

The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour in Ethiopia: The Mediation of Knowledge Sharing and Job Crafting

Yotham Yohannes

College of Economics and Management, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 21106, Nanjing, China

E-mail: yothamwolde1@gmail.com

Abstract

In Ethiopia, there is a prevalent traditional, hierarchical leadership style that has been observed to limit creativity and hinder progress potentially. In contrast, servant leadership challenges this conventional approach by prioritizing the needs of followers, thereby fostering job crafting and knowledge sharing, leading to innovative advancements. This study delves into the correlation between servant leadership and innovative work behavior in Ethiopia while also exploring the mediation of knowledge sharing and job crafting. A cross-sectional research design was employed, and a total of 200 questionnaires were gathered from Ethiopian employees. The data was analyzed using factor analysis, correlation, and regression. The findings revealed that servant leadership significantly influences innovative work behavior, and the mediators, knowledge sharing, and job crafting, also exhibit a positive and significant relationship with innovative work behavior.

Keywords: Servant leadership, Innovative work behavior, Job crafting, Knowledge sharing, Ethiopia

DOI: 10.7176/EJBM/16-10-04

Publication date: December 30th 2024

1. Introduction

In response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses have adapted by focusing on creating policies that promote the development of innovative products and services. Successful organizations attribute their growth and success to their innovation strategy, with 82% integrating innovation into their business strategies. Firms due to short product life cycles and globalization cannot think of growth without innovation (Lenka & Gupta, 2019, Lu & Marjot, 2008). Ethiopia's economy is among the fastest-growing non-oil economies, thanks to government reforms that have opened the economy to foreign direct investments and expanded commercial agriculture and manufacturing. The economy is expected to have grown by 7.9% in 2023/2024, creating job opportunities and income for the youth and poor. Governments and donors in developing countries have shown increasing interest in promoting enterprise innovations and entrepreneurship to encourage enterprises. Despite unique challenges, developing countries can overcome them by adopting innovative strategies, leveraging their strengths, building partnerships, and amplifying their voices on the global stage.

IWB is vital within organizations, serving as the foundation of innovation. It grants employees the autonomy to complete their assigned tasks. An organization's ability to innovate hinges on its employees' creative behavior, as their innovative actions lay the groundwork for ongoing innovation (Bukhari & Bhutto, 2021). This, in turn, empowers employees to think innovatively and surmount challenges. IWB is the process through which individuals generate, realize, and implement new ideas to address issues(Amabile, 1988), leading to innovative outcomes crucial for businesses to expand their market share, explore new markets, and fulfill customer needs and demands while yielding profitable results(Martins, 2021).

Ethiopia is increasingly recognizing the importance of innovation for driving economic and social development. However, the public sector in Ethiopia often exhibits a traditional, hierarchical leadership style that can restrict creativity and impede progress (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Organizations with autocratic leadership cultures are characterized by strict and authoritarian leadership styles, which entail stringent regulations and overbearing directives, impeding workers' freedom to think and act independently, thus stifling their inventiveness and originality. As a result, these leadership approaches fail to facilitate long-term organizational development and do not achieve set goals (Bitew & Gedifew, 2020). Servant leadership, on the other hand, flips the traditional concept of Traditional leadership by prioritizing the needs of followers(Walker, 2015).



For many individuals, work can become monotonous due to factors such as its simplicity, perceived lack of significance, repetitive nature, limited autonomy, or the feeling of underutilized skills. Nonetheless, work can be engaging and fulfilling, and it doesn't have to be boring. Through the practice of job crafting, employees can derive satisfaction from their work and enhance productivity. In today's knowledge-based economy, where job roles are intricate and constantly evolving, job crafting empowers employees to adapt their roles to be more meaningful, engaging, and ultimately fulfilling (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Servant leadership enhances idea generation and facilitates employees in pursuing IWB through positive emotions and resource enhancement (Khan et al., 2021). We expect job crafting to mediate the effect of servant leadership on innovative work behavior.

In today's highly competitive business environment, knowledge is crucial for organizational success, providing significant opportunities for companies to gain a competitive advantage. It is essential for leaders to actively participate in knowledge sharing initiatives, offering valuable insights to their teams. Extensive research consistently shows that when employees feel strong support from their leaders, it significantly increases their willingness to share knowledge (Cabrera et al., 2006, Carmeli et al., 2013, Hao et al., 2019). Under servant leadership, employees reciprocate by contributing transcendent benefits, like knowledge sharing, to the organization in return for the positive treatment they receive. This shared knowledge not only promotes the development of new insights but also contributes to organizational knowledge, ultimately leading to increased innovation and superior performance. Furthermore, this study suggests that an employee's knowledge sharing activities can effectively moderate the impact of servant leadership on cultivating innovative work behavior.

