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Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement Among Generation Z: Examining the Mediating Role of Mental Well-Being

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The author(s) declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the influence of servant leadership on employee engagement among Generation Z employees and to investigate whether mental well-being mediates the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement.

Research Method: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 148 Generation Z employees in Jakarta, Indonesia. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through online questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results and Discussion: The results indicate that servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. However, mental well-being does not significantly mediate the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. These findings suggest that Generation Z employees are more responsive to leadership behaviors characterized by support, empowerment, and service orientation than to their psychological well-being in developing workplace engagement. The results further demonstrate that servant leadership directly strengthens employee engagement without relying on improvements in mental well-being.

Implications: Organizations should strengthen servant leadership competencies through leadership development initiatives that emphasize empathy, empowerment, and employee support. Although mental well-being was not a significant mediator, organizations should continue promoting employee psychological health to support workforce sustainability.

Originality: This study challenges the assumption that mental well-being is a necessary mechanism linking servant leadership and employee engagement among Generation Z employees.

Keywords: Servant Leadership; Mental Well-Being; Employee Engagement; Generation Z; Leadership.

1. Introduction

The composition of the global workforce is undergoing substantial transformation as Generation Z increasingly enters organizational settings and assumes a larger share of employment opportunities (Nieżurawska *et al.,* 2023). Estimates suggest that Generation Z will account for approximately 27% of the global workforce by 2025, with its influence expected to expand considerably over the coming decade (Mărginean, 2021). As digital natives who entered the labor market during a period characterized by technological disruption and post-pandemic workplace transformation, Generation Z

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employees bring distinctive expectations regarding work environments, leadership practices, and career development. At the same time, emerging evidence indicates that many young employees experience elevated levels of stress, anxiety, burnout, and psychological exhaustion, particularly in increasingly digitalized and uncertain work contexts (Ngobeni *et al.,* 2026; Pathak & Bhayani, 2025; Syafei *et al.,* 2023). These challenges have raised concerns among organizations regarding employee retention, well-being, and long-term engagement.

The growing prevalence of psychological strain among younger employees has intensified organizational efforts to identify leadership approaches that can foster a supportive and sustainable work environment. Such efforts have become increasingly important given the emergence of workplace phenomena such as "quiet quitting," in which employees limit their involvement to formally required tasks while displaying reduced psychological attachment to their work roles (Bernuzzi *et al.,* 2025; Campton *et al.,* 2023). Because employee engagement reflects an employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in work, organizations must move beyond traditional management approaches and create conditions that promote meaningful work experiences and stronger psychological connections with the organization (Revuru & Bandaru, 2024).

Among various leadership approaches, servant leadership has received growing attention due to its emphasis on prioritizing employee growth, development, and well-being (Yagil & Oren, 2021). Unlike traditional hierarchical leadership styles, servant leadership focuses on serving followers through empathy, empowerment, active listening, and genuine concern for employees' needs. This leadership approach appears particularly relevant for Generation Z employees, who often value mentorship, support, inclusiveness, and opportunities for personal development. Prior studies suggest that servant leadership can contribute to lower turnover intentions, stronger organizational commitment, and more effective collaboration in flexible and hybrid work environments (Coun *et al.,* 2023; Davis & Needham, 2023; Gašková, 2020). By fostering a supportive work climate, servant leadership may serve as an important organizational resource that helps employees navigate workplace challenges and remain engaged in their work.

The potential influence of servant leadership on employee engagement can be understood through the lens of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2017). COR Theory argues that individuals strive to acquire, preserve, and accumulate resources that enable them to cope with stress and achieve desired outcomes. In contemporary workplaces, employees may experience resource depletion due to excessive work demands, technological pressures, uncertainty, and social isolation. Leadership behaviors can function as contextual resources that help employees replenish depleted psychological resources and protect them from further resource loss (Bregenzer & Jiménez, 2021). Consequently, servant leadership may not only influence employee engagement directly but may also enhance employees' psychological functioning by providing supportive interpersonal resources.

Within the COR framework, mental well-being represents a critical personal resource because it reflects an individual's capacity to maintain positive psychological functioning, emotional stability, and resilience when facing workplace demands. Employees who experience higher levels of mental well-being are generally better equipped to invest their cognitive and emotional resources into their work activities, thereby fostering stronger engagement (Dwidienawati *et al.,* 2025; Katsaros, 2024). Accordingly, servant leadership may enhance employee engagement indirectly by strengthening employees' mental well-being. However, despite the growing literature on servant leadership, limited research has simultaneously examined the relationships among servant leadership, mental well-being, and employee engagement within the specific context of Generation Z employees in the post-pandemic

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workplace. This gap is important because younger employees may experience workplace resources and psychological outcomes differently from previous generations. Therefore, this study investigates the direct effect of servant leadership on employee engagement and the mediating role of mental well-being among Generation Z employees. By integrating servant leadership and mental well-being within the COR theoretical framework, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership resources contribute to employee engagement in a rapidly evolving workforce context.

