularly work engagement [12,15]. Work engagement has been reported as direct and significant outcome of servant leadership, as a relational-oriented leadership among positive leader behaviors [2]. In this sense, work engagement is comprised of three aspects that are namely, vigor, dedication, and absorption. These components describe behavioral, emotional and cognitive dimensions of work engagement that can be nurtured and fulfilled by leaders through going beyond solely work-related matters, and build trust-centered relationships with their followers [7,32,38]. Considering the characteristics of servant leaders, this research argues that specifically for working conditions during COVID-19 for academic staff, servant leader can positively impact work engagement, by focusing on sustainable psychology for individuals via emphasizing on enhancing wellbeing inherently. Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 1. *Servant leadership has a direct effect on work engagement of academic staff during online education in the time of pandemic.*

2.2 Mediating Role of Trust

Following what was noted above, it is also important to highlight the fact that servant leaders are able to build trust as a result of their characteristics and approach within the organization. Employees' skills, knowledge and inputs are acknowledged and sought after by servant leaders, which creates an environment, where trust can be fostered [3] As servant leaders follow ethical means of conduct and tend to personal lives of their followers, they can initiate a mutual trust [16]. This can further lead to work engagement being positively influenced, which is vital for wellbeing of academic staff as their work-life balance has severely been affected by the pandemic and subsequent work conditions. According to recent findings in the extant literature of leadership and work engagement, trust is an influential element that links a leader to their followers, hence, yielding in desirable personal and professional outcomes for employees [2,7,34,39]. A servant leader plays a mentor role to positively impact personal aspect of individuals' lives.

In addition to what was mentioned above, a servant leader is able to establish learning process for employees. This can include organizational, group, or personal development practices. This is due to the fact that servant leadership is employee-centered. Servant leaders establish friendship, collaboration, shared value, accountability, learning, integrity, and altruism, which nurture trust as a psychological factor [3]. As a positive form of leadership (e.g. transformational, ethical, and authentic), trust is emphasized as a core concept for an effective leader. Servant leaders emphasize on trust through their approach and strategies in relation with their followers. This in turn leads to an environment of trust, in which employees can exhibit and engage in positive behaviors and be motivated to show more engagement with their work [2,40,41,42]. Consequently, role modeling, encouraging self-determination, and positive social interactions can yield in work engagement as noted in previous section and embedded in the theories that are used for current arguments [43,44,45].

As trust is a complex matter by nature, it incorporates a mixture of perceptions towards the leader as well as the organization [46], decreasing negative outcomes such as, turnover intentions. Embedded within the Social Exchange Theory [47], servant leaders possess the tools to create trust in a "high quality". The essence of servant leadership addresses provision of service to followers, which is a pillar for establishing trust [48,12]. While performance can be increased through trust, other elements that can be beneficial for both employees' wellbeing and organizations' objectives are also influenced. Indi-

viduals can show more work engagement as the element of trust is established. As a consequence, this can positively impact their wellbeing and work-life balance [5,2,49,50]. This research emphasizes on importance of wellbeing-oriented initiatives that servant leaders can deploy via Human Resource Management (HRM) departments [51]. By increasing trust among the leaders, staff, and the organization, psychological aspects can be positively affected (e.g. Based on what was mentioned, this research assumes a mediating effect posed on servant leadership-work engagement linkage by element of trust in leader. Hence, the following hypothesis has emerged:

Hypothesis 2. *Trust in leaders can mediate the relationship between servant leader and his/her academic staffs' engagement during COVID-19 online education.*