This study complements and contributes to the existing research in several ways. First, this study is one of the first studies to examine the important link between servant leadership and innovative work behavior through job crafting and knowledge sharing. Second, to date, there is no study on servant leadership in innovative work behavior in Ethiopia.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Servant Leadership

The concepts of "servant" and "leader" may seem contradictory, but they merge to embody a potent management approach known as servant leadership (McCann et al., 2014). While most leaders tend to operate from a position of power, a servant leader embraces a markedly different approach that focuses on empowering employees. This leadership style not only enhances employee morale but also drives company profitability. Servant leaders prioritize the well-being and development of their employees, diverging from traditional leadership styles where the leader's focus is primarily on advancing their status and career through the output of their employees. In situations where employees are struggling with their tasks, a servant leader steps in to ease the pressure. Furthermore, they offer support to individuals in achieving their personal goals by leveraging their talents and intellectual capabilities (Gul et al., 2021).

The concept of servant leadership has its roots in the 18th century with Frederick the Great, the King of Prussia, who referred to himself as the "first servant of the state." However, the modern understanding of servant leadership was developed by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s. Greenleaf was inspired by the short novel "Journey to the East" written by the German author Hermann Hesse in 1957, from which he concluded that "a true leader must be willing, first and foremost, to serve." Since then, scholars like Ehrhart (2004), Linden (2008), and most recently Eva et al. (2019) have further explored servant leadership. Eva et al. (2019) suggest that servant leadership can be categorized into three phases. We are currently in the third phase, which is focused on the development of models. This phase involves the utilization of more sophisticated research designs to understand the antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and boundary conditions of servant leadership. The previous phases were focused on conceptual development and measurement of servant leadership, including testing relationships between servant leadership and various outcomes.

There are various forms and constructs of leadership, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and entrepreneurial leadership, which contribute to the understanding and definition of leadership. One such concept gaining more acceptance is servant leadership (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998), where leaders selflessly dedicate themselves to promoting the development of their followers (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). Notable servant leaders in the corporate world include Alan Mulally, CEO of Ford Motor Co.; Susan Wojcicki, CEO of YouTube; Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever; Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks; and Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, among others. Servant leadership focuses on serving and developing followers, creating a sense of security and safety (Yoshida et al., 2014), which motivates followers to pursue their goals.



It is essential to continue evaluating the impact of different leadership styles to identify the most effective approaches for organizations operating in Ethiopia. Considerable efforts have been made to assess the relationship between different leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, and employee engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment in the context of Ethiopia (Negussie & Demissie, 2013, Alemnnew, 2014, Markos, 2015, Mekdelawit, 2016, Tadele, 2016). Despite being a widely studied leadership philosophy in various parts of the world, servant leadership has not been given much attention in Ethiopia (Abiye, 2023). While a few African nations have conducted research on this topic, there is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to exploring the practice of servant leadership in Ethiopia. Given the country's unique cultural and historical background, it would be interesting to see how servant leadership could be adapted and implemented in the Ethiopian context. Further research in this area could contribute to the development of effective leadership practices in Ethiopia.

2.2 Knowledge sharing

Large companies lose, on average, \$47 million per year in productivity because they don't have efficient systems set up for knowledge sharing (Olmstead, 2021). By enabling employees to share knowledge more effectively empowers them to speak up, bond with others, and make change. Moreover, knowledge is an important organizational resource that can provide sustainable competitive advantage for enterprises in today's highly competitive and ever-changing economic environment. Knowledge sharing isn't just about having access to information; it's about putting that information to work in the most effective way for the organization. While most companies acknowledge the importance of knowledge sharing, only a few actually integrate the process within their organization. Knowledge sharing happens when individuals who hold knowledge are willing to pass on their work experience, techniques, and viewpoints in a tangible manner, with the expectation that others will apply this knowledge in their work (Yu et al., 2013). To foster a culture of knowledge sharing, organizations should consider hiring a knowledge manager, investing in knowledge management software, creating internal guidelines for writing and sharing knowledge, motivating employees to document processes and develop tutorials, and implementing a system to reward employees for their contributions.

