

The Role Of Servant Leadership And Knowledge Acquisition On Employee Performance With Self-Efficacy As An Intervening Variable At The Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the mediating role of self-efficacy on the influence of servant leadership and knowledge acquisition in improving teacher performance at the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation. The background of this study is based on the importance of improving teacher performance in facing the dynamics of educational change, developments in learning technology, and demands for continuous improvement in the quality of Islamic educational institutions. This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research method. Data collection techniques were carried out by distributing questionnaires to 100 teachers at the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation. The sampling method used was purposive sampling. Data analysis was performed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS 4 software. The results showed that servant leadership did not have a significant direct effect on self-efficacy, while knowledge acquisition had a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy. Furthermore, servant leadership, knowledge acquisition, and self-efficacy were proven to have a significant effect on employee performance. However, self-efficacy was not able to mediate the effect of servant leadership on employee performance, while self-efficacy was proven to mediate the effect of knowledge acquisition on employee performance. These findings indicate that improving teacher performance is more effectively achieved by strengthening the knowledge acquisition process, which can increase teachers' self-efficacy in carrying out their duties.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Knowledge Acquisition, Self Efficacy, Employee Performance.

A. INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance is a key factor in the success of Islamic educational institutions in facing the dynamics of educational change, the development of learning technology, and the demands for continuous improvement in educational quality. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as mentors, motivators, and role models in shaping the character of students. Therefore, employee performance is a crucial indicator in determining the overall quality of Islamic educational institutions. In efforts to improve teacher performance, the role of leadership is crucial. The servant leadership approach is considered relevant because it prioritizes service to team members, supports personal and professional growth, and creates a positive work climate. This leadership style has been proven to contribute to increased employee satisfaction and performance. (Chen et al., 2022).

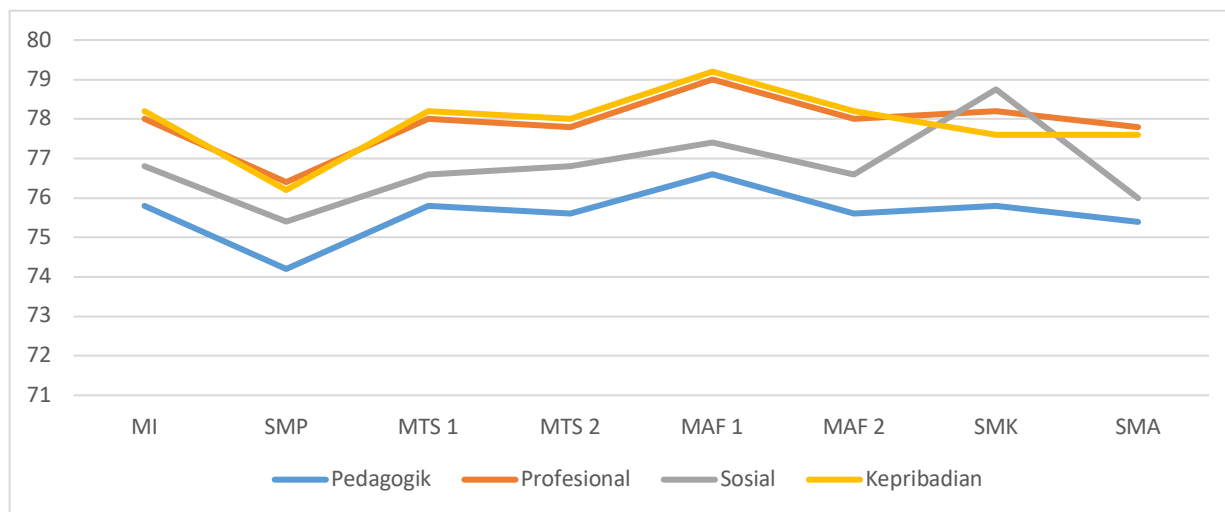
Besides leadership, another crucial factor is knowledge acquisition. Knowledge acquisition is the process of acquiring, understanding, and internalizing new information and skills from various sources,

which can then be applied in the workplace. This process involves more than just receiving information; it also involves interpreting, remembering, and utilizing knowledge in real-world work situations.(Abdollahi et al., 2025)emphasizes that knowledge acquisition is a fundamental component of absorptive capacity, supporting innovation, creativity, and an organization's competitive advantage. In other words, organizations with a strong knowledge acquisition culture will adapt more quickly to changes in the external environment. Knowledge acquisition is part of knowledge management, enabling individuals and organizations to update skills, enhance creativity, and strengthen competitive advantage. In education, knowledge acquisition is crucial because teachers are required to continuously update their knowledge in line with developments in science, technology, and the dynamics of the national curriculum.

