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## Academic Quality through Servant Leadership and Learning Satisfaction among Education Students

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### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Despite the growing body of research on leadership styles in educational contexts, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to examining how servant leadership specifically influences academic quality through the mediating role of learning satisfaction in teacher education faculties.

#### Purpose

This study investigates the interplay between servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality among education students in higher education institutions.

#### Design/method/approach

Employing a qualitative library research design, this study systematically reviews and synthesizes peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and policy documents published between 2019 and 2025. The research procedure involves comprehensive literature identification, thematic categorization, and iterative data analysis through reduction, classification, comparison, and synthesis. Source triangulation and cross-referencing of theoretical positions ensure the trustworthiness of findings.

#### Results

The results reveal three principal themes: servant leadership fosters a supportive academic environment that enhances student engagement and motivation; learning satisfaction serves as a critical mediating mechanism linking leadership practices to academic outcomes; and the synergistic interaction between servant leadership and learning satisfaction produces a compounding positive effect on academic quality. This study proposes an integrative conceptual framework demonstrating the interconnected pathways through which servant leadership and learning satisfaction collectively shape academic quality.

#### Contribution/value

The findings contribute to educational management theory by addressing the identified research gap and offering practical implications for faculty leaders seeking to enhance academic quality in teacher education programs.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Academic quality in higher education represents a multifaceted construct that extends well beyond conventional metrics such as grade point averages. It encompasses the holistic development of students' intellectual capacities, professional competencies, ethical reasoning, and social consciousness. In the context of teacher education, the stakes are particularly high because the quality of graduates directly influences the caliber of instruction in primary and secondary schools, thereby creating a cascading effect on national human resource development (Harvey & Green, 1993; Tight, 2019). Contemporary challenges such as rapid technological disruption, evolving pedagogical paradigms, and the lingering aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic have placed unprecedented pressure on higher education institutions to reassess and strengthen their academic quality assurance mechanisms (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Firmansyah et al., 2021). Despite considerable investment in curriculum reform and infrastructural modernization, many teacher education faculties continue to report persistent disparities in student engagement, learning outcomes, and graduate readiness, suggesting that structural changes alone are insufficient to guarantee meaningful improvements in academic quality.

Among the various organizational and managerial factors that influence academic quality, leadership style has emerged as a particularly salient determinant. Servant leadership, originally conceptualized by Greenleaf (1977) and subsequently refined by scholars such as Spears (1998), Liden et al. (2008), and van Dierendonck (2011), is a people-centered approach in which leaders prioritize the growth, wellbeing, and empowerment of those they serve. Unlike transactional or authoritarian models, servant leadership operates through empathy, active listening, community building, and a genuine commitment to the development of followers. In higher education settings, servant leadership has been associated with improved faculty engagement, heightened organizational citizenship behavior, and stronger institutional commitment (Aboramadan et al., 2021; Eva et al., 2019). However, the direct and indirect pathways through which servant leadership shapes student-level academic outcomes remain insufficiently explored, particularly within teacher education contexts in developing countries.

Parallel to the leadership discourse, learning satisfaction has gained increasing recognition as a critical predictor of academic success. Learning satisfaction refers to the affective and evaluative response of students toward the totality of their educational experience, including instructional quality, faculty-student interaction, institutional support, and perceived relevance of course content (Elliott & Shin, 2002; Kuo et al., 2014). Research consistently demonstrates that students who report higher levels of satisfaction exhibit greater intrinsic motivation, stronger academic self-efficacy, and improved retention rates (Alves & Raposo, 2009; Gray & DiLoreto, 2016). Furthermore, in the post-pandemic educational landscape, where hybrid and technology-enhanced pedagogies have become the norm, maintaining and enhancing student satisfaction has become even more complex and consequential. The relationship between learning satisfaction and academic quality is thus not merely correlational but deeply intertwined with the institutional processes, interpersonal dynamics, and organizational climate that define the learning environment.