In an organization, there are many barriers to knowledge sharing to function. Some companies do not emphasize collaboration and knowledge exchange. Especially in companies where knowledge is seen as power and job security, employees might hoard the information. Knowledge transfer is hindered by withholding the knowledge either by hiding or hoarding it (Bilginoğlu, 2018). This is due to their role as knowledge workers, the level of autonomy they possess, and the extent to which they are connected with their colleagues. By applying knowledge sharing in the organization, it can serve as a solution to such hindrance and enable employees to learn from each other. Some employees may not receive recognition or any benefit for sharing knowledge, so they don't see the need. In addition to that, employees are discouraged from sharing knowledge due to lack of access to information. To overcome such barriers, companies need to encourage values and rewards of knowledge sharing, promote open communication, implement recognition programs, and improve internal communication channels.

2.3 Job crafting

It is estimated that the average worker spends around 19 working days per year on tasks that could be automated (Zelenko, 2024). By embracing automation, employees gain more control over their work, leading to increased focus, engagement, and productivity. Autonomy support allows employees greater freedom to engage in job crafting within their organizations. In today's knowledge economy, where jobs are complex and constantly evolving, the concept of job crafting becomes incredibly valuable as it empowers employees to modify their roles to be more meaningful, engaging, and ultimately satisfying (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Through job crafting, employees can enhance their job experience without necessarily changing their positions.

Job crafting is viewed as a change to meaningful, interesting, and satisfying work, initiated by employees (Demerouti, 2014). It allows employees to redesign their roles and tasks to better align with their goals, skills, and interests. Job crafting is tailored to individual strengths and interests, preventing employees from feeling disconnected from their work. Employees become aware of the need for change in their roles over time, and job crafting offers a way to address this need. If employees enjoy their work, they are likely to excel in it. At an employee level, job crafting is shown to promote employee well-being (Hakanen et al., 2018).



2.4 Innovative work behavior

To keep up with the constantly changing market demands, organizations must embrace innovation, which is driven by a blend of curiosity, creativity, and a commitment to improvement. However, being innovative goes beyond simply being creative; it involves making ideas a reality. The successful implementation of new ideas within an organization is what constitutes innovation (Amabile, 1983). This understanding is further supported by the concept of Innovation Work Behavior (IWB) introduced by Scott and Bruce (1994) which states Innovation Work Behavior (IWB) involves more than just creativity; creativity is an important element of IWB, particularly at the start, to develop fresh and valuable ideas.

Another definition of IWB, provided by de Jong and Den Hartog (2007), describes it as behaviors aimed at initiating valuable new concepts related to processes, products, or procedures within a workplace, team, or organization. Other scholars have also attempted to define IWB, such as Spreitzer (1995), Janssen (2000), and Dorenbosh, VanEngen, and Verhagen (2005). Although the concept of Innovative Work Behavior was introduced by Scott and Bruce in 1994 and 1998, they did not provide a specific definition for IWB. The most commonly cited definition of IWB is the definition of innovation proposed by West and Farr (1990). They define IWB as the deliberate introduction and application of new ideas, processes, products, or procedures within a role, group, or organization, to benefit the individual, the group, the organization, or the wider society. According to West and Farr, an innovation does not need to be entirely new, but it should be new to a specific context. They assert that an innovation without a positive effect is not an innovation at all. Furthermore, for a behavior to be considered IWB, it needs to be implemented. However, De Spiegelaere et al. (2014) argue that an interpretation based solely on outcomes would greatly limit the IWB concept and its behavioral aspect.

2.5 Conceptual model

Based on the literature review analysis, it was observed that servant leadership, knowledge sharing, and job crafting have played a crucial role in shaping employee work behavior. This study aims to investigate the influence of servant leadership on innovative work behavior, and the role of knowledge sharing and job crafting as mediators. The study examines four types of variables: Servant leadership, knowledge sharing, and job crafting are the independent variables, while Employee work behavior is the dependent variable. These relationships are illustrated in the figure below

