

Organizational trust among employees of a municipal local government unit in the Philippines: Its relationship with servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior of elected officials and immediate supervisors

Cayton, Timothy Joseph E.

LGU-Dupax del Norte, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines (TimCaytonDDN@gmail.com)

Ocampo, Imelda S. ✉

Nueva Vizcaya State University, Philippines (imeldasocampo@gmail.com)



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Abstract

This study explored the organizational trust of employees in the municipal local government unit of Dupax del Norte and its relationship with the servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behaviors of their immediate supervisors. Using a quantitative research design and a descriptive-correlation method, data were gathered from 113 regular employees, selected through Slovin's formula to ensure representativeness. Organizational trust was examined across dimensions of integrity, competence, dependability, transparency, and fairness, while servant leadership was assessed through empathy, stewardship, community building, foresight, and empowerment. Ethical leadership behaviors were evaluated in terms of purpose, pride, patience, persistence, and perspective. Findings revealed a very good level of organizational trust, particularly in integrity, competence, dependability, and transparency, while fairness was rated good. Supervisors were perceived to exhibit very good servant leadership skills across all dimensions and good ethical leadership behaviors in purpose, pride, and patience, with persistence and perspective rated very good. The study established strong, positive, and significant correlations between organizational trust and both servant leadership and ethical leadership. Additionally, a strong interrelation was observed between servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behaviors. Based on these findings, the study developed targeted organizational development (OD) interventions to enhance organizational trust and leadership effectiveness. Recommendations include replicating the study in different organizational settings using diverse designs to validate findings. Future research should integrate variables such as financial management, poverty alleviation programs, and socio-economic factors to identify their influence on trust and leadership. Employing mixed-method approaches, such as combining surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, is encouraged to gain deeper insights. Expanding research in these directions will enrich understanding of organizational behavior and foster leadership practices that promote trust and collaboration.

Keywords: organizational trust, servant leadership, ethical leadership behavior

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1. Introduction

Fostering organizational trust within government organizations worldwide is crucial for effective governance, community development, and public satisfaction. Trust is built on transparency, accountability, integrity, and effective communication. Essential practices include regularly publishing financial statements, updating project progress, and demonstrating ethical leadership. However, challenges such as political instability, corruption, and resource limitations often threaten trust-building efforts. In local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines, servant leadership and ethical leadership are pivotal to cultivating organizational trust. Servant leadership, focusing on serving others over exerting authority, aligns with public service ideals. Municipal leaders, particularly mayors, who embody humility, empathy, and service, foster trust and collaboration within their organizations. Ethical leadership, meanwhile, ensures organizational integrity by emphasizing moral principles, fairness, and accountability, especially vital amid political instability (Johnson, 2028).

Integrating servant and ethical leadership strengthens organizational trust by prioritizing community welfare and adhering to transparent, principled governance (Lee, 2028). Research highlights that trust underpins job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, and employee commitment (Noble-Nkrumah & Anyigba, 2022; Akar, 2018), while mistrust fosters turnover intentions and diminishes morale (Ababneh, 2020). Trust also influences the formation of psychological contracts—informal agreements shaping mutual expectations between employees and employers (Sarikaya & Kara, 2020). In this study, organizational trust is measured across five components: integrity, competence, dependability, transparency, and fairness. The concept of servant leadership, introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf and expanded by Larry C. Spears, emphasizes empathy, stewardship, and empowerment (Del Mundo, 2016). Servant leadership is essential for local officials to foster inclusivity, resource stewardship, and community engagement (Abiye, 2023). By empowering staff and addressing community needs, servant leaders enhance organizational effectiveness and public trust.

Similarly, ethical leadership is vital in today's complex environment. Historically, leaders were viewed as charismatic figures; however, the 21st century emphasizes ethical conduct and principled decision-making as essential leadership attributes (Özan, Özdemir, & Yirci, 2017). Blanchard (2020) further stresses purpose, pride, patience, and prioritizing ethical action as key dimensions of ethical leadership. Leaders must align actions with long-term values, fostering sustainable, integrity-driven governance. Despite robust individual research on organizational trust, servant leadership, and ethical leadership, there remains a gap in understanding their interrelationships. Empirical studies have seldom explored how servant and ethical leadership practices impact organizational trust comprehensively. Research questions include: How does servant leadership foster trust? How does ethical leadership influence perceptions of servant leadership? Do high-trust organizations naturally cultivate servant leadership practices?

In LGU Dupax del Norte, organizational trust underpins effective governance. The mayor's adoption of servant leadership prioritizes residents' welfare, while ethical leadership ensures fairness and accountability. Yet, challenges like resistance to change, competing stakeholder interests, resource limitations, and bureaucratic inefficiencies complicate leadership implementation. Institutionalizing a succession plan that embeds servant and ethical leadership principles into governance laws is recommended to ensure leadership continuity and safeguard public trust beyond political transitions. Establishing local policy frameworks will reinforce these leadership values at every administrative level, ensuring sustainable, effective governance. Finally, given the identified research gap, this investigation seeks to contribute empirical evidence on the correlations among organizational

trust, servant leadership, and ethical leadership, advancing strategies to foster ethical, trustworthy, and effective leadership practices within local government organizations.