The existing body of literature offers valuable but fragmented insights into the relationships among servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality. Several systematic reviews have confirmed the positive impact of servant leadership on organizational outcomes in educational settings (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023; Dul et al., 2024; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Studies in the broader management field have consistently linked servant leadership to enhanced job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and performance (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020). In the educational domain specifically, Abbas et al. (2022) found that servant leadership positively influenced faculty commitment in Pakistani higher education institutions, while Ghasemy et al. (2022) demonstrated that servant leadership promoted community engagement among academics. Similarly, research on learning satisfaction has established firm connections to academic achievement, particularly through the mediating roles of student engagement and self-regulated learning (Maniriho, 2024; Chen et al., 2020). Nonetheless, these scholarly contributions tend to examine servant leadership and learning satisfaction in isolation or focus on faculty and staff outcomes rather than student-level academic quality.

A critical examination of the literature reveals several notable gaps that justify the present study. First, while the relationship between servant leadership and organizational outcomes is well established, very few studies have investigated its specific influence on student academic quality within faculties of education. The recent bibliometric analysis by Aung and Hallinger (2025), covering two decades of servant leadership research in higher education, confirmed that the field remains geographically concentrated in Western contexts and conceptually limited in scope, with minimal attention to student-level outcomes in developing-country teacher education programs. Second, the mediating or interactive role of learning satisfaction in the leadership–academic quality nexus has received scant empirical or conceptual attention. Most existing studies treat satisfaction as either an independent outcome variable or a peripheral factor, rather than as a dynamic mechanism through which leadership practices translate into measurable academic quality. Third, there is a dearth of integrative conceptual frameworks that simultaneously consider the triadic relationship among servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality, particularly in the Indonesian higher education context where cultural values of collectivism and service may amplify the effects of servant leadership practices.

In light of these identified gaps, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive literature review that systematically examines how servant leadership and learning satisfaction jointly contribute to academic quality among education students. The specific objectives are threefold: to synthesize the theoretical and empirical foundations underlying each construct and their interconnections; to identify the mechanisms, mediating processes, and contextual conditions that facilitate or constrain the influence of servant leadership on academic quality; and to propose an integrative conceptual framework that illustrates the synergistic relationship among the three variables. The central proposition guiding this study posits that servant leadership exerts a positive influence on academic quality both directly, by creating a supportive and empowering academic environment, and indirectly, through enhancing learning satisfaction, which in turn strengthens student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. This proposition is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which holds that the fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for intrinsic motivation and optimal functioning, as well as in the Integrative Model of

Organizational Behavior (Colquitt et al., 2021), which situates leadership and satisfaction as interconnected determinants of individual performance.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The method section describes the qualitative library research design, data sources, research procedures, and analytical techniques employed in the study. The results section presents the principal themes and conceptual patterns that emerged from the literature synthesis, supplemented by tables and figures that visualize key relationships and the proposed integrative framework. The discussion section critically interprets the findings in relation to existing theories and prior research, articulates the study's theoretical and practical contributions, and acknowledges its limitations. By addressing a significant research gap at the intersection of educational leadership and student academic outcomes, this study aspires to make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of educational management science and to provide evidence-based guidance for institutional leaders who seek to elevate the quality of teacher education in Indonesia and beyond.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in a library research design to systematically explore and interpret relevant scholarly sources. Library research, also referred to as desk research or documentary analysis, is recognized as a rigorous methodological approach in the social sciences that enables researchers to construct evidence-based arguments through the systematic examination of existing literature (Zed, 2008; Snyder, 2019). This method was selected for the present study because the research objectives center on synthesizing established theories, empirical findings, and conceptual frameworks related to servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality. Rather than generating primary data through fieldwork, this study seeks to build a coherent understanding of the phenomenon by critically analyzing, comparing, and integrating the insights available in published scholarly works.