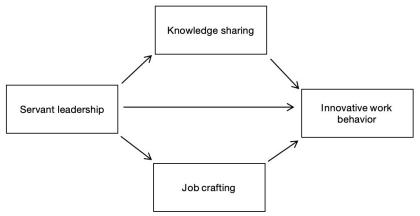


Figure 1. Conceptual model

2.6 Hypothesis Development

2.6.1 Servant leadership and innovative work behavior

Leadership plays an integral role in driving innovation within an organization as leaders often set the tone, create an enabling environment, and inspire employees to think creatively and take calculated risks. Leadership is shown to be a crucial factor in innovative work behavior as leaders shape the working environment, allocate resources, and influence employees' innovative work behaviors by controlling, motivating, and inspiring them (Lee et al., 2020). Effective leaders also provide a clear vision and purpose that motivates teams to strive for excellence. For employees to cultivate innovation, they must demonstrate innovative work behavior and require the support of a leader to achieve this goal. This is where a servant leader's role becomes pivotal. A servant leader prioritizes the collective good over personal ambitions, fostering an environment of unity and cooperation.



This approach serves to inspire teams to collaborate effectively, thereby enhancing collective problem-solving and cultivating innovation.

Traditional leadership often involves a top-down approach where leaders exercise control over their employees. This can limit employee empowerment and hinder innovation. As a result, there is a growing recognition of the need for servant leadership, where leaders prioritize the well-being and development of their employees, nurturing a collaborative and inclusive working environment. Additionally, it is a well-known fact that in the developing world, particularly in Africa, leaders are generally known for an authoritarian and self-oriented leadership style, rather than a service and people-oriented style of leadership (Lobago, 2017). Traditional leaders often prioritize individual achievement over teamwork and cooperation. They can be narrow-minded and inflexible, not allowing their subordinates to deviate from their rules, even if someone has a better idea. Hesitance to adopt new courses of action can lead to stagnation and lack of progress in the organization. On the other hand, servant leadership flips the traditional leadership model upside down. Servant leaders set an example for their followers to emulate, inspire them with enthusiasm and encouragement, and actively encourage them to challenge the status quo and express diverse views (Liden et al., 2008).

A servant leader plays a crucial role in enhancing employees' emotional well-being by empowering them to freely express themselves in the workplace. Moreover, they inspire their teams by providing encouragement, and support, celebrating successes, acknowledging achievements, and motivating team members to achieve their full potential. A primary objective of a servant leader is to facilitate the personal and professional growth of their team members. Servant leadership also entails equipping employees with a comprehensive vision (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence provided, we can formulate the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Servant leadership will positively influence employee innovative work behavior.

2.6.2 Servant leadership and Job crafting

As record numbers of workers quit their jobs, companies are busy trying to figure out how to make working conditions at their organization more attractive and sustainable. One of the causes for employees leaving is a lack of challenge due to stagnant work conditions and limited opportunities for meaningful work. Employees are dissatisfied with these conditions.

Job crafting offers a potential solution to this issue by allowing employees to customize their own roles to increase job satisfaction, resilience, engagement, and overall flourishing at work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Implementing a framework for job crafting, motivating employees to thrive, and achieving organizational success can promote employee autonomy and cultivate a commitment to contribute to the overall growth of the organization. This philosophy is aligned with servant leadership, a style that focuses on the positive development of followers (Greenleaf, 1977).

The overarching servant leadership with an intent to groom the employees and improve society enables the employee to indulge in job crafting behavior through intrinsic motivation, empowerment, and role modeling (Khan et al., 2020). This enables employees to be self determined and do a good job. According to the Self determination theory, people can become self-determined when their needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are fulfilled. As servant leadership ensures the autonomy of employees, they show an inclination to indulge in job crafting behavior (Liden et al., 2014). In consideration of the theoretical rationale and empirical findings, the following hypothesis can be posited.

Hypothesis 2: Servant leadership will positively influence job crafting

2.6.3 Servant leadership and knowledge sharing

The remarkable technological advancements of society have completely disrupted knowledge sharing on a global scale. Organizations are expected to develop, design, and deploy their knowledge to improve performance efficiently and effectively (Ng, 2022). The dynamic mechanism through which knowledge is transmitted from one to another is knowledge sharing (Kuo et al., 2014). Previous research has indicated that employees' perception of leader support can effectively promote knowledge sharing (Cabrera et al., 2006, Carmeli et al., 2013, Hao et al., 2019) It is essential for leaders to actively participate in knowledge-sharing initiatives, offering valuable insights to their teams. Extensive research consistently shows that when employees feel strong support from their leaders, it significantly increases their willingness to share knowledge (Cabrera et al., 2006, Carmeli et al., 2013, Hao et al., 2019). Even though many other types of leadership are suspected of influencing



Knowledge sharing, One type of leadership currently being widely adopted by world leaders is servant leadership (Prasetyono et al., 2024).