While research has established a link between servant leadership and employee engagement (Jabłońska-Wołoszyn & Kurek, 2021; Shafi *et al.,* 2020), the post-pandemic reality has created a significant gap in our understanding of how mental well-being mediates this relationship. This study aims to explore the mediating role of mental well-being, which focuses on Generation Z, known as a group with a very different set of workplace expectations. We're exploring whether "wellness" and mental health are fundamental requirements for higher engagement. Servant leadership is positioned as a variable to ensure that engagement among Gen Z is solid, and with mental well-being, organizations are able to maintain their employees.

The reminder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents literature review and hypothesis development. Section 3 provides methodology. Section 4 presents empirical findings and discussion. Section 5 provides conclusion.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Conservation of Resources Theory

This study is grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which posits that individuals are motivated to acquire, preserve, and protect valuable resources that enable them to cope effectively with environmental demands and stressors (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2017). Resources may include personal characteristics, emotional energy, psychological well-being, social support, and favorable working conditions. According to COR Theory, stress occurs when individuals experience actual resource loss, perceive a threat of resource loss, or fail to gain expected resources following significant resource investment (Lin *et al.,* 2018).

The post-pandemic workplace presents numerous challenges that may threaten employees' resources, particularly among Generation Z employees who frequently encounter digital fatigue, work-related uncertainty, social isolation, and elevated psychological demands (Chen *et al.,* 2023; Pathak & Bhayani, 2025). These conditions can accelerate resource depletion, resulting in reduced psychological functioning and diminished well-being. COR Theory suggests that individuals require access to external resources to offset such losses and maintain their capacity to perform effectively.

Within this framework, leadership serves as an important contextual resource that can facilitate both resource acquisition and resource preservation. Servant leadership, in particular, provides employees with valuable psychological and social resources through empathy, empowerment, emotional support, and genuine concern for employee development (Bregenzer & Jiménez, 2021). By creating a supportive and psychologically safe work environment, servant leaders help employees replenish depleted resources, reduce the risk of further resource loss, and build resource reserves that strengthen their ability to cope with workplace challenges (Alzghoul *et al.,* 2023).

Mental well-being represents a critical personal resource within COR Theory because it reflects an individual's capacity to maintain positive psychological functioning, emotional stability, and resilience

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in the face of work demands. When employees receive supportive leadership resources, they are more likely to experience enhanced mental well-being, which in turn provides the psychological energy necessary to remain engaged and invested in their work. Therefore, COR Theory offers a comprehensive explanation of how servant leadership may influence employee engagement directly and indirectly through the enhancement of employees' mental well-being.

2.2 Servant Leadership and Mental Well-being

Drawing upon Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources that help them cope with workplace demands and psychological strain. In organizational settings, leadership behaviors can function as important contextual resources that enable employees to accumulate and preserve personal resources. Servant leadership represents a particularly relevant resource-providing leadership style because it prioritizes employees' growth, well-being, and development over the leader's self-interest (Miralles *et al.,* 2024; Rivkin *et al.,* 2014). Through empathy, active listening, emotional support, and empowerment, servant leaders create a supportive work environment that helps employees replenish depleted psychological resources and reduces the risk of resource loss.

This mechanism is especially relevant for Generation Z employees, who have been reported to experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout than previous generations (Pathak & Bhayani, 2025; Syafei *et al.,* 2023). According to COR Theory, access to supportive leadership resources enables employees to conserve emotional energy, strengthen psychological resilience, and maintain positive mental states when facing workplace challenges. Unlike traditional hierarchical leadership approaches, servant leadership fosters psychological safety and empowerment, thereby facilitating resource acquisition and preservation (Coun *et al.,* 2023; Xiu *et al.,* 2023). As employees accumulate these valuable psychological resources, their mental well-being is expected to improve, resulting in greater emotional stability and resilience (Andersen *et al.,* 2025; Chitamba, 2025).

H1: *Servant leadership positively affects the mental well-being of Generation Z employees.*

2.3 Mental Well-being and Employee Engagement

According to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, individuals require sufficient personal resources to effectively cope with workplace demands and invest themselves in work-related activities (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2017). Among these resources, mental well-being represents a critical psychological asset that reflects an individual's emotional stability, resilience, and capacity to maintain positive functioning under challenging circumstances. COR Theory suggests that employees with greater psychological resources are better positioned to protect themselves from resource depletion and are more willing to invest their available resources in activities that generate positive outcomes, including work engagement.