The data sources for this study consist of both primary and secondary materials. Primary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in reputable databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC, published between 2019 and 2025. This temporal boundary was established to ensure that the review reflects the most current state of knowledge while remaining inclusive of foundational studies that remain highly cited and conceptually relevant. Secondary

sources include academic books, edited volumes, policy documents, and institutional reports issued by government agencies and higher education regulatory bodies. The selection of sources was guided by three principal criteria: relevance to the research focus on servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality in higher education; credibility, as determined by the reputation of the publishing outlet and the rigor of the research methodology; and recency, with a strong preference for studies published within the last six years.

The research procedure followed a structured sequence of phases. In the first phase, the research focus was defined by formulating specific research questions related to the influence of servant leadership and learning satisfaction on academic quality among education students. In the second phase, a comprehensive literature search was conducted using keyword combinations such as “servant leadership higher education,” “learning satisfaction academic quality,” “student academic performance leadership,” and “educational management quality assurance.” Boolean operators were employed to refine the search results, and database-specific filters were applied to limit results by publication year, document type, and subject area. In the third phase, the identified sources were screened for eligibility based on the inclusion criteria described above, resulting in a final corpus of 52 articles supplemented by relevant book chapters and policy documents. In the fourth phase, the selected materials were organized and catalogued using thematic mapping to facilitate systematic analysis.

In this qualitative library research design, the researcher serves as the primary instrument responsible for interpreting texts, identifying conceptual patterns, categorizing thematic elements, and constructing analytical arguments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher’s interpretive role is guided by a prior understanding of the theoretical landscape in educational management, which informs the selection and evaluation of scholarly sources. Data collection was carried out through systematic documentation and note-taking, following the principles of content analysis. Each source was read multiple times, with key arguments, findings, definitions, and theoretical propositions extracted and recorded in an analytical matrix organized by variable and theme.

The data analysis technique employed in this study follows an iterative process consisting of four stages. The first stage involves data reduction, in which the

collected materials are distilled to their essential arguments and findings, eliminating redundant or peripheral information. The second stage entails classification, where the reduced data are categorized according to thematic clusters corresponding to the three main constructs under investigation: servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality. The third stage involves comparison, in which findings across multiple sources within each thematic cluster are juxtaposed to identify patterns of convergence, divergence, and complementarity. The fourth stage is synthesis, in which the compared findings are integrated into a coherent narrative that addresses the research questions and generates new conceptual insights.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the study applies several validation strategies. Source triangulation is achieved by drawing evidence from multiple types of publications across different countries and methodological traditions, ensuring that the findings are not dependent on any single source or perspective. Critical evaluation of author perspectives involves assessing potential biases, methodological limitations, and contextual constraints reported in each study, thereby strengthening the interpretive rigor of the analysis. Cross-referencing of theoretical positions ensures internal consistency by verifying that the conceptual claims made in the synthesis are supported by multiple independent scholarly sources. The research was conducted within a defined timeframe of six months, corresponding to the stages of literature identification, review, and interpretation, culminating in a comprehensive and logically structured understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

## **RESULTS**

The systematic analysis of the reviewed literature yielded three principal thematic findings that collectively address the research questions. Each theme represents a distinct but interrelated dimension of the triadic relationship among servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality. The findings are presented below, accompanied by a synthesizing table and a proposed integrative conceptual framework that captures the novelty of this study.

***Theme 1: Servant Leadership as a Foundation for Supportive Academic Environments***

The literature consistently demonstrates that servant leadership in higher education creates organizational conditions favorable to student academic development. Leaders who embody servant leadership principles, including empathy, active listening, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of others, cultivate a campus climate characterized by psychological safety, mutual respect, and collaborative inquiry. Eva et al. (2019), in their seminal systematic review of servant leadership research, concluded that servant leadership operates through the fulfillment of followers' fundamental psychological needs, which in turn generates enhanced engagement and performance outcomes. In educational settings, this translates into a learning environment where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to pursue academic excellence.

