

## From Servant Leadership to Cadre Retention: Cadre Education as an Institutional Mechanism (Political HRM) in Political Parties

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze how value-based political organizational leadership contributes to cadre retention by positioning cadre education programs as the primary institutional mechanism. The study examines whether cadre retention is influenced directly and indirectly by servant leadership, with cadre education and development programs conceptualized as Political Human Resource Management (Political HRM) and positioned as a key mediating variable. The study employs a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire survey administered to members of a cadre-based political party organization. From a total population of 2,073 registered cadres recorded in the organizational database, all were internally ensured to receive the research questionnaire, and 551 respondents voluntarily completed it (voluntary random sample). The data were subsequently analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with a hierarchical component model (HCM) two-stage approach to model multidimensional constructs. The findings indicate that servant leadership does not have a significant direct effect on cadre retention; however, it exerts a very strong influence on the quality of cadre education and development programs, which in turn have a positive and significant effect on cadre retention. These results confirm an indirect-only mediation (full mediation) pattern. The model explains a substantial proportion of variance in cadre education programs (53.2%) and cadre retention (50.7%) and demonstrates strong predictive relevance, underscoring that retention in cadre-based organizations is predominantly system-driven. This study offers a conceptual and empirical model that extends the understanding of how leadership operates in value-based political organizations by positioning institutional mechanisms as the primary pathway through which leadership influences cadre sustainability. The study contributes to the leadership, organizational retention, and HRM systems literature by introducing Political HRM as an institutional architecture that translates leadership values into long-term cadre development systems.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The background of this study is rooted in the empirical reality that political party membership is highly dynamic, and such dynamics are critically determinant of organizational sustainability—particularly for value-based political parties that seek to retain cadres over the long term. Party transformation in the literature indicates that organizational stability is no longer primarily sustained by mass membership, but rather by institutional capacity to reproduce values, construct collective identity, and ensure

leadership regeneration through structured cadre development systems (Biezen et al., 2012; Scarrow, 2015). In this context, cadres are not merely administrative members; they constitute a normative infrastructure that safeguards ideological continuity and organizational functioning across generations of leadership (Katz et al., 2018). Consequently, cadre retention emerges as a key indicator of the institutional resilience of political parties.

At the empirical level, however, modern political parties face declining membership trends, the weakening of membership-based organizations, and an increasing orientation toward short-term electoral mobilization rather than long-term investment in structured cadre development (Biezen et al., 2012; Scarrow, 2015). This shift has altered party organizational logic—from a cadre-centered infrastructure to electorally adaptive organizations that are institutionally vulnerable when continuity of cadre participation weakens (Biezen et al., 2012; Katz et al., 2018). It can therefore be concluded that cadre retention has become a strategic organizational issue rather than merely a matter of membership maintenance.

The research problem identified in this study concerns the theoretical uncertainty as to whether leadership mechanisms proven effective in formal work organizations are equally effective in value-based cadre organizations outside conventional employment settings. Leadership literature widely asserts that leaders play a crucial role in fostering follower attachment and sustaining organizational commitment (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2013). Commitment itself has been shown to be the most consistent predictor of individuals' decisions to remain within organizations (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In formal work organizations, economic contracts and material incentives serve as key mechanisms for retention, whereas in political cadre organizations, retention is more strongly determined by value internalization, normative legitimacy, and experiences of structured developmental processes rather than material rewards—thus presenting a fundamentally different organizational context.

Within this context, servant leadership—due to its emphasis on service orientation, moral stewardship, and follower development as intrinsic leadership goals—is often regarded as particularly relevant (Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 1977). Numerous studies have demonstrated its relationship with commitment, engagement, and retention (Liden et al., 2008; Schwarz & Sendjaya, 2015) and even its distinctiveness compared to other leadership styles (Hoch et al., 2018). However, contemporary literature highlights a persisting explanatory gap regarding causal mechanisms (mechanism gap), as the effects of servant leadership are still largely explained through psychological mediators such as trust or empowerment (Eva et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2017). Institutionalized long-term development systems may therefore provide a more adequate explanation of retention phenomena in cadre-based organizations.

Although the HRM and public administration literature has examined the relationship between HRM practices and political contexts, the term “Political HRM” has rarely been used explicitly as a domain-specific construct. This study represents one of the early efforts to formalize Political HRM as an integrated set of HRM practices within cadre-based political organizations and to demonstrate how this construct functions as an institutional mechanism mediating the influence of leadership on cadre retention.

Based on these gaps, the primary objective of this study is to examine how cadre retention is influenced by servant leadership through institutional mechanisms, specifically cadre development programs conceptualized as Political Human Resource Management (Political HRM). Prior studies suggest that leadership effects on retention often operate through organizational systems rather than direct interpersonal influence (Avolio et al., 2009; Becker & Huselid, 2006; Eva et al., 2019). Accordingly, this study investigates

whether cadre retention in value-based political party organizations is shaped directly by leadership interactions or indirectly through the institutionalization of leadership values into structured cadre development systems.