On the other hand, psychological factors in the form of self-efficacy also influence teacher performance.(Wickramasinghe & Mallawaarachchi, 2022)Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief or confidence in their ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and actions required to successfully complete a specific task in a given context. Self-efficacy is formed through four aspects: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological conditions. Teachers with high self-efficacy will be more confident in using new methods, persistent in the face of difficulties, and more adaptive to change. In the context of education, teacher self-efficacy is a highly relevant issue. Teachers with low self-efficacy are often reluctant to use digital technology or implement innovative learning methods. Conversely, teachers with high self-efficacy are more creative and adaptive, thus contributing directly to improving the quality of learning. Therefore, this study positions self-efficacy as an intervening variable that plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance. Although many studies highlight servant leadership, knowledge management, and self-efficacy, most studies still focus on the business and industrial sectors. Research in the education sector, especially Islamic education, is still relatively limited. This creates a research gap that needs to be answered, because Islamic educational institutions have unique characteristics, both in terms of organizational culture and educational goals.

This phenomenon is also experienced by various Islamic educational institutions in Demak, Central Java, one of which is the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation. The Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation is one of the largest Islamic educational institutions in Demak Regency, covering levels from kindergarten to high school. The 2020-2024 Teacher Performance Evaluation Data at the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation includes the following:

Chart 1Average Teacher Performance Evaluation for 2020-2024
Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation



Source: Futuhiyyah Mranggen Foundation 2024

The table above shows that teacher performance at various levels of education has consistently declined between 2020 and 2024. This decline occurred across nearly all competency aspects, particularly pedagogical and professional competencies. Therefore, evaluation and strengthening of teacher competency development are necessary to improve the quality of learning and education.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant Leadership

Leadership can be likened to a pilot piloting an airplane, who is responsible for ensuring the safe arrival of all cabin crew and passengers. The pilot must be able to direct the team, make wise decisions, and maintain coordination with the team to ensure everything goes according to plan. (Sunarso, 2023) Leadership is defined as the ability or intelligence of a person to motivate a group of people to work together to carry out activities directed toward a common goal. Today's leadership faces complex and dynamic challenges, both in business organizations, education, and the public sector. Leadership places particular emphasis on a leader's ability to serve their followers through moral, spiritual, and cultural approaches.

According to (Ariyanti et al., 2021) Servant leadership is a natural feeling of wanting to serve others or employees first as a top priority and treating subordinates as co-workers for the sake of realizing organizational goals and for the long-term well-being of employees. Recent research shows that the implementation of servant leadership is not only based on universal values but is also influenced by religiosity and organizational culture. (Alenazy & Alsulami, 2025) confirms that servant leadership enhances faculty loyalty among employees working at the State University of Saudi Arabia. Adapting servant leadership principles to accommodate the university's unique cultural context is crucial for university leaders in fostering a thriving academic community where faculty are valued, supported, and engaged in the institution's success. This demonstrates how cultural dimensions can strengthen the effectiveness of a servant-based leadership style.

In the context of education, research (Ricky, 2025) explains that the integration of servant leadership with coaching practices can form transformative leadership rooted in spirituality and divine calling. Meanwhile, according to (Ruata & Tung, 2024) The servant leadership demonstrated by the principal is an adaptation of servant leadership. Every teacher should experience spiritual formation because students observe and emulate their teachers. Teachers must first undergo this spiritual formation. When teachers are spiritually formed and grow, it will have a significant impact on students.

In this approach, leadership is not only oriented towards achieving organizational goals, but also focuses on developing the personal, emotional and spiritual aspects of its members. (Rumengan & Idawati, 2024) There are five indicators of servant leadership. These are empathy and concern, emotional and moral support, building a collaborative climate, empowerment and encouragement of self-development, and strengthening social responsibility.