Employee engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, all of which require the investment of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources (Khusanova *et al.,* 2021; Widanti & Sunaryo, 2022). When employees experience poor mental well-being, stress, anxiety, or emotional exhaustion, their psychological resources become depleted, reducing their capacity to fully engage with their work (Mazzetti *et al.,* 2021; Miranda *et al.,* 2020). Conversely, employees who possess higher levels of mental well-being are more likely to have the psychological energy and resilience needed to remain enthusiastic, focused, and committed to their work responsibilities (Lu *et al.,* 2022).

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This relationship may be particularly relevant for Generation Z employees, who frequently encounter psychological pressures associated with rapid technological change, heightened work expectations, and post-pandemic workplace adjustments. Within the COR framework, maintaining mental well-being enables employees to preserve valuable personal resources and allocate them toward productive work behaviors. Consequently, employees with higher levels of mental well-being are expected to demonstrate stronger work engagement because they possess the psychological capacity required to sustain vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work roles (Bordoloi *et al.,* 2025; Chitamba, 2025).

H2: *Mental well-being positively affects employee engagement among Generation Z employees.*

2.4 Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement

Drawing upon Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, employee engagement emerges when individuals possess sufficient resources to invest physical, cognitive, and emotional energy into their work roles (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2017). Leadership represents an important contextual resource that can either facilitate resource accumulation or contribute to resource depletion. In this regard, servant leadership provides employees with valuable psychological and social resources through empowerment, emotional support, trust, autonomy, and developmental opportunities (Miralles *et al.,* 2024; Rivkin *et al.,* 2014). These leadership behaviors help employees preserve existing resources while simultaneously acquiring new resources that enhance their capacity to cope with workplace demands.

The availability of such resources is expected to foster employee engagement, which is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work activities. According to COR Theory, employees are more likely to invest their resources in their work when they perceive that adequate resources are available and that the work environment supports their personal and professional growth. Servant leaders create these favorable conditions by promoting psychological safety, encouraging participation, and demonstrating genuine concern for employee well-being. As a result, employees are more likely to feel energized, committed, and fully involved in their work roles.

This relationship may be particularly relevant for Generation Z employees, who often value supportive leadership, meaningful work, and opportunities for personal development (Nieżurawska *et al.,* 2023). By providing resources that align with these expectations, servant leadership can strengthen employees' willingness to invest their energy and effort in organizational activities, thereby enhancing their level of engagement (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022; Carter & Baghurst, 2014).

H3: *Servant leadership positively affects employee engagement among Generation Z employees.*

2.5 The Mediating Role of Mental Well-being

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory provides a comprehensive explanation for the mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. COR Theory suggests that contextual resources provided by the work environment can be transformed into personal resources that enhance individuals' capacity to cope with workplace demands and pursue valued outcomes (Hobfoll *et al.,* 2017). In this context, servant leadership functions as an important source of external resources by providing employees with emotional support, empowerment, trust, autonomy, and developmental opportunities (Chen *et al.,* 2023; Zada *et al.,* 2024). These leadership

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behaviors help employees reduce resource loss, replenish depleted psychological resources, and build resource reserves.

As employees accumulate and preserve these resources, they are more likely to experience higher levels of mental well-being, reflected in greater emotional stability, resilience, and positive psychological functioning. Within the COR framework, mental well-being represents a valuable personal resource that enables individuals to invest their cognitive, emotional, and physical energy in work-related activities. Employees with stronger psychological resources are therefore more capable of maintaining vigor, dedication, and absorption, which constitute the core dimensions of employee engagement (Ayyashi *et al.,* 2024).

Accordingly, servant leadership may influence employee engagement not only directly through the provision of supportive workplace resources but also indirectly by enhancing employees' mental well-being. Through this mechanism, external leadership resources are converted into personal psychological resources that subsequently facilitate greater engagement at work (Chen *et al.,* 2022).

H4: *Mental well-being mediates the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement among Generation Z employees.*