2. Related Studies

This study is anchored on three core theories: Organizational Trust Theory (Mayer et al., 1995), Servant Leadership Theory (Greenleaf, 1970s), and Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown et al., 2015). Each provides a unique lens for understanding leadership and trust within organizations. Organizational Trust Theory (Mayer et al., 1995) defines trust as the willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations, emphasizing ability, benevolence, and integrity as key dimensions. Mishra and Mishra (2004) and Covey (2006) further expanded this framework, adding transparency, competence, dependability, and fairness as vital elements. Covey underscores that leaders with integrity, transparency, and competence foster organizational trust, creating environments of credibility and stability. Dirks and Ferrin (2022) affirm that trust correlates strongly with job satisfaction, commitment, and innovation, while also warning of the detrimental effects when trust deteriorates.

Servant Leadership Theory, introduced by Greenleaf (1970), redefines leadership as service. Spears (1995) identifies empathy, stewardship, community building, foresight, and empowerment as the essential characteristics of servant leaders. Research (Liden et al., 2018) shows that servant leadership enhances trust, organizational citizenship, and performance by prioritizing the growth and well-being of employees. In today's complex environment, servant leadership provides stability and a focus on ethical community-centered action. Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown et al., 2015) stresses the leader's role as a moral exemplar who models ethical behavior and promotes it through communication and reinforcement. Ethical leadership, closely tied to positive organizational outcomes like increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover (Kalshoven et al., 2021), aligns closely with servant leadership. Blanchard (2020) expands on this by highlighting purpose, pride, patience, persistence, and perspectives as critical components of ethical leadership. Leaders embodying these traits foster trust, ethical behavior, and organizational resilience.

The study assumes that organizational trust is fundamental to effective leadership. Servant leadership fosters trust through empathy and accountability, while ethical leadership reinforces it through fairness and moral integrity. A symbiotic relationship among organizational trust, servant leadership, and ethical leadership promotes a positive organizational culture. These theoretical foundations guide the researcher's framework, illustrated in the following paradigm: organizational trust as the independent variable, influencing servant leadership and ethical leadership as dependent variables. Together, these elements create a catalyst for leadership effectiveness and organizational success.

The present study was anchored on the conceptual frameworks of organizational trust articulated by Otto (2024) and Martic (2024). The researcher also incorporated key dimensions of organizational trust drawn from the works of Brown and Treviño (2018) on integrity, Kashyap and Rangnekar (2018) on competence, Puranam and Vanneste (2019) on dependability, Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) on transparency, and You (2022) on fairness. These conceptualizations formed the theoretical bedrock upon which the present investigation was built.

A comprehensive review of related studies further enriched the study's foundation. Notably, Basaran and Cakir (2023) examined the interplay between school happiness and teachers' organizational trust, while Jones et al. (2023) explored the relationships among organizational trust, job satisfaction, and psychological contract breach. Polat and Turhaner (2024) investigated inclusive leadership's influence on teachers' perceptions of organizational trust, and Bahadır and Levent (2022) analyzed the mediating role of locus of control between organizational trust and organizational cynicism. Similarly, Demir (2021) focused on the link between teachers' perceptions of organizational trust and their innovative behaviors. Although these studies addressed organizational trust, they diverge from the current study in terms of their research environments, frameworks, and respondent profiles. In contrast, the present research specifically examines organizational trust within the context of a municipal local government unit (LGU) in the Philippines.

Local studies also informed the development of this investigation. Reyes (2019) explored organizational trust, job satisfaction, and leadership styles within LGUs, aligning closely with the current study's focus but differing in respondent demographics and setting. Santos (2019) investigated organizational trust dynamics within Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) in the Southern Tagalog region, while Garcia (2019) studied organizational trust perceptions among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). Abdul (2021) examined organizational trust and servant leadership among elected officials in Tawi-Tawi Province. Although these studies share thematic similarities with the present research, distinctions remain regarding research approaches, target respondents, and contexts.

In conceptualizing servant leadership, the researcher drew heavily from Greenleaf's (1982) foundational work and subsequent contributions by Adda et al. (2020). Sendjaya et al. (2018) illuminated the positive outcomes of servant leadership on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Barbuto and Wheeler (2016) emphasized the role of empathy, Todd (2018) underscored stewardship, Abram (2018) highlighted community building, Spears (2020) stressed foresight, and Daniels (2017) discussed empowerment as a key trait of servant leaders. Collectively, these perspectives provided critical insights shaping the servant leadership framework adopted in this study. Further, several foreign studies explored servant leadership's impact across various settings. Dami et al. (2024) investigated trust, job satisfaction, leader-member exchange, and organizational citizenship behavior as outcomes of servant leadership. Kyambade et al. (2024) examined how fostering a sense of community moderated the relationship between servant leadership and socially responsible leadership. Johansen (2023) and Dagg (2024) respectively applied the servant leadership model within university and higher education settings. Despite thematic overlaps, these studies differ from the present investigation regarding methodology, participant demographics, and research locales.