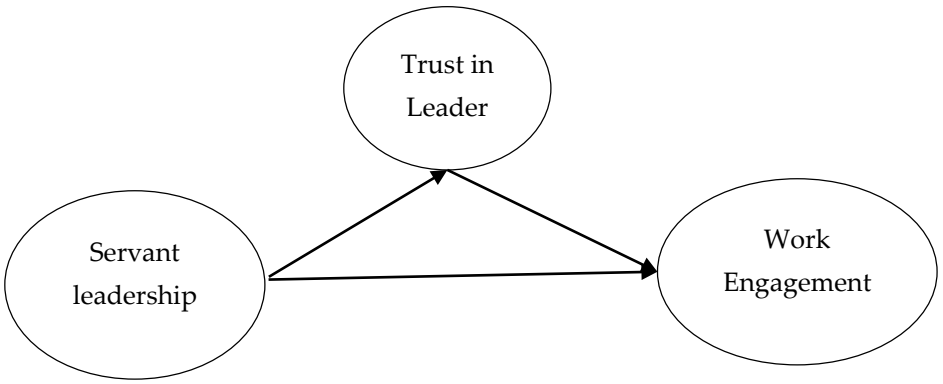


Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Criteria and Approach

The current research undertakes a quantitative approach, in which a questionnaire survey is designed from valid and reliable measurements in the extant literature. To address the hypotheses of this study and obtain its aims, several university managers (located in Turkey) and faculty deans were contacted. This was to understand whether servant leadership was present in their organization and conducted ethically, and in accord with its theoretical framework. In this sense, conversations with managers and online meetings with a select few staff implied whether the school/faculty qualified for the specifics of this research. From six different universities, three have not been qualified, one school was qualified, which as pilot test was conducted, it did not qualify for final analysis. The remaining two universities used in data collection procedure have been qualified for having servant leadership in their organizations. To ensure appropriateness of representatives of the academic staff population, only teachers, tutors, researchers, and professors were addressed. Upon completion of this stage, relevant authorities were informed regarding data collection and necessary permissions were granted. Sensitive information of organizations, and participants (through emails and other negotiations) have been strictly changed and codified for data confidentiality. These considerations also address common method bias and are implemented to minimize it [52].

3.2 Sampling Procedure

The data for the current research was gathered through online surveys shared with the academic employees of two universities approved by the research criteria. Notably, sev-

eral faculties were selected as the result of abovementioned conversations. Respondents were asked about their daily routines, which is *proximal separation* recommended by Jordan and Troth (2020). The data was collected after the pandemic was controlled, and lockdowns and other strict restrictions were lifted in Turkey. In addition, loneliness, stress and anxiety have been mentioned in these conversations to account for their effect and inform participants of purpose of this research to understand how their wellbeing was affected by leaders, trust, and work engagement and not merely/necessarily performance [34]. Pilot study showed understandability, validity and appropriateness of items. Following [53], G*power software is used for sample size calculation with statistical power of 80% and α 0.05 that shows a sample size between 113 and 214 is sufficient for satisfactory statistical analysis [54]. Thus, total of 170 questionnaires were distributed among academic staff (teachers, and administrative staff), which with 143 responses remains an acceptable response rate (85%). With two incomplete and three loaded responses (one answer for all items), 138 surveys were selected for the final analyses. Respondents' profile showed 58% male and 42% female, where majority of participants had over 3 years of work experience (88). In addition, participants' age range varied from 30 as the minimum and 59 maximum. Majority of respondents were between 30 to 40 years old (117). Furthermore, 75 participants reported as married, while 63 were single. Each participant worked between 40-50 hours a week. This was dependent on the amount of students they were responsible for, OR during exam/registration period.

3.3 Measurements

To measure servant leadership, a short version of Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) was used as a commonly used scale among scholars and is developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006)[20]. Items have been selected based on their relevance to theoretical framework of this research; a sample item is *"manager learns from different views of others"* In addition, Organizational Trust Inventory was used to derive the questions addressing trust in leader [55]. A sample item is *"supervisor tries to gain the trust of all members"*. For measuring work engagement of employees, this research follows the work of Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova, (2006) and deploys a short version of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale), which is a commonly used scale for analyzing work engagement of employees. All three dimensions of work engagement, vigor (behavioral), dedication (emotional), and absorption (cognitive) [32], with a sample item of *"I am enthusiastic about my work"* are included in this study, which is illustrated in Figure 1 as the proposed research model. All measurements have been designed in a 5-item Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree. Servant leadership and work engagement dimensions are weighted based on repeated indicator approach to exhibit reflective-formative latent variable [56]. This is presented in figure 2. The survey consisted of four sections that are namely, demographics, servant leadership questions, work engagement items, and trust in leader indicators.