Several recent studies reinforce this finding within the specific context of higher education. Aboramadan et al. (2021) demonstrated that servant leadership significantly predicted faculty engagement and job satisfaction in Palestinian universities, with satisfaction serving as a partial mediator. Ghasemy et al. (2022), employing a multi-level structural equation model, found that servant leadership promoted community-serving behaviors among academics in Malaysian higher education, thereby enhancing the broader institutional quality. Kainde and Mandagi (2023), in a systematic review focused on educational contexts, reported that servant leadership consistently produced improvements in morale, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior among both teachers and students. More recently, Dul et al. (2024) synthesized 40 studies and concluded that servant leadership correlates positively with student engagement, academic success, and the development of ethical academic practices.

In the Indonesian context, Kyambade et al. (2024) found that servant leadership in university settings fostered a stronger sense of community, which moderated the relationship between socially responsible leadership and institutional outcomes. Similarly, Qamar et al. (2024) established that servant leadership enhanced pedagogical resilience among educators in the post-pandemic era, suggesting that the benefits of this leadership style extend beyond immediate academic outcomes to include long-term institutional adaptability. These findings collectively indicate that servant leadership functions not merely as a leadership

style but as a foundational mechanism for creating the organizational conditions necessary for academic quality to flourish.

***Theme 2: Learning Satisfaction as a Mediating Mechanism between Leadership and Academic Quality***

The second major finding concerns the role of learning satisfaction as a critical mediating variable in the pathway from servant leadership to academic quality. Learning satisfaction, understood as the positive affective response of students toward their educational experience, emerges from the literature as a construct that both reflects the quality of the learning environment and predicts the quality of academic outcomes. Elliott and Shin (2002) established the foundational argument that student satisfaction is not merely a consumer-oriented metric but a genuine indicator of institutional effectiveness. Subsequent research has consistently validated this position. Alves and Raposo (2009) developed a comprehensive conceptual model of student satisfaction in higher education, identifying academic service quality, faculty interaction, and institutional support as its primary determinants.

The connection between leadership practices and learning satisfaction has been increasingly documented in recent scholarship. When academic leaders adopt servant leadership behaviors, students perceive a more caring, responsive, and student-centered institutional culture, which directly enhances their satisfaction with the learning process. Gao and Huang (2024) demonstrated that college teachers who perceived their leaders as servant leaders exhibited higher organizational citizenship behavior, which in turn improved the instructional quality experienced by students. Dahleez and Aboramadan (2022) found that servant leadership positively predicted affective commitment among academics, which translated into more dedicated teaching and, consequently, higher student satisfaction.

The mediating role of satisfaction in linking institutional practices to academic outcomes is further supported by the broader educational research. Chen et al. (2020) found a significant positive relationship between learning satisfaction and academic performance among university students in East Asia, with satisfaction mediating the effect of instructional quality on grade point averages. Maniriho (2024) extended this finding to post-pandemic contexts, demonstrating that student satisfaction with hybrid learning environments significantly predicted academic

achievement and retention. In the Indonesian higher education system, where the interplay of cultural values, regulatory expectations, and resource constraints shapes the student experience, learning satisfaction serves as a particularly important barometer of academic quality and institutional health.

***Theme 3: Synergistic Effects of Servant Leadership and Learning Satisfaction on Academic Quality***

The third and most significant finding of this study is the identification of a synergistic relationship between servant leadership and learning satisfaction in shaping academic quality. Rather than exerting parallel but independent effects, the two variables interact in a mutually reinforcing manner that produces compounding benefits for student academic outcomes. Servant leadership creates the institutional conditions that foster learning satisfaction, while learning satisfaction amplifies the positive effects of servant leadership on academic quality by strengthening student engagement, intrinsic motivation, and academic self-efficacy.