Knowledge Acquisition

Draft Knowledge management is not a new concept, this concept is commonly known and clearly identified in large information technology-based organizations. And in practice, even small-scale organizations can apply this concept, but with more limited aspects. (Innuuridz Wahid et al., 2021). According to (Houessou et al., 2023) Knowledge acquisition is the process of acquiring available knowledge and refers to the use of existing knowledge or the acquisition of new knowledge. This process enables individuals to broaden their knowledge and skills, thereby improving employee performance, particularly in terms of adaptability, decision-making quality, innovation, and achieving work goals.

Knowledge acquisition in Islamic education understood as the process of acquiring, validating and internalizing knowledge through the integration of revelation (Naqliyyah), reason ('Aqliyyah) and experience (Tajribi) whose aim is not just the transfer of knowledge but also the formation of the morals and character of students. (Asyibli et al., 2025) At the individual level, knowledge acquisition is a series of activities or processes of searching for, identifying, processing, and selecting information, ideas, and knowledge originating from external sources within the organization to enhance the knowledge that the individual has previously mastered. (Sahibzada et al., 2020) External information obtained through various sources undergoes a selection process and is then integrated with the individual's existing internal knowledge. The results of this integration are then stored in cognitive memory, perceptions, and beliefs, and manifested in the individual's skills and capacities. (Yahya, 2021).

Based on the book *Strategies of Knowledge Acquisition* work (Kuhn et al., 1995) Knowledge acquisition is an active and reflective process in which a person not only gathers information but also seeks to align existing theories or beliefs with new evidence gained from experience or research. Indicators of knowledge acquisition include the following: Coordination of theory and evidence, strategic development, metacognitive competence, and metastrategic competence.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity to successfully complete a particular task or problem. A high level of self-efficacy will encourage individuals to persist in the face of obstacles, while low self-efficacy tends to hinder efforts and lead to avoidance of tasks perceived as difficult.(Putri, 2025). In the study(Maran & Elisabeth, 2023)Self-efficacy plays a role in successfully instilling a love of batik culture in children. Confidence in understanding, appreciating, and adopting cultural values forms a solid foundation for their involvement in the cultural preservation process. Self-efficacy indicates a person's belief in their abilities, such as completing education, obtaining desired employment, coping skills, performing tasks or jobs well, resolving work-related problems, and being able to persuade colleagues.

(Basileo et al., 2024) In his research entitled "The Role of Self-Efficacy, Motivation, and Perceived Support of Autonomy in Student Achievement," he explains that self-efficacy is understood as an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task or achieve a certain level of performance, which in turn can influence various events and outcomes in their lives. In other words, self-efficacy is not just a general sense of self-confidence, but rather a person's specific perception of their capacity to face demands and achieve desired goals. Meanwhile, research(Wiwanda; & Fadiah, 2024)explains that self-efficacy can be understood as an individual's belief in their ability to design, organize, and execute the actions necessary to complete a task and achieve a specific goal. In other words, self-efficacy emphasizes a person's confidence in their capacity to face challenges, manage strategies, and optimize efforts to achieve desired results.

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability or capacity to organize, manage, and carry out the actions necessary to complete tasks and achieve desired goals. This concept is not merely a general sense of self-confidence, but rather more specifically a person's perception of their effectiveness in facing certain challenges. A high level of self-efficacy will encourage individuals to be more persistent, diligent, and able to master difficult tasks, while low self-efficacy often leads to avoidance, procrastination, and a lack of effort in the face of obstacles. Thus, self-efficacy can be seen as an important psychological capital, not only in academic and work contexts, but also in social and cultural life, because it plays a role in determining an individual's success in learning, working, solving problems, and adapting to various situations. According to(Ferdiansyah et al., 2020)Self-efficacy significantly influences student learning in schools. The role of teachers is essential and needed to improve self-efficacy in the learning process. Teachers provide motivational support by providing appropriate services to address students experiencing low self-efficacy in learning.

In the article entitled The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Learning Independence in Students by(Tyas & Nurhasanah, 2019)Self-efficacy indicators refer to the three main dimensions proposed by Albert Bandura, namely level, generality, and strength.