Parallel local studies were also reviewed. Abdulrahem (2017) examined servant leadership and ethical behavior among provincial officials in Sulu, Santiago (2018) studied servant leadership among LGU officials in Batangas, and Dela Cruz (2019) assessed the impact of servant leadership on organizational performance among elected officials in Nueva Ecija. While these studies align in focusing on servant leadership within government settings, differences exist in terms of specific variables measured and frameworks utilized. The present study, however, uniquely correlates servant leadership skills with organizational trust and ethical leadership behavior. The development of the study's ethical leadership component was informed by key theoretical contributions. Treviño (2016) provided essential insights on ethical leadership's core principles, while Resick et al. (2021) demonstrated its impact on employee satisfaction. Eisenbeis (2021) emphasized the integration of personal moral integrity into ethical leadership, and Yukl et al. (2023) discussed its broader organizational outcomes. Huppenbauer (2017) highlighted ethical leadership's grounding in a higher moral purpose. Meanwhile, Kanungo and Mendonca (2021) explored pride, Riggio et al. (2018) focused on patience, Kalshoven et al. (2021) stressed persistence, and Leroy et al. (2015) added further dimensions to ethical leadership. These insights collectively informed the study's conceptualization of ethical leadership behavior.

Complementary foreign studies were also consulted. Papaloi et al. (2023) conducted multilevel analyses on ethical leadership and ethical climate, Siva et al. (2021) assessed ethical leadership practices among Malaysian public school leaders, Allen (2022) examined perceptions of supervisors' ethical leadership, and Sabir (2021) investigated school teachers' views on ethical leadership behaviors. While sharing ethical leadership as a research variable with the present study, these studies differ in terms of frameworks, respondent groups, instrumentation, and settings. Finally, local studies further contextualized the research. Hernando (2019) studied ethical leadership behaviors among government officials in Cebu, while Retonda (2019) explored how employees and private sector stakeholders perceive elected officials' ethical leadership. Tan (2019) examined the relationship between ethical leadership and job performance among Singaporean government workers, and Reyes (2019) investigated ethical leadership's connection to organizational commitment and trust. While sharing thematic similarities, these studies vary from the present investigation, which uniquely focuses on the interplay between organizational trust, servant leadership, and ethical leadership behavior among LGU employees.

Drawing from this extensive body of literature, the researcher synthesized foundational concepts and empirical findings to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework. The insights gathered served as a compass, guiding the conceptualization and ensuring a holistic approach to investigating the relationships among organizational trust, servant leadership skills, and ethical leadership behavior.

3. Methodology

Research Design. This study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a descriptive-correlational research procedure. Utilizing a quantitative research method that employs a descriptive-correlational procedure is crucial for studying organizational trust among employees in LGU Dupax del Norte, particularly in relation to servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior of their immediate supervisors. This approach allows for a systematic and objective analysis of how these leadership qualities impact employees' trust within the organization. By gathering numerical data through structured surveys or questionnaires, researchers can accurately measure levels of organizational trust and the presence of servant and ethical leadership behaviors.

Research Environment. The Municipal Local Government Unit (MLGU) of Dupax del Norte in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, serves as the research environment for this study. As a grassroots administrative body, the MLGU plays a pivotal role in community service delivery, sustainable development, and socio-economic progress. Led by the Municipal Mayor and the Sangguniang Bayan, the MLGU fosters inclusive growth through participatory governance, addressing key issues like infrastructure, health, education, and environmental conservation. The municipality emphasizes sustainable practices, such as community-based forest management, and invests in human resource development through educational and vocational programs. With a focus on transparency, accountability, disaster management, and cultural preservation, the MLGU has recently been awarded P1 million from the DOST for the SMARTER Community Program. Recognized as one of the most improved LGUs in Region 02 and with its Local Chief Executive honored as the Outstanding Local Chief Executive in 2023, Dupax del Norte exemplifies effective local governance, making it an ideal research environment.