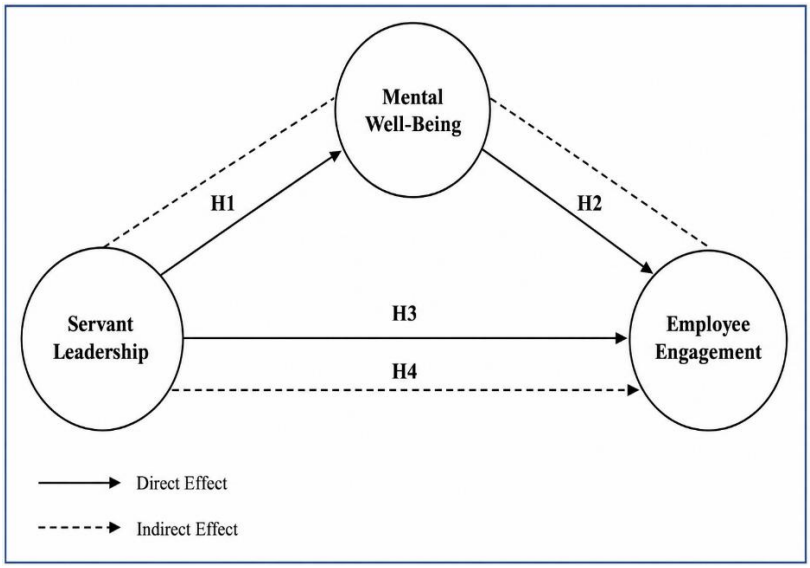


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Method

The study used a quantitative approach to test how servant leadership, mental well-being, and employee engagement relate within the Generation Z workforce. The target group consists of Gen Z employees, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, who are currently working in various professional roles. We used non-probability sampling with a convenience sampling technique to meet our sample needs. This process resulted in 148 valid responses for the final analysis. This sample size is appropriate for the statistical tools used in this study. Specifically, for structural equation modeling with partial least squares, a common rule of thumb is to have at least 100 to 150 observations to ensure the parameter estimates remain stable. We also specified a confidence level of 95% with a significance level of 0.05 to ensure the statistical accuracy of our findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

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Data were collected from primary sources using a self-administered online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree") was employed to measure all study constructs (Harpe, 2015). The questionnaire assessed three primary constructs: servant leadership as the exogenous variable, mental well-being as the mediating variable, and employee engagement as the endogenous variable.

Servant leadership was measured using items adapted from Northouse (2021), mental well-being was assessed using the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) adapted from Marmara *et al.,* (2022), and employee engagement was measured using the scale developed by Anitha (2014). Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure construct validity and reliability. Indicator retention was based on established recommendations for PLS-SEM, including factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity (Hair *et al.,* 2022). Items with insufficient psychometric performance were removed only when their exclusion improved measurement quality without compromising the conceptual representation of the construct.

Following this procedure, the servant leadership scale was reduced from 28 to 17 items, while the mental well-being scale was reduced from 14 to 6 items. The retained indicators continued to represent the core theoretical dimensions underlying each construct, thereby preserving content validity. The employee engagement scale retained all 14 original items because all indicators satisfied the recommended validity and reliability thresholds.

Because all variables were collected through self-reported questionnaires from a single source at a single point in time, several procedural and statistical remedies were implemented to mitigate the risk of common method bias (CMB). Procedurally, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce evaluation apprehension and social desirability bias. Statistically, a common method variance assessment was conducted, and the results indicated that common method bias was unlikely to pose a substantial threat to the validity of the findings.

We invited individuals to participate in the study through professional networks and social media, ensuring every participant met the Gen Z criteria and was currently employed at the time of the survey. For the analysis, we used Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). We chose this approach because it works well for complex models that involve multiple variables and mediation paths (Dash & Paul, 2021; Hair *et al.,* 2022). It is useful for research where the goal is to develop and predict theories rather than just confirm existing ones.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis Results

4.1.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The first step in our analysis involves evaluating the measurement model to confirm that the variables are both reliable and valid. This stage is important because it shows that the specific survey items for Servant Leadership, Mental Well-Being, and Employee Engagement are able to reflect the theoretical ideas they are meant to measure. The result is presented in Table 1 as follows:

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Table 1. Measurement Model

Variable	Items	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Servant Leadership	SL31	0.672	0.960	0.964	0.612
	SL32	0.794			
	SL33	0.777			
	SL34	0.813			
	SL41	0.770			
	SL51	0.790			
	SL52	0.848			
	SL53	0.751			
	SL71	0.823			
	SL72	0.832			
	SL73	0.853			
	SL74	0.795			
	SL81	0.818			
	SL82	0.697			
	SL83	0.812			
	SL91	0.701			
	SL92	0.722			
Mental Well-Being	MWB13	0.734	0.819	0.866	0.522
	MWB14	0.842			
	MWB2	0.778			
	MWB4	0.638			
	MWB6	0.700			
	MWB9	0.620			
Employee Engagement	EE11	0.861	0.974	0.977	0.749
	EE12	0.746			
	EE21	0.886			
	EE22	0.892			
	EE31	0.889			
	EE32	0.868			
	EE41	0.886			
	EE42	0.905			
	EE51	0.903			
	EE52	0.800			
	EE61	0.891			
	EE62	0.774			
	EE71	0.886			
	EE72	0.912			

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

4.1.2 Indicator Reliability: Outer Loadings

To evaluate the strength of the measurement model, we first examined the outer loadings, which indicate how well each individual survey item aligns with its corresponding variable. Following the standards established by Hair *et al.,* (2021) a loading above 0.60 is necessary to confirm that an indicator shares a sufficient amount of variance with its construct. We separate any indicators that failed to reach this 0.60 benchmark to eliminate statistical "noise" and ensure that the remaining items provide an accurate reflection of the main variables.