Employee Performance

Performance is the result of efforts made by an employee in carrying out the tasks and responsibilities given by the company in accordance with the employee's abilities.(Nabella, 2024)This is in line with research(Siti Rubai & Lestari Rini, 2022)which explains that performance is a form of output from work results that have been achieved in a certain time period with the aim of achieving organizational goals. According to(Robbins P. Stephen & Judge A. Timothy, 2019)Employee performance can be understood as the level of ability of individuals or groups of workers to achieve organizational goals by achieving expected results. This performance reflects the extent to which effectiveness and productivity can be realized in carrying out the tasks for which they are responsible.(Ryu et al., 2021)Employee performance is understood as the extent to which an employee is able to complete their work according to the standards set by the organization. This definition emphasizes that performance encompasses the achievement of goals, meeting targets, and the quality of work results expected by the company.

(Sinambela et al., 2020)Employee performance is often understood as achievement or work results, but its meaning extends beyond that. Employee performance encompasses both results and the process involved in achieving them. Good employee performance is directly related to an organization's success in achieving strategic goals, increasing customer satisfaction, and providing economic benefits. Performance can be understood as the achievement of an individual's work results, determined by their skills, experience, dedication, and use of time. Performance reflects not only the activities of employees and the organization but also encompasses the products or services produced by individuals and groups.

Thus, performance can be defined as an individual's work achievements in the form of products or services in accordance with their responsibilities.(Panaha et al., 2022).

In the book of works(Robbins P. Stephen & Judge A. Timothy, 2019)There are several dimensions of employee performance, including task performance, citizenship (organizational citizenship behavior/OCB), counterproductive work behavior (CWB), adaptive performance, and proactive/innovation.(Nugraha et al., 2024)There are five indicators of employee performance, namely work quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness and independence.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses an approach *Explanatory Research* which aims to analyze the influence of servant leadership and knowledge acquisition on employee performance with self-efficacy as an intervening variable at the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation. This explanatory research study, according to(Pfister et al., 2023)explains that explanatory research aims to develop theoretical explanations regarding the phenomenon being studied. The data used are primary data obtained through distributing questionnaires to 100 teachers using a purposive sampling technique. The research variables include servant leadership, knowledge acquisition, self-efficacy, and employee performance. Data analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS 4, including testing the measurement model and structural model to determine the direct influence and mediating role of self-efficacy.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher employee performance at the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation is influenced by several factors, namely servant leadership, knowledge acquisition, and self-efficacy. To determine the extent of each variable's influence on teacher performance, data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. The results of the data processing and descriptions of each variable during the study period can be seen in the following table and graph.

Table 1
R-Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Employee Performance	0.822	0.817
Self-Efficacy	0.755	0.750

Source: Processed data, 2026

Based on the table above, the R Square value is used to see the influence of exogenous variables, in this case Servant Leadership and Knowledge Acquisition, on endogenous variables, namely Employee Performance and Self-Efficacy. In the Employee Performance variable, it is 0.822, meaning that Servant Leadership and Knowledge Acquisition have an influence and are able to explain Employee Performance by 82.2% and the other 17.8% is explained through other constructs. Meanwhile, the R Square value for the Self-Efficacy variable is 0.755, meaning that Servant Leadership and Knowledge Acquisition have an influence and are able to explain Self-Efficacy by 75.5% and the remaining 24.5% is explained through other constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model is considered substantial because it is >0.75 .

Table 2
AVE and Reliability Test

Variables	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Employee Performance	0.769	0.924	0.927	0.943
Knowledge Acquisition	0.741	0.883	0.885	0.919
Self-Efficacy	0.796	0.872	0.876	0.921

Servant Leadership	0.713	0.899	0.905	0.925
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Source: Processed data, 2026

All constructs showed AVE above 0.50 and high reliability values, which indicated that the measurements in this study were reliable.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity (Cross Loading)

	Employee Performance	Knowledge Acquisition	Self-Efficacy	Servant Leadership
Employee Performance 1	0.850	0.751	0.757	0.553
Employee Performance 2	0.873	0.709	0.734	0.550
Employee Performance 3	0.854	0.632	0.669	0.615
Employee Performance 4	0.930	0.789	0.831	0.625
Employee Performance 5	0.873	0.726	0.767	0.551
Knowledge Acquisition 1	0.674	0.863	0.684	0.465
Knowledge Acquisition 2	0.748	0.867	0.754	0.496
Knowledge Acquisition 3	0.680	0.840	0.748	0.480
Knowledge Acquisition 4	0.733	0.872	0.796	0.408
Self-Efficacy 1	0.671	0.758	0.873	0.359
Self-Efficacy 2	0.791	0.829	0.914	0.531
Self-Efficacy 3	0.831	0.735	0.889	0.414
Servant Leadership 1	0.494	0.376	0.367	0.866
Servant Leadership 2	0.521	0.347	0.319	0.877
Servant Leadership 3	0.548	0.456	0.408	0.884
Servant Leadership 4	0.645	0.564	0.521	0.805
Servant Leadership 5	0.537	0.469	0.409	0.784