This synergistic pattern is consistent with the theoretical predictions of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for intrinsic motivation and optimal performance. Servant leaders, by their nature, promote autonomy through empowerment, competence through mentoring and feedback, and relatedness through community building and empathic engagement. When these conditions are met, students experience higher levels of satisfaction, which in turn fuels their academic motivation and performance. Chiniara and Bentein (2016) provided empirical support for this theoretical pathway by demonstrating that servant leadership predicted individual performance through the serial mediation of autonomy, competence, and relatedness need satisfaction.

The synergistic relationship is also reflected in the Integrative Model of Organizational Behavior proposed by Colquitt et al. (2021), which positions leadership mechanisms and individual satisfaction as interconnected predictors of job performance and organizational commitment. Adapted to the educational context, this model suggests that academic leadership and learning satisfaction function as complementary drivers of student academic quality, with neither variable alone being sufficient to produce optimal outcomes. The present study's synthesis of the literature strongly supports this integrative perspective, offering a

conceptual refinement that accounts for the interactive dynamics between servant leadership and learning satisfaction in the specific context of teacher education programs.

**Table 1. Summary of Key Thematic Findings from Literature Synthesis**

Theme	Key Finding	Supporting Sources
Theme 1: Servant Leadership & Supportive Academic Environments	Servant leadership cultivates psychological safety, mutual respect, and collaborative inquiry that create conditions for academic quality to flourish.	Eva et al. (2019); Aboramadan et al. (2021); Kainde & Mandagi (2023); Dul et al. (2024); Kyambade et al. (2024); Qamar et al. (2024)
Theme 2: Learning Satisfaction as Mediating Mechanism	Learning satisfaction mediates the relationship between servant leadership practices and measurable academic quality outcomes.	Elliott & Shin (2002); Alves & Raposo (2009); Chen et al. (2020); Maniriho (2024); Gao & Huang (2024); Dahleez & Aboramadan (2022)
Theme 3: Synergistic Interaction Effects	Servant leadership and learning satisfaction interact in a mutually reinforcing manner, producing compounding positive effects on academic quality.	Deci & Ryan (2000); Chiniara & Bentein (2016); Colquitt et al. (2021); Ghasemy et al. (2022)

**Table 2. Synthesized Dimensions and Indicators of Academic Quality in Teacher Education**

Dimension	Key Indicators	Theoretical Basis
Cognitive Development	Critical thinking, disciplinary mastery, learning outcomes achievement	Biggs & Tang (2011); Tight (2019); Harvey & Green (1993)
Affective Engagement	Intrinsic motivation, academic self-efficacy, sense of belonging	Deci & Ryan (2000); Tinto (1997); Astin (1993)
Professional Competence	Pedagogical readiness, ethical reasoning, professional identity	Goetsch & Davis (2014); Sallis (2014)

Social Integration	Faculty-student interaction, peer collaboration, community building	Liden et al. (2008); Colquitt et al. (2021); Spears (1998)
Transformative Growth	Value-added development, character formation, social responsibility	Harvey (2006); UNESCO (2015); Patterson (2003)

**Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework: The Servant Leadership Learning Satisfaction Academic Quality (SL-LS-AQ) Model**