Respondents of the Study. The respondents of this were the heads of offices, permanent, and casual employees of the municipal government unit of Dupax del Norte for the fiscal year 2024. All 16 heads of offices will be included as respondents using a purposive sampling technique. Of the 72 permanent employees, 55 (72.36 percent) will be selected as respondents, and of the 55 casual employees, 42 (76.36 percent) will be considered as respondents. The sample size was determined using the Slovin Formula. Taken as a whole, there are 113 or 79.02 percent from a total population of 143 as respondents of this study. The frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents of the Study

	Population	Sample	Percentage
Heads of Offices	16	16	100.00
Permanent	72	55	72.36
Casual	55	42	76.36
Total	143	113	79.02

Sampling Procedure. This study used purposive sampling to select 16 heads of offices and simple random sampling for permanent and casual employees, with respondents determined by the Slovin Formula (76.38%). Ethical considerations were prioritized, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Non-coercion principles were especially important for heads of offices to avoid perceived pressure. The research followed principles of beneficence and non-maleficence to maximize benefits and minimize harm. Fair participant selection ensured statistical validity, and ethical reporting was emphasized for transparency and accuracy. This approach ensures the study's credibility while protecting the rights and well-being of all participants at MLGU Dupax del Norte.

Research Instrument. In order to gather the needed data for this research investigation, the following research instruments were utilized:

Organizational Trust Survey Questionnaire. This is a 30-item questionnaire to measure the dimensions of integrity, competence, dependability, transparency, and fairness, developed and validated by Castriciones et al. (2024) with a reliability coefficient of 0.786 indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency. This coefficient suggests that the questionnaire is a dependable tool for measuring the constructs of organizational trust, providing a solid foundation for its use in future research applications.

Servant Leadership Skills Questionnaire. This is a 30-item questionnaire aimed at assessing dimensions such as empathy, stewardship, community building, foresight, and empowerment developed and validated by Ordoñez et al. (2024) with a reliability coefficient of 0.791, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency. This coefficient demonstrates that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for measuring the intended constructs, providing confidence in its effectiveness for future research applications.

Ethical Leadership Behavior Questionnaire. This 30-item questionnaire, developed and validated by Aguila et al. (2024), is designed to assess key dimensions of ethical leadership: purpose, pride, patience, persistence, and perspective. The questionnaire underwent rigorous content validation by experts in the field to ensure that its content accurately reflects the intended constructs. Furthermore, reliability testing was conducted to verify the consistency and precision of the instrument across diverse respondents, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.752. This coefficient signifies a satisfactory level of internal consistency, confirming the questionnaire's effectiveness in measuring these critical dimensions of ethical leadership.

Data Gathering Procedure. To collect data, the researcher followed a structured protocol. Initially, the questionnaires were prepared and reproduced, with formal approval obtained from the Dean, Graduate School Chairperson, and academic adviser. After securing approval, questionnaires were distributed to participants, with clear explanations of the study's purpose and instructions to ensure honest, thoughtful responses. Once data collection was completed, a rigorous statistical analysis was conducted to address the research questions. This approach ensured valid, reliable results and maintained methodological rigor and research integrity, contributing to meaningful findings that enhance the understanding of the research topic.

Statistical Treatment of Data. The data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed using the following statistical tools.

Mean. This was utilized to determine the perceived organizational trust, servant leaderships skills, and ethical leadership behavior of the respondents.

Pearson-r. This was used to determine the significant relationship between the respondents' perceived organizational trust, servant leaderships skills, and ethical leadership behavior.

4. Results and Discussion

Problem 1. How do the employees in the municipal local government unit of Dupax del Norte perceived their organizational trust along the dimensions of integrity, competence, dependability, transparency, and fairness?

Table 2 shows the respondents' perception of their organizational integrity along the different dimensions or components. The respondents' perception of organizational trust is notably positive, with a grand mean of 3.57, indicating that overall, trust within the organization is rated as "Very Good." This suggests a strong foundation of trust among employees across various dimensions. Competence emerged as the highest-rated dimension, with a mean score of 3.67. This reflects a strong confidence in the organization's ability to effectively carry out tasks and make competent decisions. Employees believe that their organization possesses the skills and expertise necessary to succeed, which significantly reinforces trust.

Table 2*Mean and Qualitative Description of the Respondents' Perception of their Organizational Trust (n=113)*

Organizational Trust	Mean	Qualitative Description
Integrity	3.56	Very Good
Competence	3.67	Very Good
Dependability	3.63	Very Good
Transparency	3.61	Very Good
Fairness	3.38	Good
Grand Mean	3.57	Very Good
Organizational Trust		

Following closely, Dependability scored a mean of 3.63. This indicates that respondents trust the organization to be reliable and consistent in fulfilling its commitments, which is a critical factor in maintaining long-term trust. Employees feel assured that the organization will deliver on promises and act in a predictable and trustworthy manner. Transparency, with a mean of 3.61, also scored highly, reflecting respondents' belief that the organization is open, honest, and forthcoming with information. A culture of openness fosters trust by ensuring that employees feel informed and that there is no hidden agenda. Integrity received a mean score of 3.56, which further reinforces the overall trust level, as employees view the organization as ethical and morally upright in its dealings. This dimension highlights the importance of honesty and ethical behavior in building trust.