4. Results

Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is used to analyze the collected data. The measurement model has met the satisfactory thresholds with regards to outer loadings (more than 0.710) [57]; internal consistency values of Cronbach's alpha and Rho A as well as composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity (CV) show acceptable levels [58,59] (above 0.7); Average Variance Extracted (AVE) calculated values are all within the satisfactory level, further stating convergent validity [54]; and hetero-trait-monotrait (HTMT) presents discriminant validity that is below the threshold of 0.85 [60]. Model assessment analyses have been shown in table 1, while HTMT is reported in table 2.

Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Dimensions	Indicator	Outer Loadings	α	Rho A	CR	AVE	VIF	Weights	t-stat.	CV
Servant Leadership	Altruistic Calling	AC1	0.735	0.807	0.823	0.805	0.661	1.957	0.389	2.541**	0.731
		AC2	0.849						0.411	2.351**	
	Wisdom	WD3	0.867	0.784	0.801	0.782	0.742	1.784	0.393	2.119*	0.728
		WD4	0.821						0.387	4.123**	
	Persuasive Mapping	PM5	0.845	0.731	0.739	0.741	0.721	2.326	0.502	3.458**	0.736
		PM6	0.779						0.433	2.487*	
	Emotional Leadership	EL7	0.915	0.724	0.728	0.738	0.719	2.392	0.368	2.36**	0.740
		EL8	0.884						0.397	2.135*	
	Organizational Stewardship	OS9	0.889	0.734	0.741	0.740	0.720	1.884	0.402	3.245*	0.752
		OS10	0.875						0.411	3.0121*	
Trust in Leader	–	TIL1	0.814	0.884	0.892	0.884	0.749	-			
		TIL2	0.851								
		TIL3	0.818								
		TIL4	0.775								
		TIL5	0.797								
Work Engagement	Absorption (ABP)	WE1	0.854	0.896	0.901	0.895	0.596	1.845	0.405	2.231*	0.762
		WE2	0.884						0.395	2.315**	
		WE3	0.894						0.384	2.187*	
	Vigor (VG)	WE4	0.899	0.832	0.844	0.833	0.703	2.021	0.378	3.154**	0.781
		WE5	0.887						0.408	3.160**	
		WE6	0.739						0.413	3.268**	
	Dedication (DD)	WE7	0.842	0.761	0.763	0.761	0.667	2.124	0.452	4.120**	0.779
		WE8	0.808						0.488	3.651**	
		WE9	0.780						0.493	2.126*	

ues are all below the threshold of 3 [57], which state that there is no issue of multicollinearity. The significance of weights and their relevance is shown in table 1 and exhibit acceptable thresholds [61,62].

Table 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) values

	SL	AC	WD	PM	EL	OS	TIL	ABP	VG
SL									
AC	0.734								
WD	0.463	0.517							
PM	0.731	0.608	0.782						
EL	0.595	0.732	0.641	0.761					
OS	0.703	0.458	0.645	0.755	0.834				
TIL	0.716	0.723	0.748	0.776	0.780	0.820			
ABP	0.645	0.635	0.702	0.689	0.734	0.728	0.764		
VG	0.687	0.641	0.711	0.731	0.714	0.687	0.718	0.773	
DD	0.692	0.482	0.812	0.592	0.541	0.613	0.677	0.716	0.723

Table 3 shows the hypotheses testing analysis that has been conducted on the data. While both hypotheses of the current research have been supported (β = 0.318, t = 4.312) for direct effect (H1) and (β = 0.132, t = 2.778) for indirect effect and control variables (i.e. demographics), path coefficients have shown statistical significance, which are shown in figure 2.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

Effects	Relations	β	t-statistics	f^2	Decision
Direct					
H1	SL → WE	0.318	4.312***	0.129	Supported
Mediation					
H2	SL → TIL → WE	0.132	2.778**	0.037	Supported
Control Variables					
	Marital Status → WE	0.134	2.230*		
	Age → WE	0.126	2.054*		
	Job tenure → WE	0.124	2.214*		
	R^2_{SL} = 0.42 / Q^2_{SL} = 0.21				
	R^2_{WE} = 0.63 / Q^2_{WE} = 0.41				
	SRMR: 0.026; NFI: 0.912				