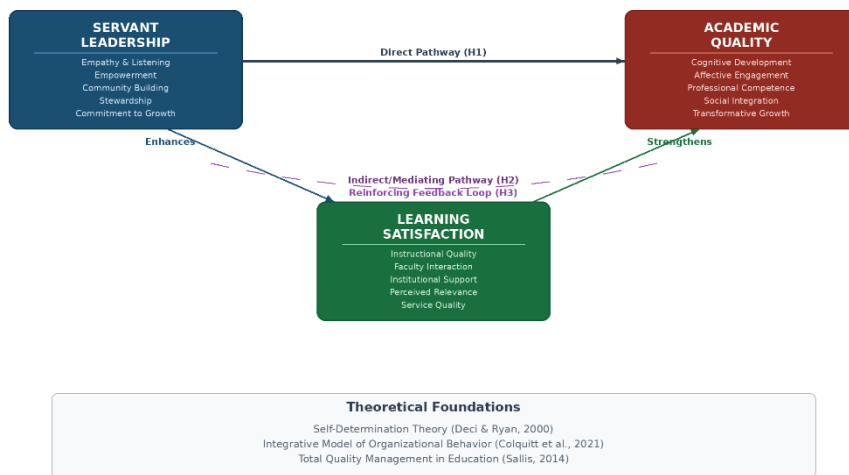
Building on the three principal themes identified above, this study proposes an integrative conceptual framework designated as the SL-LS-AQ Model. The framework represents the novelty and original contribution of this research. Unlike previous models that examine servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality as discrete or linearly related constructs, the SL-LS-AQ Model explicitly captures the synergistic and cyclical dynamics among them. The model posits three interconnected pathways: a direct pathway from servant leadership to academic quality through the creation of supportive academic environments; an indirect pathway through which servant leadership enhances learning satisfaction, which in turn strengthens academic quality; and a reinforcing feedback loop in which improved academic quality generates positive institutional outcomes that further sustain servant leadership practices and maintain high levels of learning satisfaction.

**Table 3. Novelty Comparison: Previous Studies vs. Present Study**

Aspect	Previous Studies	Present Study (Novelty)
Variable Scope	Examined servant leadership and satisfaction separately; focused on faculty outcomes	Integrates servant leadership, learning satisfaction, and academic quality in a unified triadic framework for students
Contextual Focus	Predominantly Western, corporate, or general higher education contexts	Specifically targets teacher education faculties in Indonesian higher education
Conceptual Model	Linear or bivariate relationship models	Proposes cyclical, synergistic SL-LS-AQ Model with feedback loops

Mediating Mechanism	Satisfaction examined as outcome variable, not as mediating mechanism	Positions learning satisfaction as a critical mediating and reinforcing mechanism
Theoretical Integration	Single-theory approaches (e.g., only SDT or only leadership theory)	Integrates Self-Determination Theory, Integrative OB Model, and TQM in Education

**Figure 1. The SL-LS-AQ Integrative Conceptual Framework**  
(Servant Leadership – Learning Satisfaction – Academic Quality Model)



Source: Synthesized by Authors (2025)

**Figure 1. The SL-LS-AQ Integrative Conceptual Framework (Novelty of This Study)**

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed SL-LS-AQ Integrative Conceptual Framework, which constitutes the primary novelty of this study. The model delineates three interconnected pathways: a direct pathway from servant leadership to academic quality (H1), an indirect pathway mediated by learning satisfaction (H2), and a reinforcing feedback loop through which improved academic quality sustains the servant leadership–learning satisfaction dynamic (H3). The framework is grounded in three complementary theoretical foundations: Self-Determination Theory, the Integrative Model of Organizational Behavior, and Total Quality Management in Education. This integrative approach distinguishes the present study from prior research that has predominantly examined these constructs in isolation or through linear bivariate models.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer a comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of how servant leadership and learning satisfaction collectively contribute to academic quality among education students. This discussion critically examines the three principal themes in relation to the research questions, interprets them through established theoretical lenses, and positions them within the broader scholarly discourse on educational management.

### ***Servant Leadership and Academic Quality: Direct Pathways and Mechanisms***

The first theme confirms that servant leadership establishes the foundational conditions necessary for academic quality to thrive. This finding aligns with and extends the conclusions of Eva et al. (2019), who identified servant leadership as a distinct and consequential leadership paradigm with effects that transcend conventional transactional or transformational approaches. The present study enriches their work by demonstrating that these effects are particularly pronounced in teacher education contexts, where the values of service, empathy, and community building inherent in servant leadership resonate with the professional identities that education students are developing. This resonance creates an alignment between institutional leadership practices and the pedagogical ethos of the faculty, thereby amplifying the influence of servant leadership on academic quality.