While still positive, Fairness received the lowest score, with a mean of 3.38, rated as "Good." This suggests that while the organization is seen as generally fair, there is a perception that there could be improvements in how equitably and justly decisions are made, especially in terms of rewards, opportunities, and treatment of employees. In conclusion, the respondents' perception of organizational trust is strong, with particularly high ratings for competence, dependability, transparency, and integrity. However, there is a slight concern regarding fairness, indicating a potential area for the organization to focus on to strengthen trust further. Overall, the data suggest that the organization has built a solid trust foundation, but attention to fairness could enhance this trust even more.

These findings align with Otto (2024), who highlights the critical role of organizational trust, particularly in the context of promoting good governance. Organizational trust extends beyond confidence in individual teams, encompassing the organization's mission, the vision of senior leadership, and the overall organizational culture. It represents employees' confidence in the organization's actions and long-term sustainability. This type of trust is not limited to trust in managers or colleagues; it also includes trust in systemic factors such as workplace diversity, ethical practices, and the fairness of organizational processes. Such trust is essential for maintaining employee commitment and motivation, driving them to contribute fully to the organization's success. Without organizational trust, even the most well-crafted business strategies can fail, as a lack of trust diminishes employee engagement and effort (Otto, 2024).

Problem 2. What is the perception of the respondents of the servant leadership skills of their immediate supervisors along the dimensions of empathy, stewardships, community building, foresight, and empowerment?

Table 3 below shows the respondents' perception of the servant leadership skills of their immediate supervisors along the different dimensions or components. The data on the servant leadership skills of the respondents' immediate supervisors reveals a grand mean of 3.57, indicating a very good overall perception of servant leadership within the organization. A closer examination of the individual dimensions highlights some key strengths. Foresight emerges as the top-rated dimension, with a mean score of 3.86. This suggests that supervisors possess a remarkable ability to anticipate future challenges and opportunities, an essential skill for navigating the complexities of the organizational landscape and making informed strategic decisions.

Following closely is Community Building, which scored 3.84. This indicates that supervisors excel in creating an inclusive and collaborative work environment, fostering strong relationships among team members and promoting a sense of belonging. Such a supportive culture not only enhances teamwork but also drives

employee morale and engagement. The dimension of Empathy received a mean score of 3.81, underscoring the supervisors' commitment to understanding and sharing the feelings of their team members. This emotional intelligence is pivotal in building trust and rapport, enabling supervisors to connect with their employees on a deeper level and address their needs effectively. Empowerment follows with a score of 3.73, demonstrating that supervisors effectively encourage their team members to take initiative and ownership of their work. This empowerment promotes a proactive and engaged workforce, where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts.

Table 3

Mean and Qualitative Description of the Respondents' Perception of the Servant Leadership Skills of their Immediate Supervisors (n=113)

Servant Leadership Skills	Mean	Qualitative Description
Empathy	3.81	Very Good
Stewardship	3.56	Very Good
Community Building	3.84	Very Good
Foresight	3.86	Very Good
Empowerment	3.73	Very Good
Grand Mean	3.57	Very Good
Servant Leadership		

Finally, while Stewardship ranks lowest with a mean of 3.56, it still reflects a very good perception. This suggests that supervisors are generally effective in managing resources responsibly and aligning their actions with the organization's values. However, there is potential for further development in ensuring that stewardship practices are consistently upheld across the organization. The data above indicates that respondents perceive their immediate supervisors as effective servant leaders, particularly excelling in foresight and community building. These attributes are vital for fostering a proactive, inclusive, and supportive organizational culture that not only enhances employee satisfaction but also drives overall performance.

The above findings are supported by the concept of servant leadership, first introduced by Greenleaf (1982), which advocates a leadership philosophy that prioritizes serving others over the pursuit of power or personal gain. Greenleaf argues that true leadership arises from a profound desire to serve, focusing on the growth and well-being of followers and their communities (What Is Servant Leadership? 2018). This approach inverts the traditional power pyramid, placing the needs of others at the forefront.

Servant leaders are distinguished by their empathy, active listening skills, and commitment to empowering those around them (Adda et al., 2020). They strive to cultivate a work environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and encouraged to reach their full potential. This emphasis on personal development and well-being extends beyond the workplace, as servant leaders promote a holistic approach that considers the broader needs of the community and society as a whole.

Problem 3. What is the perception of the respondents of the ethical leadership behavior of their immediate supervisors along the dimension of purpose, pride, patience, persistence, and perspectives.

Table 4 below shows the mean and qualitative descriptions of the perception of the respondents of the ethical leadership behavior of their immediate supervisors. The respondents perceived the ethical leadership behavior of their immediate supervisors as "Very Good," with a grand mean score of 3.48. Among the dimensions assessed, Persistence received the highest mean score of 3.75, indicating that supervisors demonstrate a strong commitment to staying focused on goals despite challenges. Following closely is Perspective, which scored 3.74, reflecting supervisors' ability to consider different viewpoints and understand the broader context of their decisions. Purpose and Pride both scored 3.37 and 3.33, respectively, indicating that supervisors are seen as having clear goals and instilling a sense of pride in their team members. Lastly, Patience had the lowest score at 3.23, but it still falls within the "Good" category, suggesting that supervisors generally exhibit the patience necessary for effective leadership, though there may be room for improvement in this area. Overall, the findings highlight a strong perception of ethical leadership among supervisors, particularly in their

persistence and ability to maintain perspective.