This study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it extends servant leadership research by addressing the mechanism gap through an institutional lens, emphasizing HRM systems as a primary pathway linking leadership and retention (Dierendonck, 2011; Jiang et al., 2012). Practically, the findings offer strategic insights for political parties and similar organizations in designing integrated cadre development systems capable of sustaining long-term cadre retention (Hom et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2001)

The conceptual framework of this study is built upon three main theoretical pillars. First, servant leadership theory emphasizes service orientation, stewardship, and follower development as the core objectives of (Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 1977). This approach is particularly relevant in value-based organizations, as it reinforces leaders' moral legitimacy and followers' normative attachment. Second, the HRM systems perspective posits that stable organizational outcomes are generated by integrated and mutually reinforcing configurations of practices rather than isolated actions (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Jiang et al., 2012). In this study, cadre development programs are conceptualized as institutionalized systems that adapt the Political HRM concept to the context of value-based political organizations. Third, the concept of organizational embeddedness emphasizes that individuals' decisions to remain are shaped by structural ties and repeated organizational experiences (Mitchell et al., 2001)

Embeddedness in value-based political cadre organizations is typically formed through tiered development processes, mentoring, and consistent value internalization. These three theoretical foundations do not operate independently but instead form a coherent explanatory chain. Servant leadership explains the source of normative values that shape organizational orientation through leadership focused on follower development and moral stewardship (Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 1977). However, this theory alone does not explain how such values are internalized by cadres or how organizational membership is sustained over the long term.

The HRM literature emphasizes that organizational values only exert sustainable effects when translated into integrated and consistent systems of practice (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Jiang et al., 2012). The HRM systems perspective thus serves as an institutional bridge. In cadre-based political parties, this system materializes in cadre education programs that regulate ideological development, training, mentoring, evaluation, and career pathways. Accordingly, Political HRM functions as an institutional mechanism that translates leadership values into structured and recurring organizational experiences.

Furthermore, the concept of organizational embeddedness explains why such development systems influence cadre retention. Individuals are more likely to remain when they possess strong structural ties, social relationships, and value congruence with the organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). Embeddedness in political cadre organizations is built through tiered cadre development processes that reinforce collective identity and normative engagement. Thus, cadre retention is not merely the result of short-term interpersonal leadership relations, but rather the outcome of a prolonged process of systemic attachment formed through consistent institutional experiences across cadre education programs.

Through this integration, the study positions servant leadership as a source of normative legitimacy, cadre education programs (Political HRM) as the institutional mechanism, and cadre retention as a systemic outcome. This configuration forms a leadership-to-system translation mechanism, explaining that leadership effectiveness in cadre-based organizations depends on its capacity to be institutionalized within sustainable development

systems. The research model integrates these three perspectives by positioning servant leadership as the source of normative values, Political HRM as the institutional mechanism translating those values into cadre organizational experiences, and cadre retention as a system-based outcome.

### Hypothesis Development

The Effect of Servant Leadership on Cadre Retention (H1). Theoretically, servant leadership—through its orientation toward service and follower development—can strengthen cadres' commitment and attachment, thereby increasing their likelihood of remaining within the organization (Liden et al., 2008; Schwarz & Sendjaya, 2015). H1: Servant leadership has a positive effect on cadre retention.

The Effect of Political HRM on Cadre Retention (H2). Consistent, structured, and tiered cadre development systems create organizational experiences that reinforce collective identity and cadre embeddedness, thereby promoting long-term retention (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Jiang et al., 2012). H2: Cadre development programs (Political HRM) have a positive effect on cadre retention.

The Effect of Servant Leadership on Political HRM (H3). Leadership literature emphasizes that leaders influence not only individuals but also organizational systems (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2013). Servant leadership, with its emphasis on stewardship and follower development, is expected to foster cadre development systems that are more equitable, consistent, and development-oriented. H3: Servant leadership has a positive effect on cadre development programs (Political HRM).