The finding is also consistent with the work of Aboramadan et al. (2021) and Ghasemy et al. (2022), who demonstrated that servant leadership enhances institutional quality through improved faculty engagement and community-oriented academic behavior. However, the present study advances their contributions by shifting the analytical lens from faculty outcomes to student-level academic quality, an area that the recent bibliometric review by Aung and Hallinger (2025) explicitly identified as underdeveloped. By establishing that the positive institutional climate created by servant leadership translates into tangible benefits for student learning and academic development, this study fills a notable gap in the literature and provides evidence that supports the broader application of servant leadership principles in higher education governance.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding can be explained through Colquitt et al.'s (2021) Integrative Model of Organizational Behavior, which situates

leadership as a group-level mechanism that influences individual outcomes through mediating individual-level processes such as motivation, satisfaction, and learning. Servant leadership, as a group-level mechanism, shapes the academic environment in which students operate, thereby influencing their psychological engagement and academic performance. The model's emphasis on the interconnection between organizational, group, and individual mechanisms provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding why servant leadership produces positive academic outcomes across different institutional contexts.

### ***Learning Satisfaction as a Critical Mediating Variable***

The second theme reveals that learning satisfaction operates as a crucial mediating mechanism in the relationship between servant leadership and academic quality. This finding both confirms and extends the established literature on student satisfaction in higher education. Elliott and Shin (2002) first proposed that student satisfaction reflects institutional quality and predicts academic success; the present study deepens this proposition by identifying the specific leadership antecedent that most effectively generates learning satisfaction in teacher education contexts. The finding that servant leadership, rather than other leadership styles, is particularly effective in fostering satisfaction can be attributed to its inherent emphasis on empathy, listening, and personalized attention, which are precisely the leadership behaviors that students in education faculties value most highly.

The mediating role of learning satisfaction identified in this study resonates with recent empirical evidence from diverse educational settings. Chen et al. (2020) found that satisfaction mediated the relationship between instructional quality and academic achievement in Chinese universities, while Maniriho (2024) demonstrated similar mediating effects in the context of post-pandemic hybrid learning environments. The present study synthesizes these findings and extends them by integrating servant leadership as the independent variable, thereby constructing a more complete causal pathway. Furthermore, the finding that learning satisfaction is not merely an outcome but an active mechanism aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which holds that satisfaction with learning experiences reflects the fulfillment of intrinsic psychological needs that drive academic motivation and performance.

The practical implications of this finding are substantial. If learning satisfaction serves as the critical conduit through which servant leadership influences academic quality, then institutional leaders who wish to improve academic outcomes must not only adopt servant leadership behaviors but also systematically monitor and enhance student satisfaction. This dual focus recognizes that leadership practices, however well-intentioned, will only translate into academic improvements if students genuinely perceive and experience the supportive environment that servant leadership is designed to create. Assessment instruments that measure both perceived servant leadership and learning satisfaction can provide institutional leaders with actionable data for continuous improvement initiatives.

### ***The Synergistic SL-LS-AQ Model: Theoretical and Practical Contributions***

The third and most significant contribution of this study is the identification of a synergistic relationship between servant leadership and learning satisfaction in shaping academic quality, formalized in the proposed SL-LS-AQ Model. This model represents a conceptual advancement beyond the linear and bivariate frameworks that have dominated prior research. Whereas most existing studies examine the effects of servant leadership or satisfaction in isolation, the SL-LS-AQ Model captures the mutually reinforcing dynamics between these variables, illustrating how improvements in one variable create positive feedback effects that strengthen the other and collectively elevate academic quality.

The synergistic pattern identified in this study is theoretically grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Servant leaders promote autonomy by empowering students to take ownership of their learning, competence by providing mentoring and constructive feedback, and relatedness by building caring academic communities. When these three psychological needs are fulfilled, students experience deep satisfaction with their learning experience, which in turn generates intrinsic motivation, sustained engagement, and high-quality academic performance. Crucially, the fulfillment of these needs is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that creates a self-reinforcing cycle: satisfied students contribute to a more vibrant academic community, which further supports servant leadership practices and sustains high levels of academic quality.