Table 4

Mean and Qualitative Description of the Respondents' Perception the Ethical Leadership Behavior of their Immediate Supervisors (n=113)

Ethical Leadership Behavior	Mean	Qualitative Description
Purpose	3.37	Good
Pride	3.33	Good
Patience	3.23	Good
Persistence	3.75	Very Good
Perspective	3.74	Very Good
Grand Mean	3.48	Very Good
		Ethical Leadership Behavior

The results find support from Treviño (2016), who emphasizes that ethical leadership involves integrating ethical standards into daily business operations and decision-making processes. This leadership style underscores the importance of leaders serving as role models, exemplifying high ethical standards to foster an organizational environment where ethical behavior becomes the norm rather than the exception. In the realm of good governance, ethical leadership holds particular significance. Leaders who prioritize ethical practices contribute to transparency, accountability, and fairness within their organizations. They establish policies and systems that promote ethical behavior, reduce opportunities for unethical conduct, and implement mechanisms to address ethical breaches when they arise. Additionally, ethical leaders engage in open and honest communication, which builds trust and nurtures a culture of integrity throughout the organization.

Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived organizational trust of the respondents and their perceived servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior of their immediate supervisors?

Table 5

Correlation Coefficient Between the Perceived Organizational Trust of the Respondents and the Servant Leadership Skills of their Immediate Supervisor (n=113)

Compared Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Critical r-value	Coefficient of Determination	Statistical Inference
Organizational Trust				
VS	0.781	0.189	61.00%	Very Significant
Servant Leadership Skills	(high positive correlation)			

Degrees of Freedom: 111

Level of Significance: 0.05

The analysis reveals a strong positive correlation of 0.781 between perceived organizational trust and the servant leadership skills demonstrated by immediate supervisors among the respondents. This significant correlation indicates that as employees perceive their supervisors to embody servant leadership qualities, their trust in the organization correspondingly increases. A critical r-value of 0.189 supports the statistical significance of this correlation, confirming that the relationship observed is not due to chance. With a significance level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom at 111, the results are strong and highlight the importance of servant leadership in promoting trust within the workplace. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Moreover, the coefficient of determination stands at 61.00%, suggesting that a substantial 61% of the variation in organizational trust can be accounted for by the servant leadership behaviors of supervisors. This finding underscores the profound impact that effective servant leadership can have on fostering a positive organizational climate. Conversely, this implies a 39% coefficient of alienation, indicating that 39% of the variation in organizational trust is influenced by other factors outside of servant leadership. These could include organizational culture, communication practices, or external market conditions, which also play significant roles in shaping employees' trust in their organization.

In practical terms, the results indicate that organizations should focus on developing and enhancing servant leadership skills among their leaders. By doing so, they can cultivate an environment where employees feel

valued, supported, and trusted. This not only strengthens relationships within the organization but also enhances overall employee engagement and satisfaction. Ultimately, these findings advocate for a leadership approach that prioritizes empathy, collaboration, and community, which are essential for nurturing trust and commitment among employees. Furthermore, recognizing the 39% of factors contributing to alienation emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to improving organizational trust, addressing multiple elements beyond leadership alone.

The above findings are supported by the study of Polat and Turhaner (2024), which examined the relationship between inclusive leadership and teachers' perceptions of organizational trust within educational institutions in Türkiye. Their findings revealed a strong positive correlation between inclusive leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of organizational trust, similar to the significant correlation observed between organizational trust and servant leadership behavior in the current research. Specifically, Polat and Turhaner found that inclusive leadership behaviors significantly influenced teachers' trust in their educational institutions, enhancing positive perceptions of institutional trust. This parallels the high positive correlation of 0.781 found between perceived organizational trust and servant leadership skills in the current study, highlighting how leadership styles that prioritize the well-being and empowerment of followers foster a culture of trust. The findings reinforce the critical importance of servant leadership in fostering organizational trust, emphasizing the need for leaders in any institutions to adopt servant leadership practices to enhance trust among members and create a supportive and inclusive environment for all staff members. Moreover, this is supported by Santos (2019), who highlights a positive correlation between organizational trust and both servant leadership skills and quality of work life. The study delves into how servant leadership behaviors—specifically empathy, empowerment, and stewardship—serve as mediators in the relationship between organizational trust and employees' perceptions of their work environment. This underscores the vital role that servant leadership plays in enhancing trust within organizations and improving the overall quality of the work experience for employees.