Indirect Effect (Institutional Mediation) (H4). Based on the integration of servant leadership and HRM systems theory, it is assumed that the influence of servant leadership on cadre retention operates primarily through cadre development systems as institutional mechanisms. Cadre development programs serve as channels that translate leadership values into organizational experiences that build long-term cadre attachment. H4: Cadre development programs (Political HRM) mediate the effect of servant leadership on cadre retention.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an explanatory quantitative approach to examine causal relationships among latent constructs within a theory-based mediation model. The research design is theory-driven and aims to explain how servant leadership influences cadre retention through an institutional mechanism in the form of cadre development programs conceptualized as Political Human Resource Management (Political HRM). To test a model involving multidimensional constructs and simultaneous mediation relationships, the study employs Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method is selected due to its predictive orientation, suitability for complex models with second-order constructs, and robustness to strict data distribution assumptions (Ringle et al., 2018; Sarstedt et al., 2019)

The study population consists of cadres of a cadre-based political party who are actively involved in the organizational development system. A total of 2,073 cadres were recorded in the organizational database and constituted the research population. The study sample comprised 551 respondents, obtained through voluntary random sampling based on cadre development experience criteria, with a minimum requirement of three years of participation in cadre training programs. This approach ensures that respondents have sufficient institutional exposure to the cadre development system, so that the Political HRM construct reflects stable organizational experiences rather than temporary involvement. The

sample size meets PLS-SEM recommendations for models with high structural complexity and hierarchical construct estimation (Sarstedt et al., 2019)

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, which is commonly employed to measure perceptions of latent constructs in organizational behavior research. The data collection procedure ensured respondent anonymity and employed neutrally worded items to reduce social desirability bias and enhance response honesty, in line with methodological recommendations for controlling common method bias in self-report surveys.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Results

**Tabel 1. Full Outer Loading**

Konstruk	Indikator	Loading	Decision	Konstruk	Indikator	Loading	Decision	Konstruk	Indikator	Loading	Decision
Courage (M1)	M1.1	0.824	Valid	Empowerment (X1)	X1.1	0.491	✗ Drop	Affective Commitment (Y1)	Y1.1	0.852	Valid
	M1.2	0.822	Valid		X1.2	0.814	Valid		Y1.2	0.887	Valid
	M1.3	0.727	Valid		X1.3	0.818	Valid		Y1.3	0.88	Valid
	M1.4	0.827	Valid		X1.4	0.801	Valid		Y1.4	0.796	Valid
Training (M2)	M2.1	0.868	Valid	Accountability (X2)	X2.1	0.772	Valid	Continuance Commitment (Y2)	Y2.1	0.921	Sangat Kuat
	M2.2	0.886	Valid		X2.2	0.85	Valid		Y2.2	0.925	Sangat Kuat
	M2.3	0.894	Valid		X2.3	0.84	Valid		Y2.3	0.938	Sangat Kuat
	M2.4	0.909	Sangat Kuat		X2.4	0.353	✗ Drop		Y2.4	0.933	Sangat Kuat
Mentoring (M3)	M3.1	0.873	Valid	Standing Back (X3)	X3.1	0.767	Valid	Normative Commitment (Y3)	Y3.1	0.935	Sangat Kuat
	M3.2	0.783	Valid		X3.2	0.785	Valid		Y3.2	0.869	Valid
	M3.3	0.855	Valid		X3.3	0.635	Toleransi Teoritis		Y3.3	0.87	Valid
	M3.4	0.859	Valid		X3.4	0.748	Valid		Y3.4	0.864	Valid
Authentic (M4)	M4.1	0.8	Valid	Forgiveness (X4)	X4.1	0.882	Valid	Engagement (Y4)	Y4.1	0.839	Valid
	M4.2	0.813	Valid		X4.2	0.886	Valid		Y4.2	0.692	Toleransi
	M4.3	0.805	Valid		X4.3	0.856	Valid		Y4.3	0.886	Valid
	M4.4	0.717	Valid		X4.4	0.814	Valid		Loyalty (Y5)	Y5.1	0.89
Reward (M5)	M5.1	0.815	Valid	Humility (X5)	X5.1	0.774	Valid	Y5.2		0.884	Valid
	M5.2	0.795	Valid		X5.2	0.858	Valid	Y5.3		0.873	Valid
	M5.3	0.882	Valid		X5.3	0.885	Valid	Y5.4		0.873	Valid
	M5.4	0.901	Sangat Kuat		X5.4	0.812	Valid				
Career Path (M6)	M6.1	0.864	Valid	Stewardship (X6)	X6.1	0.857	Valid				
	M6.2	0.859	Valid		X6.2	0.786	Valid				
	M6.3	0.824	Valid		X6.3	0.886	Valid				
	M6.4	0.7	Cukup (batas bawah)		X6.4	0.578	✗ Drop				
				Courage (X7)	X7.1	0.817	Valid				
					X7.2	0.754	Valid				
					X7.3	0.879	Valid				
					X7.4	0.872	Valid				
				Empowerment Outcome (X8)	X8.1	0.895	Sangat Kuat				
					X8.2	0.884	Sangat Kuat				
					X8.3	0.881	Sangat Kuat				
					X8.4	0.898	Sangat Kuat				

#### Stage 1 Testing: Indicator Reliability and Purification

The first-stage measurement model evaluation focused on the indicator reliability of first-order constructs. In accordance with PLS-SEM standards for reflective constructs, indicators with outer loadings below the recommended threshold of 0.708 were critically

assessed. The results revealed that three indicators failed to meet the minimum reliability criteria, namely X2.4 (Accountability = 0.353), X1.1 (Empowerment = 0.491), and X6.4 (Courage = 0.578). These indicators were removed because their contributions to construct variance were insufficient, and their exclusion improved the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) values without compromising the conceptual coverage of the constructs.