For servant leadership, the assessment of the 17 indicators resulted in valid loading factors ranging from 0.672 to 0.853. Because every item exceeded the 0.60 requirement, we retained the full set, ensuring that this construct offers a stable and standardized measure of leadership behavior as

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perceived by Generation Z workers. Similarly, the 6 items measuring mental well-being showed final loadings between 0.620 and 0.842. This refinement ensures that the scale effectively captures the psychological state of the participants without the interference of weak or irrelevant indicators.

Employee engagement demonstrated the highest level of indicator reliability among all the variables in the model. Its 14 items produced loadings between 0.746 and 0.912, which significantly exceed the required of minimum value 0.60. These values mean that there is no additional trimming was necessary for this construct. By ensuring that each variable is built only on high-performing indicators, we have established a valid indicators that use to measure the construct.

4.1.3 Internal Consistency: Cronbach's Alpha

We used Cronbach's Alpha to check how closely the items in each set relate to one another as a group. Generally, a value over 0.70 is the benchmark for a reliable instrument. Our results showed that Servant Leadership (0.960), Mental Well-Being (0.819), and Employee Engagement (0.974) all moved far past this 0.70 requirement. These high scores suggest that the survey tools we used were stable and consistent across the different respondents.

4.1.4 Composite Reliability (CR)

While Cronbach's Alpha is a standard test, it assumes all items are equally reliable. Composite Reliability is a more precise measure in structural equation modeling because it accounts for the different "weights" or loadings of each indicator. Similar to Alpha, the target for a strong CR is a value greater than 0.70. The CR scores for Servant Leadership (0.964), Mental Well-Being (0.866), and Employee Engagement (0.977) were all exceptionally high. These figures confirm that our variables were measured with a high degree of internal accuracy, meaning the indicators are truly representative of the underlying concepts.

4.1.5 Convergent Validity: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

To ensure convergent validity, we calculated the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). This metric tells us how much of the variance in the indicators is actually explained by the latent variable. A score above 0.50 is the standard, as it proves the variable explains more than half of the variance in its items.
The Servant Leadership construct had an AVE of 0.612, meaning it explains 61.2% of the variance in its 17 items. Mental Well-Being reached an AVE of 0.522. Even though this variable had a few lower individual loadings (near 0.620), it still passed the 0.50 requirement, which confirms its validity. Lastly, Employee Engagement produced an AVE of 0.749. This is an excellent result, showing that the engagement variable explains nearly 75% of the variance in its indicators, providing very strong evidence for the validity of the model.

4.1.6 Discriminant Validity

To ensure that each construct is truly unique and measures a distinct part of the model, we tested discriminant validity using two primary methods: the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. This step is essential to prove that our three variables do not overlap and become statistically indistinguishable.

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Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Employee Engagement	Mental Well-Being	Servant Leadership
Employee Engagement	0.866		
Mental Well-Being	0.116	0.723	
Servant Leadership	0.575	0.121	0.782

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

The Fornell-Larcker criterion states that the square root of the AVE for each variable should be higher than its correlation with any other variable in the model. In a results table, these values appear on the diagonal (Hair *et al.,* 2021). Our data confirms this distinctiveness across all three areas. Employee engagement (0.866) was significantly higher than its correlations with mental well-being (0.116) and servant leadership (0.575). Similarly, Mental Well-being (0.723) exceeded its correlation with Servant Leadership (0.121), and Servant Leadership (0.782) remained higher than any of its shared correlations. These results show that each variable fulfil sufficient criteria.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Employee Engagement	Mental Well-Being	Servant Leadership
Employee Engagement			
Mental Well-Being	0.140		
Servant Leadership	0.582	0.146	

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

We also used the HTMT ratio, which is currently considered a more thorough modern test for discriminant validity where the standard to pass this test, the ratios should ideally be below 0.85 (Hair *et al.,* 2022). Our analysis produced ratios of 0.140 for mental well-being and employee engagement, 0.582 for servant leadership and employee engagement, and 0.146 for servant leadership and mental well-being. All of these values remained under 0.85 benchmark, ensuring there is no significant overlap between the constructs.