Table 6

Correlation Coefficient Between the Perceived Organizational Trust of the Respondents and the Ethical Leadership Behavior of Their Immediate Supervisor (n=113)

Compared Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Critical r-value	Coefficient of Determination	Statistical Inference
Organizational Trust				
VS	0.725	0.192	53.00%	Very Significant
Ethical Leadership Behavior	(high positive correlation)			

Degrees of Freedom: 111

Level of Significance: 0.05

The analysis of the correlation between perceived organizational trust and the ethical leadership behavior of immediate supervisors among the respondents reveals a strong positive correlation of 0.725. This indicates that as employees perceive their supervisors to exhibit ethical leadership behaviors, their trust in the organization tends to increase correspondingly. The critical r-value of 0.192 suggests that the relationship observed is statistically significant, meaning it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. With degrees of freedom set at 111 and a significance level of 0.05, these results highlight the reliability of the findings. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. The coefficient of determination is calculated at 53.00%, indicating that 53% of the variation in organizational trust can be attributed to the ethical leadership behaviors displayed by supervisors. This underscores the substantial role that ethical leadership plays in cultivating trust within the workplace. However, this also implies a 47% coefficient of alienation, indicating that 47% of the variation in organizational trust is influenced by factors other than ethical leadership. These could encompass various elements such as organizational policies, team dynamics, communication practices, and broader cultural or environmental influences.

In practical terms, these findings suggest that organizations should prioritize the development of ethical leadership qualities among their supervisors. Leaders who model ethical behavior can create a more trustworthy

environment, thereby enhancing employees' trust in the organization. The 53% impact of ethical leadership on organizational trust indicates that fostering ethical practices can lead to a more engaged and loyal workforce. Additionally, acknowledging the 47% of factors contributing to alienation emphasizes the need for organizations to adopt a comprehensive approach to building trust. This approach should involve addressing various elements beyond leadership alone, such as reinforcing ethical standards at all organizational levels, promoting open communication, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture. By doing so, organizations can further enhance trust and commitment among their employees.

The above correlation is further supported by the findings of Garcia (2019), who investigated the perception of organizational trust among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) of the Philippines. This study specifically aimed to understand how ethical leadership behavior influences organizational trust within SK structures. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, Garcia conducted quantitative surveys alongside qualitative interviews with a sample of SK officials. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between organizational trust and ethical leadership behavior, suggesting that officials who exhibit integrity, fairness, and transparency are more successful in fostering trust among their peers and constituents. This indicates that ethical leadership behaviors are crucial for establishing and maintaining a culture of trust within organizations. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of accountability mechanisms—such as transparency in decision-making and responsiveness to community needs—in enhancing perceptions of trustworthiness.

These insights reinforce the understanding that ethical leadership behavior plays a vital role in building organizational trust, which is essential for effective governance in local government settings. By promoting ethical leadership practices, organizations can strengthen trust among their members, ultimately leading to improved collaboration, communication, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Problem 5. Is there a significant relationship between servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior of immediate supervisors as perceived by the respondents?

Data in Table 7 below show the correlation coefficient of 0.836 between perceived servant leadership skills and the ethical leadership behavior of respondents' immediate supervisors indicates a high positive correlation. This suggests a strong relationship between the two variables, meaning that as the perception of servant leadership skills increases, the perception of ethical leadership behavior also tends to increase correspondingly.

Table 7

Correlation Coefficient Between the Perceived Servant Leadership Skills and the Ethical Leadership Behavior of the Respondents' Immediate Supervisors (n=113)

Compared Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Critical r-value	Coefficient of Determination	Statistical Inference
Servant Leadership Skills	0.836 (high positive correlation)	0.192	69.89%	Very Significant
VS Ethical Leadership Behavior				

Degrees of Freedom: 111

Level of Significance: 0.05

The critical r-value of 0.192 serves as a benchmark for determining statistical significance. Given that the calculated correlation coefficient of 0.836 significantly exceeds this critical value, we can conclude that the correlation is very significant leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Additionally, the coefficient of determination of 69.89% implies that approximately 69.89% of the variance in ethical leadership behavior can be explained by the servant leadership skills perceived by the respondents. However, it is also essential to consider the coefficient of alienation, which is 30.11%. This figure indicates that about 30.11% of the variance in ethical leadership behavior is unexplained by servant leadership skills. This remaining variance could be attributed to

other factors, such as organizational culture, individual values, or external influences that also play a role in shaping ethical leadership behaviors.

In practical terms, this finding underscores the importance of servant leadership qualities—such as empathy, listening, and commitment to the growth of others—in promoting ethical leadership behaviors among supervisors. Organizations aiming to foster ethical behavior in leadership may benefit from developing and enhancing servant leadership practices, as these skills appear to be strongly linked to the ethical conduct of leaders. However, they should also consider other contributing factors that may affect ethical leadership behavior to develop a comprehensive approach to leadership development.