In a servant leadership setting, employees reciprocate by providing valuable contributions, such as sharing knowledge, to the organization in return for the positive treatment they receive. Through knowledge sharing, employees can benefit from their leaders' experience, while servant leaders can, in turn, help facilitate the professional growth of their employees. Additionally, employees feel that their opinions are valued. This approach to servant leadership nurtures knowledge growth and supports employees' career progression. Servant leadership is expected to be an effective form of leadership for instilling enthusiasm in subordinates, promoting a culture of collaboration among workers, and encouraging ongoing knowledge sharing (Sheikh et al., 2019). Servant leadership allows others the chance to express themselves and receive undivided attention. Employees in a servant leadership environment are more likely to feel that their voices are heard. Servant leadership involves giving others the opportunity to be heard and providing full attention. Engaged employees who receive attention tend to acquire more knowledge compared to others. As a result, employees are more likely to desire to share their knowledge with other team members (Kadarusman & Bunyamin, 2021). In light of this theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis can be formed.

Hypothesis 3: Servant leadership will positively influence knowledge sharing

2.6.4 The Mediation of Job crafting

Servant leadership emphasizes the well-being and development of employees. This leadership style focuses on serving those being led (Sergiovanni, 2000). When led by a servant leader, employees engage in job crafting behavior as they shape their roles to be more meaningful and motivating (Bavik et al., 2017). Job crafting involves various strategies and activities that employees use to redefine their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Job crafting thrives in a bottom-up management approach, empowering employees to take initiative, think creatively, and have more autonomy at work. Companies like Spotify, GitHub, and Google are increasingly implementing policies that give teams autonomy over their work, promoting a sense of ownership, boosting creativity, and nurturing innovation.

The concept of servant leadership, which utilizes relational power, focuses on building trust with employees (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Trust becomes the driving force for the servant leader to influence employees, encouraging them to consider changing or taking on new work roles. This overarching approach to servant leadership aims to develop and empower employees, ultimately contributing to society. By nurturing intrinsic motivation, and empowerment, and serving as a role model, servant leadership fosters job crafting behavior among employees (Khan et al., 2020). Servant leaders prioritize serving the greater good, which, in turn, inspires employees to engage in job crafting behaviors (Bavik et al., 2017). Research has shown that servant leadership, as a relationship-based style, positively impacts employee job crafting behaviors (Harju et al., 2018, Bruning & Campion, 2018). Job crafting, a self-management practice involving changes made to employees' roles, has been identified as a crucial factor influencing employee creativity (Sun et al., 2020, Wang & Lau, 2021, Afsar et al., 2019). Engaging in crafting activities may strengthen employees' belief in their ability to generate and implement new ideas, as well as carry them out (Battistelli et al., 2019). Based on the above theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis can be formed.

Hypothesis 4: job crafting will mediate the relationship between Servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

2.6.5 The mediation of Knowledge sharing

In today's 21st-century landscape, employees require a deep understanding, context, and insight In today's fiercely competitive landscape, innovation stands as a cornerstone for success. Business leaders are continually seeking fresh avenues for innovation, recognizing that traditional solutions may not suffice in addressing contemporary challenges. In times of significant disruptions, companies must prioritize innovation, as shown during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, possessing deep expertise in specific domains empowers employees to think creatively and yield ground-breaking ideas, equipping them to navigate and surmount evolving business obstacles. Hence, Knowledge plays a vital role in shaping employees' innovative behavior (Cummings, 2003). Knowledge sharing behavior is a dynamic process of learning that enables organizations to engage continuously with suppliers and customers to create innovation (Sheikh et al., 2019). Servant leadership



involves supporting followers in helping others and engaging in knowledge-sharing among subordinates (Sial et al., 2014), thereby significantly influencing workers' attitudes toward knowledge sharing, involving organizational members, and encouraging the undertaking of experiments and risks in their work (Rehman et al., 2021).