To further evaluate discriminant validity at the indicator level, we conducted an analysis of the cross-loadings for all items. According to the methodological standards established by Hair *et al.,* (2022) discriminant validity is confirmed when an indicator's outer loading on its intended latent construct is higher than its cross-loadings on any other construct in the model. This test ensures that each item is a unique reflection of its parent variable and does not capture excessive variance from other phenomena. The cross-loadings is presented in table 4.

We examined the cross-loadings to ensure each item was correctly aligned with its intended construct. For the 14 indicators used to measure employee engagement (EE11 to EE72), the primary loadings were quite strong, falling between 0.746 and 0.912. These figures were much higher than their correlations with mental well-being or servant leadership, which reached maximums of only 0.229 and 0.569. This wide margin gives us confidence that the value is fulfil the standard. The results for mental well-being (MWB13 to MWB9) followed a similar pattern. These items produced primary loadings ranging from 0.620 to 0.842. Crucially, the highest cross-loading for any of these indicators on other variables was just 0.141, which is very low. This confirms that the mental health items also meet the standard. Finally, the 17 items for servant leadership showed primary loadings between 0.672 and 0.853. We did notice a moderate level of conceptual connection between some of these leadership items and

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employee engagement, with one cross-loading peaking at 0.517. However, in every single case, the item's primary loading on servant leadership was substantially higher than its loading on any other construct.

Table 4. Cross-Loadings Value

	Employee Engagement	Mental Well-Being	Servant Leadership
EE11	0.861	0.085	0.467
EE12	0.746	0.060	0.355
EE21	0.886	0.130	0.506
EE22	0.892	0.131	0.569
EE31	0.889	0.077	0.531
EE32	0.868	0.229	0.498
EE41	0.886	0.136	0.500
EE42	0.905	0.133	0.541
EE51	0.903	0.152	0.506
EE52	0.800	-0.073	0.429
EE61	0.891	0.093	0.527
EE62	0.774	0.121	0.402
EE71	0.886	0.016	0.538
EE72	0.912	0.080	0.536
MWB13	0.102	0.734	0.090
MWB14	0.107	0.842	0.130
MWB2	0.046	0.778	0.123
MWB4	0.035	0.638	0.052
MWB6	0.034	0.700	0.076
MWB9	0.141	0.620	0.018
SL31	0.291	0.136	0.672
SL32	0.405	0.163	0.794
SL33	0.395	0.097	0.777
SL34	0.420	0.071	0.813
SL41	0.400	0.015	0.770
SL51	0.454	0.117	0.790
SL52	0.476	0.168	0.848
SL53	0.418	0.122	0.751
SL71	0.425	0.026	0.823
SL72	0.449	0.088	0.832
SL73	0.425	0.072	0.853
SL74	0.517	0.143	0.795
SL81	0.511	0.026	0.818
SL82	0.475	0.083	0.697
SL83	0.516	0.118	0.812
SL91	0.459	0.092	0.701
SL92	0.501	0.058	0.722

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

4.1.7 Structural Model Assessment

The first step involved examining potential collinearity issues among the predictor variables. Following the criteria provided by Hair *et al.,* (2022) , we examined the inner VIF values. The values that have a 3.3 threshold standard indicate that multicollinearity does not bias the structural results. In the next step, we proceeded to assess the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The model also must show a good fit with the empirical data, as the SRMR value must be

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held below the recommended 0.08 benchmark. The results are presented in Table 5 and Table 6. The r-square values were calculated to identify the percentage of variance accounted for in both mental well-being and employee engagement to determine the explanatory capacity of the model, as shown in table 7. Meanwhile, the f-square effect sizes in table 8 were examined to ensure the relative contribution and strength of each individual construct within the model. These preliminary checks provide the necessary evidence of model quality before proceeding to the path analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 5. Colinearity Statistics - Inner VIF

	Employee Engagement	Mental Well-Being	Servant Leadership
Employee Engagement			
Mental Well-Being	1.015		
Servant Leadership	1.015	1.000	

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

We analyzed inner VIF values necessary for protecting the structural results from predictor correlation bias. This assessment followed the benchmarks set by Hair *et al.,* (2022) which suggest that values stay under 3.3 to prevent multicollinearity from distorting path estimates. The data indicates that the predictors for employee engagement, specifically servant leadership and mental well-being, both yielded VIF scores of 1.015. The link between servant leadership and mental well-being resulted in a VIF of 1.000. These numbers representated safely within the required range and the maximum limits, confirming that the model remains free from redundant overlaps.

Table 6. SRMR Result

	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.067

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was calculated to evaluate the overall fit of the structural model. This metric shows the average difference between the observed and expected correlations. Our study yielded an SRMR value of 0.067, which is below the 0.08 threshold recommended by Hair *et al.,* (2022) for establishing a good fit. This result indicates that the model statistically represents the empirical data. Thus, it confirms that the relationships modeled between servant leadership, mental well-being, and employee engagement are accurate.