Source: Processed data, 2026

In discriminant validity, the indicators of each construct must have a higher value than the indicators of other constructs. (Imam Ghazali, 2020) The table above shows the cross-loading values, which indicate that each indicator has a high correlation with its respective construct compared to other constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the cross-loading is a valid discriminant.

Table 5
Path Coefficient

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Servant Leadership -> Self Efficacy	0.035	0.049	0.081	0.431	0.667
Knowledge Acquisition -> Self Efficacy	0.850	0.840	0.066	12,852	0.000
Servant Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.286	0.283	0.085	3,370	0.001
Knowledge Acquisition -> Employee Performance	0.190	0.191	0.122	1,549	0.121
Self Efficacy -> Employee Performance	0.555	0.553	0.120	4,608	0.000

Source: Processed data, 2026

Based on the results of the analysis of the table above, several findings can be concluded regarding the influence of variables in this study. First, the direct influence of Servant Leadership (X1) on Self Efficacy (Z) is not significant, so the fifth hypothesis (H5) is rejected; this is indicated by the t-statistic value of 0.431, the path coefficient of 0.035 (3.5%), and the p-value of 0.667, which is below the significance criteria. Second, Knowledge Acquisition (X2) has a positive and significant influence on Self Efficacy (Z), so the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted, with a t-statistic of 12.852, a path coefficient of 0.850 (85.0%), and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, Servant Leadership (X1) also shows a positive and significant influence on Employee Performance (Y), so the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted, with a t-statistic of 3.370, a path coefficient of 0.286 (28.6%), and a p-value of 0.001. However, the direct effect of Knowledge Acquisition (X2) on Employee Performance (Y) is not significant, so the fourth hypothesis (H4) is rejected, indicated by the t-statistic of 1.549, the path coefficient of 0.190 (19.0%), and the p-value of 0.121. Finally, Self Efficacy (Z) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y), so the first hypothesis (H1) is accepted, with the t-statistic of 4.608, the path coefficient of 0.555 (55.5%), and the p-value of 0.000. Thus, the variables Knowledge Acquisition and Self Efficacy have an important role in improving employee performance, while the effect of Servant Leadership on Self Efficacy is not proven to be significant.

Table 6
Specific Indirect Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Servant Leadership -> Self Efficacy -> Employee Performance	0.019	0.028	0.046	0.417	0.676
Knowledge Acquisition -> Self Efficacy -> Employee Performance	0.471	0.465	0.109	4,309	0.000

Source: Processed data, 2026

Based on the table above regarding the specific indirect effect, the indirect effect of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance through Self-Efficacy is not significant, with an original sample

value of 0.019, a t-statistic of 0.417, and a p-value of 0.676. This indicates that Self-Efficacy does not mediate the relationship between Servant Leadership and teacher performance. Conversely, the indirect effect of Knowledge Acquisition on Employee Performance through Self-Efficacy is significant, with an original sample value of 0.471, a t-statistic of 4.309, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that Self-Efficacy acts as a mediator. This finding suggests that increasing Knowledge Acquisition can improve teachers' Self-Efficacy, which then has a positive impact on their performance. Top of Form

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research at the Futuhiyyah Mranggen Demak Foundation, it can be concluded that Knowledge Acquisition does not have a direct effect on employee performance, but has a positive and significant effect on Self-Efficacy. This shows that the higher the knowledge acquired by teachers, the stronger their self-confidence in carrying out their tasks optimally. Furthermore, Self-Efficacy has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, because confident teachers are better able to face learning challenges and complete their professional responsibilities. Meanwhile, Servant Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, but does not have a direct effect on Self-Efficacy, which shows that servant leadership can improve teacher performance without directly increasing self-confidence. In addition, Self-Efficacy is proven to act as a mediator in the relationship between Knowledge Acquisition and employee performance, but does not mediate the relationship between Servant Leadership and employee performance. Thus, Self-Efficacy is an important factor in strengthening the influence of Knowledge Acquisition on teacher performance.

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