Responsible leaders and knowledgeable employees are pivotal assets for businesses (Liden et al., 2015). Unlike other leadership approaches, servant leadership prioritizes serving followers before fulfilling their own needs, operating as servant leaders in various aspects of life, work, home, and community, and developing organizational members into serving leaders (Liden et al., 2015). Servant leaders encourage their followers to help others and engage in knowledge sharing among subordinates (Sheikh et al., 2019). Knowledge sharing cultivates innovative work behavior by creating a workplace environment that allows employees to address complex problems and build on each other's solutions. Accessing the organization's knowledge base enables employees to make innovative leaps, contributing to the organization's overall improvement and success. An organization that promotes knowledge sharing is likely to generate new ideas and enhance its innovative capabilities (Darroch & McNaughton, 2002). This collaborative knowledge not only contributes to the development of fresh insights but also enriches the organization's knowledge, ultimately leading to increased innovation and superior performance. Therefore, this study suggests that knowledge sharing will mediate the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

Hypothesis 5: Knowledge sharing will mediate the relationship between Servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data sample

200 questionnaires were gathered from both public and private sectors in Ethiopia, specifically focusing on the capital city, Addis Ababa, employing a simple random sampling technique. The survey was conducted using Microsoft Forms and distributed through a convenient link via email to ensure participation from various organizations. In order to maintain confidentiality, the employees' names were kept anonymous. Descriptive statistics, presented in Table 1, were employed to illustrate the respondents' profiles, including gender, age group, level of education, years of work experience, and sector. The participants included 110 males and 90 females. The majority of respondents were from the finance/banking sector, followed by the hospitality sector. Notably, 64 respondents belonged to the age group of 31-40.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=200)

	1	1 101110		\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \	1 1 1
				Valid	Cumulative
Variables	Sample components	Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Gender	Female	90	45	45	45
	Male	110	55	55	100
	Total	200	100	100	
Age group	31-40	64	32	32	32
	41-50	42	21	21	53
	51-60	37	18.5	18.5	71.5
	Over 60	6	3	3	74.5
	Under 30	51	25.5	25.5	100
	Total	200	100	100	
Level of	Graduate	99	49.5	49.5	49.5
education	High school diploma	13	6.5	6.5	56
	Post graduate	88	44	44	100



	Total	200	100	100	
Years of	1-3 years	25	12.5	12.5	12.5
work experienc	3-5 years	19	9.5	9.5	22
1	5-10 years	30	15	15	37
	Less than 1 year	10	5	5	42
	More than 10 years	116	58	58	100
	Total	200	100	100	
Sector	NGO	28	14	14	14
	Other	27	13.5	13.5	27.5
	private sector	99	49.5	49.5	77
	pubic sector	46	23	23	100
	Total	200	100	100	
Industry	Agriculture	3	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Education	13	6.5	6.5	8
	Energy/Utilities	9	4.5	4.5	12.5
	Finance/Banking	36	18	18	30.5
	Healthcare/Pharmaceuticals	20	10	10	40.5
	Hospitality/Travel	28	14	14	54.5
	Manufacturing	10	5	5	59.5
	other	63	31.5	31.5	91
	Retail/Consumer Goods	5	2.5	2.5	93.5
	Technology	13	6.5	6.5	100
	Total	200	100	100	

3.2 Measurement

3.2.1 Servant Leadership

The study measured servant leadership using a five-point Likert scale with six items. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree). The questionnaire used in the study was developed by Liden et al. (2015). One of the items on the questionnaire was: "My supervisor puts my best interests ahead of his/her own." The study reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.811.

3.2.2 Innovative work behavior

The study measured Innovative work behavior using a five-point Likert scale with Ten items. The scale ranged from 1 (never) to 5(always). The questionnaire used in the study was developed by (De Jong and Den Hartog 2010). One of the items on the questionnaire was: "Put effort into the development of new things?". The study



reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.893.

3.2.3 Job crafting

The study measured Job crafting using a five-point Likert scale with fifteen items. The scale ranged from 1 (Hardly ever) to 5(Very often). The questionnaire used in the study was developed by (Slemp and Vella-Brodrick 2013). One of the items on the questionnaire was: "Introduce new approaches to improve your work". The study reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.899.

3.2.4 Knowledge sharing

The study measured Knowledge sharing using a five-point Likert scale with fifteen items. The scale ranged from 1 (never) to 5(always). The questionnaire used in the study was developed by (Lee, 2018). One of the items on the questionnaire was: "I request advice from my colleagues based on what they know". The study reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.955.