Table 7. R-Square

	R Square
Employee Engagement	0.333
Mental Well-Being	0.015

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

The explanatory power of the structural model was evaluated through the r-square values for the endogenous constructs. Employee engagement achieved an r-square of 0.333, indicating that the model accounts for approximately 33.3% of the variance in how generation z workers engage with their roles. According to the benchmarks established by Hair *et al.,* (2022) this result represents a moderate

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level of predictive capability that is consistent with behavioral research examining complex workplace dynamics. On the contrary, the r-square for mental well-being was considerably low at 0.015, suggesting that servant leadership explains only a minimal portion of the variance in the psychological health of participants within this sample.

Table 8. F-Square Result

	Employee Engagement	Mental Well-Being	Servant Leadership
Employee Engagement			
Mental Well-Being	0.003		
Servant Leadership	0.479	0.015	

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

The f-square values were then examined to determine the relative strength and contribution of each predictor variable. The effect of servant leadership on employee engagement yielded a value of 0.479, which exceeds the 0.35 threshold and indicates a large effect size (Hair *et al.,* 2022). This finding demonstrates that leadership style is a dominant factor in shaping the engagement levels of younger employees. However, the influence of mental well-being on employee engagement produced a value of 0.003, which falls below the 0.02 cutoff for a small effect. Similarly, the relationship between servant leadership and mental well-being resulted in an f-square of 0.015, also representing a small effect. These effect sizes reveal that while servant leadership has a substantial direct impact on engagement, its ability to influence mental well-being is more limited in this context. The pattern of results suggests that the mediating role of mental well-being may be less pronounced than initially anticipated, with leadership behaviors driving engagement through mechanisms beyond psychological well-being alone.

4.1.8 Hypothesis Result

After we can be certain that the structural and measurement model assessments were consistent and met the established standards, we proceeded to analyze the hypothesis results. The hypotheses are presented in two parts: the direct hypothesis are shown in Table 9, while the indirect hypothesis are shown in Table 10.

Table 9. Hypothesis Result Direct Effect

Hypothesis		Path Coefficient	p-value	95% Confidence Intervals		Hypothesis Result
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
H1	Servant Leadership ➔ Mental Well-Being	0.121	0.254	-0.157	0.309	Not Supported
H2	Mental Well-Being ➔ Employee Engagement	0.047	0.667	-0.183	0.252	Not Supported
H3	Servant Leadership ➔ Employee Engagement	0.569	0.000	0.430	0.709	Supported

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

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The findings from the direct hypothesis testing reveal that only one of the three proposed relationships reached statistical significance. The link between servant leadership and employee engagement, represented by H3, shows a positive and highly significant path coefficient of 0.569 with a p-value of 0.000. Because the 95% confidence interval of 0.430 to 0.709 does not include zero, H3 is supported. This result shows that when leaders prioritize the growth and needs of their team, it serves as a main result for the motivation and dedication of the generation z workforce. The other two hypothesis H1 and H2 are failed to meet the standard for statistical significance of supported hypothesis. The impact of servant leadership on mental well-being in H1 produced a coefficient of 0.121 and a p-value of 0.254, with a confidence interval of -0.157 to 0.309 that crosses zero. Meanwhile, the result from mental well-being to employee engagement in H2 yielded a low coefficient of 0.047 and a p-value of 0.667. These data points indicate that while leadership behaviors directly influence how younger employees engagement, the mediated variable of mental well-being is not statistically proven has an effect in this matter either in servant leadership or the employee engagement.

Table 10. Hypothesis Result Indirect Effect

	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	p-value	95% Confidence Intervals		Hypothesis Result
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
H4	Servant Leadership ➔ Mental Well-Being ➔ Employee Engagement	0.006	0.750	-0.030	0.043	Not Supported

Source: *Author's own work (2026)*

The findings from the indirect hypothesis testing show that the mediating variable has no effect in mediating the connection between servant leadership and employee engagement. The results for H4 yielded a path coefficient of 0.006 with a p-value of 0.750. Because the confidence interval passes through zero, it provides evidence that the hypothesis is neither significant nor supported. This is also confirmed by the Upsilon value of 0.00002, which indicates that the variable lacks a meaningful connection within the mediation path.

4.2 Discussion

The findings provide important insights into the mechanisms through which servant leadership influences employee engagement among Generation Z employees. Contrary to our theoretical expectations, mental well-being was found to have neither a direct effect on employee engagement nor a mediating role in the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. In contrast, servant leadership demonstrated a strong and significant direct effect on employee engagement. These findings suggest that, within the context of this study, leadership-related resources may play a more immediate role in fostering engagement than psychological well-being resources.