The model also draws on the Total Quality Management in Education framework proposed by Sallis (2014), which emphasizes that quality in education is not achieved through top-down mandates alone but through the cultivation of a quality culture that permeates all levels of the institution. Servant leadership, with its focus on service, empowerment, and community building, is ideally suited to nurture such a quality culture. Learning satisfaction serves as both an indicator and a reinforcer of this culture: when students are satisfied, they become active participants in the quality improvement process rather than passive consumers of educational services. This reconceptualization of students as co-creators of academic quality represents a significant theoretical refinement that the SL-LS-AQ Model introduces to the field of educational management.

The proposed framework also challenges the prevailing tendency in the literature to treat academic quality as a static outcome variable. By incorporating a feedback loop in which improved academic quality sustains servant leadership practices and reinforces learning satisfaction, the SL-LS-AQ Model reconceptualizes academic quality as a dynamic and emergent property of the educational system. This perspective aligns with the concept of continuous improvement articulated by Goetsch and Davis (2014) and with the process–outcome integration emphasized in the quality assurance frameworks adopted by Indonesian higher education regulations (Permendikbudristek No. 39/2025).

### ***Contextual Significance for Indonesian Higher Education***

The findings of this study carry particular significance for the Indonesian higher education context. Indonesia's cultural values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and *kekeluargaan* (familial solidarity) are inherently aligned with the principles of servant leadership, suggesting that this leadership style may be especially effective in Indonesian academic institutions. The regulatory framework established by Permendikbudristek No. 39/2025, which mandates a cycle of standard setting, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement in higher education quality assurance, provides an institutional infrastructure within which the SL-LS-AQ Model can be operationalized. By identifying servant leadership and learning satisfaction as key drivers of academic quality, this study offers evidence-based guidance for Indonesian university

administrators and faculty leaders who seek to implement the PPEPP cycle more effectively.

Moreover, the findings contribute to addressing the geographic and contextual imbalance in the servant leadership literature identified by multiple bibliometric reviews (Aung & Hallinger, 2025; Dul et al., 2024). By grounding the analysis in the specific characteristics of Indonesian teacher education, including the dual mandate of developing academic and professional competencies, the collectivist cultural orientation, and the post-pandemic digital transformation challenges, this study enriches the global discourse on servant leadership with perspectives that are currently underrepresented in the literature.

### ***Limitations and Directions for Future Research***

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. As a library research study, the findings are derived from the synthesis of existing literature rather than from primary empirical data. While this approach ensures breadth and theoretical depth, it cannot provide the statistical evidence necessary to confirm causal relationships among the variables. Future research should employ quantitative methods, such as structural equation modeling with survey data from education students, to empirically test the pathways proposed in the SL-LS-AQ Model. Additionally, mixed-methods studies that combine quantitative measurement with qualitative exploration of students' lived experiences would provide richer insights into the mechanisms through which servant leadership and learning satisfaction influence academic quality. Longitudinal research designs are also recommended to capture the dynamic and cyclical nature of the relationships hypothesized in the model.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated, through a systematic and comprehensive literature review, that servant leadership and learning satisfaction are not merely parallel contributors to academic quality but synergistic forces that interact in mutually reinforcing ways to produce compounding positive effects on student academic outcomes in teacher education programs. The proposed SL-LS-AQ Model captures the direct, mediating, and feedback dynamics among these three constructs, offering a more nuanced and theoretically integrated understanding than

has previously been available in the literature. The findings carry important implications for educational management practice, suggesting that institutional leaders who wish to enhance academic quality must simultaneously cultivate servant leadership behaviors and monitor student learning satisfaction as part of a holistic quality improvement strategy. By addressing a significant research gap and contributing a novel conceptual framework, this study advances the field of educational management and provides a foundation for future empirical investigations that can further refine and validate the proposed model.

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