4. Theoretical Background

4.1 Factor Analysis

To assess sample adequacy and underlying factors, factor analysis was conducted to validate the data. Factor analysis is also used to confirm the data's convergent and discriminant validity of the construct. Before conducting factor analysis, it's important to verify the sufficiency of the sample size. Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy were employed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test assesses how suitable the data is for Factor Analysis by measuring sampling adequacy for each variable and the complete model. This measure quantifies the proportion of shared variance among variables. The data is considered factorable only if the KMO value exceeds .60 (Latif et al., 2016). The test results are detailed in Table 2.

Detail of the Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Approx. Chi-Square

7013.793

7

Sig.
0.000

Table 2. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test

KMO value is .908, indicating that the sample size is sufficient for conducting factor analysis and the data is normally distributed. Bartlett's test sphericity also demonstrates good values. It affirms the suitability of the data, as the positive Chi-Square value with a high significance level(P=.000, df=1176) which indicates that the correlation matrix is appropriate for conducting factor analysis. These outcomes validate the use of factor analysis for the data analysis in this study.

4.2 Correlation

All correlations between the four variables are significant at the 0.01 level, showing that there are meaningful relationships among them. Job crafting (JC) has the strongest correlation with innovative work behavior (IWB) (r = 0.628), followed by knowledge sharing (KS) (r = 0.488). Servant leadership (SL) also plays an important role, though its direct correlation with IWB is lower (r = 0.384), indicating that its influence may be more indirect, through mediators like job crafting and knowledge sharing. The analysis suggests that fostering servant leadership may help cultivate job crafting and knowledge sharing behaviors, which in turn promote innovative



work behavior in the organization.

Table 3. Correlations

		IWB	SL	JC	KS
IWB	Pearson Correlation	1	.384**	.628**	.488**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200
SL	Pearson Correlation	.384**	1	.322**	.235**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.001
	N	200	200	200	200
JC	Pearson Correlation	.628**	.322**	1	.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	200	200	200	200
KS	Pearson Correlation	.488**	.235**	.556**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.000	
	N	200	200	200	200
**. Co	rrelation is significant a	t the 0.01	level (2-tailed).	•	

4.3 Regression analysis

The study employed multiple regression analysis to test its hypotheses and estimate the relationship between the variables. Multiple regression encompasses various techniques to explore the link between one continuous dependent variable and several independent variables or predictors. The findings, presented in Table 3, offer a comprehensive overview of the model specifications and its outcomes. In this case, the aim was to establish the relationship between the dependent variable (IWB) and independent variables (SL, KS, JC).

The results revealed an R-value of 0.674, indicating a strong relationship among the variables. A higher R-value, closer to -1 or +1, suggests a better relationship. Additionally, the R Square value, also known as the coefficient of determination, stood at 0.455, explaining 45% of the variance in IWB. A smaller R-Square value signifies a poor fit of the model to the data. The Adjusted R square, reflecting the impact of independent variables on the model, showed that SL, KS, and JC significantly influenced the dependent variable (IWB), indicating a good model fit.



Table 4. Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model S	ummary								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Stati	stics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.674a	0.455	0.446	0.53111	0.455	54.451	3	196	0.000
Predicto	Predictors: (Constant), KS, SL, JC								

4.4 Analysis of Variance(Anova)

ANOVA is a statistical test used to assess how a quantitative dependent variable changes based on the levels of one or more categorical independent variables. It determines whether there is a difference in means of the groups at each level of the independent variable. Table 4 displays the ANOVA results. The large F-statistic of 54.451 and the small p-value of 0.000 indicate that the model as a whole is statistically significant.

Tabe 5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

M	odel	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.078	3	15.359	54.451	.000b
	Residual	55.288	196	0.282		
	Total	101.366	199			

4.5 Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1: Servant leadership will positively influence employee innovative work behavior

The findings in Table 5 show that The p-value of servant leadership is 0.001 which is less than 0.05, and has a positive B value, this shows that Servant Leadership has a significant and positive impact on Innovative Work Behavior, therefore Hypothesis 1 is accepted.