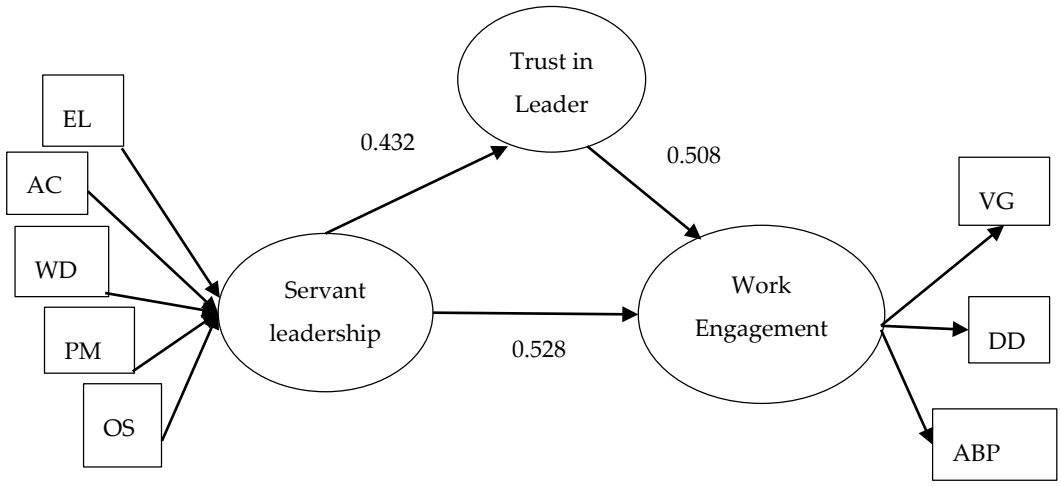


Figure 2. Path Coefficient Analysis of The Model

5. Conclusions and Implications

This research examined the effects of servant leadership on academic staffs' work engagement. The results show a significant relationship that cannot be neglected. In this sense, each dimension of servant leadership (altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, emotional intelligence, and organizational stewardship) was found to be positively linked to dimensions of work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). The current results imply that in times of crisis where staff are forced to change their working habits (from traditional classes to online education), servant leaders can positively influence wellbeing of their followers through adequately using their characteristics. These findings are in consensus with the extant literature and contribute to development of servant leadership through, self-determination theory, social learning and social identity theory [39,12,2,37].

Servant leaders are capable of addressing competence, connection, and autonomy genuinely, which enables positive feelings in employees to be more engaged with their jobs [35]. Similarly, through social learning theory, these leaders are able to act as role-models for their staff, which promotes learning and positive behaviors within the organization as well as considering ethics. Academic staff can imitate their leaders' behavior, further contributing to the overall organizational culture, and aiding the leaders to achieve sustainable psychological outcomes [26, 18]. This is linked to the premises of social identity theory, where staff can be encouraged through sense of identification that is supported by leader and/or peers (social learning) [27, 29, 30]. Hence, the current results provide a better understanding on interconnectedness of these theories, and their adequacy within the context of leadership in academic sector after the global pandemic of COVID-19. Servant leaders are able tap onto sense of identification, autonomy, and competence of their followers which combined with element of trust has led to higher work engagement levels. Current findings show that trust in leader is a mediating factor for the servant leadership-work engagement linkage. Servant leadership has shown to be influential for a number of psychological elements, including trust as a positive outcome. This has been supported by the extant literature [3,11].

This study contributes to leadership and organizational behavior by developing on the current findings in this context. The importance of a 'serving' leader, who focuses on building trust with employees and implement tactics that increase their work engagement cannot be neglected in the academic sector. Servant leaders are able to foster trust and engage in positive interactions and overall approach that provides a workplace for staff, where they are encouraged to exhibit positive organizational behaviors (i.e. work engagement). Notably, this implies that through adequate leadership styles, sustainable psychology of academic staff can be improved as they can trust their leaders in enabling professional and personal development while considering their needs and interests. The ultimate understanding from the current results can be the role of servant leaders in creating a soothing workplace for academic staff in the post-pandemic era and in a high-performing industry (i.e. education). It is essential that decision-makers in universities implement strategies that attract, recruit and/or develop leaders, who can appropriately and positively impact employees' sustainable psychology to achieve long-term goals.