The above findings are supported by Reyes (2019), who explored the relationship between ethical leadership behavior and organizational commitment and trust among government employees in the City of Malabon, Philippines. The study examined ethical leadership behaviors through dimensions such as integrity, fairness, transparency, and accountability. In assessing organizational commitment and trust as critical outcomes influencing employee engagement and performance, the preliminary findings revealed that ethical leadership behaviors significantly influence both organizational commitment and trust among government employees. Notably, the study identified positive correlations between perceived ethical leadership and employees' commitment to organizational goals, as well as their trust in their leaders. These results indicate that when leaders demonstrate ethical behavior, they are more likely to cultivate a committed workforce that trusts their guidance and decisions. This reinforces the notion that ethical leadership is crucial in fostering a supportive work environment, which in turn enhances employee satisfaction and retention.

By highlighting the significance of ethical leadership, Reyes's research contributes to the broader literature on leadership and organizational behavior, particularly in the context of public sector governance. The practical implications of the study include recommendations for leadership development programs focused on promoting ethical practices. These insights align with the findings that ethical leadership behavior and ethical leadership skills are significantly correlated, suggesting that developing ethical leadership skills among leaders can effectively enhance their ethical behaviors, ultimately benefiting organizational dynamics and employee engagement in local government settings.

5. Conclusions

- The respondents have a very good level of organizational trust particularly along the dimensions of integrity, competence, dependability, and transparency; and good along the dimension of fairness.
- The respondents perceived the servant leadership skills of their immediate supervisor as very good in all its dimensions like empathy, stewardship, community building, foresight, and empowerment.
- The respondents perceived the ethical leadership behavior of their immediate supervisors as good particularly along the dimension of purpose, pride, and patience; but very good along persistence and perspectives.
- There is a strong positive and very significant correlation between the perceived organizational trust of the respondents and their immediate supervisors' servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior.
- There is a strong positive and very significant correlation between the servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior of the immediate supervisors as perceived by the respondents.
- The researcher developed OD intervention programs distinct for each of the significant findings of the study and offered several actions and strategies for its implementation.

5.1 Recommendations

- To further enhance organizational trust, particularly in the dimensions of integrity, competence, dependability, and transparency, the organization should implement regular training programs focused on ethical practices and accountability. Additionally, fostering open communication channels where employees can voice their concerns and suggestions will reinforce transparency and integrity. Implementing a feedback mechanism that allows employees to assess leadership practices can provide valuable insights and improve perceptions of fairness.
- Given the positive perception of servant leadership skills among immediate supervisors, the organization should promote a culture of servant leadership by providing ongoing professional development opportunities. Workshops and seminars focusing on empathy, stewardship, community building, foresight, and empowerment can deepen supervisors' understanding and application of these skills. Furthermore, establishing mentoring programs can enable experienced leaders to share best practices and encourage the adoption of servant leadership principles throughout the organization.
- To strengthen ethical leadership behavior, particularly in the dimensions of purpose, pride, and patience, the organization should develop a clear ethical framework and conduct regular training sessions on ethical decision-making. Recognizing and rewarding ethical behavior among supervisors can enhance their sense of pride and motivate them to embody these qualities consistently. Furthermore, promoting a culture that values patience and understanding in leadership decisions will foster a supportive environment for employees.
- Given the strong positive correlation between perceived organizational trust and supervisors' servant and ethical leadership skills, the organization should integrate leadership development initiatives that emphasize building trust. These initiatives could include team-building exercises, leadership retreats, and workshops focused on enhancing emotional intelligence and relational skills. Regular assessments of trust levels within teams can guide targeted interventions to address any emerging issues.
- To capitalize on the significant correlation between servant leadership skills and ethical leadership behavior, the organization should create an integrated leadership development program that combines elements of both leadership styles. This program can focus on training supervisors in areas such as ethical reasoning, servant leadership practices, and the importance of role modeling for their teams. Facilitating collaborative projects where supervisors can practice these skills in tandem can further reinforce their application.
- The researcher's development of OD intervention programs should be accompanied by a structured implementation plan that includes clear objectives, timelines, and responsible parties for each strategy. Conducting pilot programs in select departments can help refine the interventions based on feedback before broader implementation. Additionally, establishing metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions will ensure continuous improvement and adaptation to the evolving needs of the organization. Regular review sessions should be held to assess progress and make necessary adjustments to the strategies based on emerging organizational dynamics.
- It is recommended that this study be replicated in various research environments using different research designs to validate and enhance the findings. Conducting similar research in diverse organizational contexts will deepen the understanding of constructs like organizational trust, servant leadership skills, and ethical leadership behavior. Additionally, including other variables such as financial management, poverty alleviation programs, and socio-economic demographic factors could reveal their potential roles as determinants or correlates. Employing mixed methods approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, will provide richer data and insights. Expanding the scope of research in this way will strengthen the internal consistency of

the constructs and contribute to the broader understanding of organizational behavior and effective leadership practices.

6. References

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