Table 6. Hypothesis testing (SL and IWB)

Coefficientsa								
Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients						
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.		
1	(Constant)	0.364	0.271		1.346	0.180		
	SL	0.183	0.054	0.191	3.419	0.001		
	JC	0.498	0.070	0.463	7.089	0.000		
	KS	0.203	0.070	0.185	2.913	0.004		

Hypothesis 2: Servant leadership will positively influence job crafting

The findings in Table 6 show that The p-value of servant leadership is 0.000 which is less than 0.05, and has a positive B value, this shows that Servant Leadership has a significant and positive impact on Job crafting, therefore Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Table 7. Coefficients (SL and JC)

Сс	pefficientsa								
		Unstanda Coefficie		Standardized Coefficients					
M	odel	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.			
1	(Constant)	2.689	0.206		13.040	0.000			
	SL	0.287	0.060	0.322	4.779	0.000			
a.	a. Dependent Variable: mean_JC								

Hypothesis 3: Servant leadership will positively influence knowledge sharing

The findings in Table 7 show that The p-value of servant leadership is 0.001 which is less than 0.05, and has a positive B value, this shows that Servant Leadership has a significant and positive impact on Knowledge sharing, therefore Hypothesis 3 is accepted.



Table 8. Coefficients (SL and KS)

Co	Coefficientsa								
		Unstan Coeffic	dardized	Standardized Coefficients					
M	odel	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.			
1	(Constant)	3.298	0.208		15.882	0.000			
	mean_SL	0.206	0.060	0.235	3.402	0.001			
a.	a. Dependent Variable: mean_KS								

Hypothesis 4: job crafting will mediate the relationship between Servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

For hypothesis 4 and 5 mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS model 4 was used, as table 9 indicates that the indirect effect of servant leadership on innovative work behavior through job crafting is statistically significant, with an effect size of 0.1428 and a confidence interval between 0.0632 and 0.2423. The fact that the confidence interval does not include zero indicates a significant mediation effect of job crafting (p < 0.05). This suggests that job crafting plays a significant role in mediating in between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Hypothesis 5: Knowledge sharing will mediate the relationship between Servant leadership and innovative work behavior.

The indirect effect of servant leadership on innovative work behavior through knowledge sharing is also significant, with an effect size of 0.0418 and a confidence interval between 0.0081 and 0.0859. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, the mediation effect of knowledge sharing is statistically significant (p < 0.05), indicating that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Table 9. Indirect Effect(s) of X on Y

Effect Type	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	0.1845	0.0505	0.0921	0.2870
mean_JC	0.1428	0.0459	0.0632	0.2423
mean_KS	0.0418	0.0199	0.0081	0.0859

5. Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and innovative work behavior, alongside the mediating roles of knowledge sharing and job crafting. Conducted within the Ethiopian context, a sample of 200 respondents was gathered for analysis. The results of the regression test revealed that servant leadership significantly impacts innovative work behavior. Hypothesis testing confirmed several critical relationships: servant leadership significantly and positively influences innovative work behavior (Hypothesis 1), job crafting (Hypothesis 2), and knowledge sharing (Hypothesis 3). Mediation analyses further demonstrated that both job crafting (Hypothesis 4) and knowledge sharing (Hypothesis 5) serve as significant mediators between servant leadership and innovative work behavior. Notably, job crafting emerged as the stronger mediator, with a larger indirect effect size, while knowledge sharing, though significant, exhibited a more modest influence.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on servant leadership and its effect on organizational outcomes, particularly employee innovation. It extends existing theories by demonstrating the mediating roles of job crafting and knowledge sharing, illustrating how leadership can indirectly shape employee behavior through



these mechanisms. Given Ethiopia's growing focus on innovation, organizations should prioritize the development of servant leadership programs to cultivate a culture of innovation, collaboration, and proactivity. Allowing employees to engage in job crafting and share knowledge will promote flexibility and autonomy, thereby promoting greater innovation. Moreover, leadership practices that nurture a knowledge-sharing environment can further enhance organizational innovation by rewarding collaboration.

5.2Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, there are some limitations. First, it only considered job crafting and knowledge sharing as mediators. Other potential mediators, such as organizational commitment and psychological empowerment, were not explored, limiting the scope of understanding. Though the sample size of 200 respondents is sufficient, larger samples would provide more robust and generalizable findings. Furthermore, as the study was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the cultural and organizational context may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or countries.

5.3Future Studies

Future research should focus on replicating these findings in larger and more diverse samples, particularly across different cultural and organizational contexts. Expanding the geographical scope to other regions, both within and outside of Ethiopia, would enhance the generalizability of the results. Additionally, future studies could explore other mediators like psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, and work engagement, which may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking servant leadership to innovative work behavior. Longitudinal studies could also be valuable in examining how the effects of servant leadership on innovation evolve over time, providing deeper insights into the sustainability of its impact. Finally, integrating qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, may uncover nuanced insights into how employees perceive servant leadership and its role in nurturing innovation in different organizational settings.

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