The non-significant relationship between servant leadership and mental well-being differs from prior studies that reported positive associations between supportive leadership behaviors and employee psychological health (Erschens *et al.*, 2022; Kuchenbaur & Peter, 2022; Lundqvist *et al.*, 2022). One possible explanation is that mental well-being is influenced by a broader set of factors beyond

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workplace leadership, including personal circumstances, social support systems, economic conditions, and individual coping capacities. Given that Generation Z employees entered the workforce during a period characterized by rapid technological change and post-pandemic adjustment, their psychological well-being may be shaped by factors that extend beyond direct managerial influence. Consequently, servant leadership may be insufficient on its own to generate substantial improvements in employees' mental well-being.

Similarly, the absence of a significant relationship between mental well-being and employee engagement contrasts with previous studies that identified psychological well-being as an important predictor of engagement (Abdullah *et al.,* 2024; Ashraf & Siddiqui, 2020; Ayyashi *et al.,* 2024). Rather than suggesting that Generation Z employees can separate their psychological condition from their work engagement, the present findings indicate that the relationship between mental well-being and engagement may be more context-dependent than previously assumed. It is possible that other factors, such as career aspirations, learning opportunities, organizational support, meaningful work, or leadership quality, play a more prominent role in shaping engagement among younger employees. Therefore, the non-significant effect should be interpreted as evidence of potential boundary conditions rather than as proof that mental well-being is unimportant for Generation Z employees.

Consistent with previous servant leadership literature, the results demonstrate that servant leadership has a substantial positive effect on employee engagement. This finding suggests that employees respond positively to leaders who provide support, empowerment, developmental opportunities, and genuine concern for their well-being. For Generation Z employees, who often value mentorship, feedback, inclusion, and personal growth, servant leadership appears to create a work environment that encourages greater dedication, involvement, and commitment to organizational goals. The strong direct effect observed in this study indicates that servant leadership functions as a critical organizational resource capable of fostering employee engagement even in rapidly changing work environments.

The findings also contribute to the growing literature on Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. While COR Theory suggests that contextual resources may influence work outcomes through the development of personal resources, the present results indicate that resource transmission may not always occur through a sequential mediation process. Instead, organizational resources provided by servant leaders may directly enhance employee engagement without necessarily first improving employees' mental well-being. This finding extends the application of COR Theory by suggesting that different categories of resources may operate through distinct pathways depending on the organizational context and employee characteristics.

This study further contributes to the servant leadership literature by demonstrating that servant leadership remains highly relevant for Generation Z employees in the post-pandemic workplace. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on psychological outcomes, our findings highlight the direct motivational value of servant leadership in promoting engagement. Additionally, the study contributes to employee engagement research by identifying circumstances under which mental well-being may not function as the primary explanatory mechanism linking leadership and engagement. These findings encourage future research to examine alternative mediating variables, such as psychological empowerment, meaningful work, organizational identification, or perceived organizational support, that may better explain how servant leadership enhances employee engagement among younger generations.

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5. Concluding Remarks and Recommendation

This study found that servant leadership directly increases employee engagement for Generation Z, regardless of their mental well-being. While it is often thought that a leader usually cares about mental well-being to increase employee's engagement, our data shows these two factors are not strongly linked for this research. Instead, Generation Z seem to have a unique ability to keep their professional focus separate from their personal feelings.

The value of this research lies in its new perspective on how this generations behave in the organization. It reveals a specific trait in Generation Z which is the ability to separate effort from emotion that has not been widely studied. For organizations, this suggests a two-part strategy: companies should train managers in servant leadership to maintain high engagement, while simultaneously providing separate, specialized mental health resources in event that mental health deterioration occurs.

We acknowledge that this study has several limitations, particularly regarding the sample size of 148 participants, which may not fully represent the broader population. The research was also constrained by limited resources and time, and our reach was restricted by the reluctance of some potential respondents to participate. In future research, we also encourage others researcher to explore why the connection between a servant leader and employee engagement is so direct for this generation. Since mental well-being does not act as a bridge, we should investigate other factors like organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), employee resilience, or presenteeism. These variables might offer a new perspective to explain how Generation Z stays dedicated even when their mental well-being is not at its best. It would also be interesting to study if organizational transparency or job flexibility provides the missing link as a moderating or mediating variables. We believe the different areas will benefit researchers for a better understanding of this generation. This will help organizations build better systems that support the specific professional needs and the unique boundaries of Generation Z.

Statement of Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used generative artificial intelligence tools to support the scientific writing process. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author.

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