Through path goal theory [63], it is implied that servant leaders guide their followers based on their needs. Servant leaders are constantly providing support to their followers, which further develops trust, and allows staff to engage in positive behaviors. In academic sector, which requires high levels of performance and is demanding, such leaders can play a major role in delivering adequate information and support that is imperative for positively influencing sustainable psychology of their staff. Linked to the occurrence of COVID-19 pandemic, servant leaders can be highly effective in managing emotions and organizational behavior of their staff as they provide personal care, which is vital for employees to better cope with the outcomes of the pandemic (i.e. stress, anxiety, work-life conflict, and loneliness) [34, 66]. The current findings support the aforementioned statement. The academic sector is highly competitive, which makes the organiza-

tions high performing [5,15]. Therefore, the role of servant leaders in creating work-life balance, and enhancing overall wellbeing of academic staff is emphasized. Current findings imply that schools or universities can greatly benefit from deploying servant leadership in their organizations. Accordingly, servant leaders can greatly enhance work conditions as well as creating bonds with their followers. During times of change and uncertainty, servant leaders have shown to be vital for academic staffs' work engagement, with the emphasis on their wellbeing, stress and anxiety, and motivation, while providing assistance, training, and fostering trust as a psychological element [34,3].

Importantly, the current research contributes to sustainable psychology as a broad topic that incorporates wellbeing as the current results show the importance and influence of approaches (i.e. servant leadership) and factors to be considered (i.e. emphasis on trust-building, and increasing work engagement) for positively impacting wellbeing of individuals in an academic setting. HRM departments of universities can deploy initiatives that increase work engagement by reducing stress and anxiety, providing a positive and honest environment, providing support, better connecting with leaders, and enhance wellbeing of academic staff [51,7,64,65], and considering negative factors such as, loneliness [40], work-life balance and autonomy [66], and loneliness during remote working hours [34] with the goal of generating sustainable and positive employee outcomes. Consequently, universities will benefit from this as resilience [41], flexibility, and ethical conduct become the core strategies of their leaders. It is also important to mention the relatively weak mediation effect that was noted in the current results. This can be due to the other factors that are influential in this context but are not included in the current model (e.g. organizational support, leader-member exchange, team-member exchange, personal characteristics, and social or cultural elements). These aspects can be addressed by scholars aiming to develop current understanding on sustainable psychology within leadership and organizational behavior domains.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The current research was limited in a number of elements. Firstly, this study was conducted in a cross-sectional manner. Future studies can conduct longitudinal data collection [67] to address the changes in time regarding academic staff and their organizational behavior under the presence of servant leaders. Furthermore, the proposed model was controlled regarding other factors (i.e. demographics). Differences among academic staff based on their age, gender, marital status and other characteristics can be examined by scholars interested in sustainable psychology of academicians or other high performing sectors (e.g. IT). Similarly, the effect and influence of other factors can be included in future studies to provide a better understanding regarding underlying and relevant effects (e.g. organizational support, work-life balance, coping strategies, emotional contagion, and cultural intelligence). Therefore, future studies can focus on developing the theoretical model proposed in this study by including relevant factors that encompass psychology, behavior and/or leadership in academic sector. Additionally, the current research is limited in terms of theory. In this sense, effects of leaders on work engagement during and/or after COVID-19 can be assessed through other theories such as Job Demands-Resources, and path goal theory. This can help in comprehending the various aspects of academic jobs and impacts on the psychological wellbeing within sustainable psychology domain. The current research used short versions of SLS and Work Engagement scales. Future studies can include more items to increase validity and reliability of measures.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, F.R. and P.F.; methodology, P.F.; software, F.R.; validation, P.F. and F.R.; formal analysis, F.R.; investigation, F.R.; resources, F.R.; data curation, P.F.; writing—original draft preparation, F.R.; writing—review and editing, P.F.; visualization, F.R.; supervision, P.F.; project administration, P.F. All authors have read and agreed to the published

version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from the respondents of the survey.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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