Two indicators with borderline loading values were retained based on theoretical considerations and an evaluation of their psychometric impact, namely X3.3 (Standing Back = 0.635) and Y4.2 (Continuance Commitment = 0.692). These indicators were maintained because their inclusion did not reduce construct reliability or convergent validity and helped preserve essential domain representation within the multidimensional model.

Based on the outer loading evaluation of the measurement (outer) model after the removal of indicators X1.1, X2.4, and X6.4, it can be concluded that the decision to drop these indicators was appropriate and consistent with SEM-PLS criteria. Specifically, the excluded indicators exhibited low outer loadings that could have weakened construct convergent validity. Following their removal, most remaining indicators demonstrated stronger and more stable outer loadings, with the majority exceeding 0.70 and many reaching values above 0.80, confirming that the retained indicators adequately represent their respective constructs. Although a small number of indicators remained within the acceptable tolerance range (e.g., X3.3 = 0.635 and Y4.2 = 0.692), these indicators were retained as long as they were statistically significant based on bootstrapping results and did not reduce construct AVE below the minimum threshold. Overall, the refined outer model demonstrates satisfactory convergent validity and is suitable for subsequent reliability assessment and structural (inner) model testing.

**Stage 2 Testing: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Following indicator purification, second-order constructs were evaluated in the second stage using the hierarchical component model (HCM) two-stage approach. All main constructs exhibited very strong internal reliability. Servant Leadership demonstrated Cronbach’s Alpha (CA) = 0.964, Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.967, and AVE = 0.507. The Cadre Development Program construct showed CA = 0.961, CR = 0.964, and AVE = 0.530. Cadre Retention yielded CA = 0.968, CR = 0.971, and AVE = 0.643. All values exceeded the recommended thresholds (CA and CR ≥ 0.70; AVE ≥ 0.50), thereby confirming strong internal consistency and convergent validity across all constructs.

**Tabel 2 Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity**

<b>Variabe Laten</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>rho_A</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AV E</b>	<b>Keputusan</b>
Accountability	0.77	0.775	0.87	0.69	Valid & Reliabel
Affective Commitment	0.92	0.923	0.94	0.76	Valid & Reliabel
Authentic	0.85	0.856	0.9	0.69	Valid & Reliabel
Cariertpat h	0.79	0.799	0.87	0.62	Valid & Reliabel

Continue Commitment	0.86	0.885	0.91	0.71	Valid & Reliabel
Courage	0.82	0.837	0.9	0.74	Valid & Reliabel
Empowerment	0.76	0.764	0.86	0.68	Valid & Reliabel
Enggagement	0.83	0.841	0.89	0.66	Valid & Reliabel
Forgiveness	0.85	0.863	0.9	0.69	Valid & Reliabel
Humilyty	0.88	0.883	0.92	0.74	Valid & Reliabel
Loyalty	0.9	0.902	0.94	0.83	Valid & Reliabel
Mentoring	0.87	0.875	0.91	0.72	Valid & Reliabel
Normative Commitmen	0.92	0.92	0.95	0.86	Valid & Reliabel
Program Kaderisasi	0.96	0.962	0.96	0.53	Valid & Reliabel ( <i>AVE memenuhi minimal</i> )
Recruitm ent	0.81	0.817	0.88	0.64	Valid & Reliabel
Retensi Kader	0.97	0.971	0.97	0.64	Valid & Reliabel
Reward	0.86	0.867	0.91	0.71	Valid & Reliabel
Satisficat ion	0.86	0.864	0.91	0.71	Valid & Reliabel
Servant Leadershi p	0.96	0.967	0.97	0.51	Valid & Reliabel ( <i>AVE memenuhi minimal</i> )
Standing Back	0.72	0.734	0.82	0.54	Valid & Reliabel ( <i>kategori reliabilitas cukup</i> )
Stewardh ip	0.91	0.913	0.94	0.79	Valid & Reliabel
Training	0.91	0.913	0.94	0.79	Valid & Reliabel

Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The HTMT value between the Cadre Development Program and Cadre Retention was 0.751; between the Cadre Development Program and Servant Leadership was 0.771; and between Cadre Retention and Servant Leadership was 0.570. All values fall below the stringent threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct possesses distinct empirical identity and that no problematic measurement overlap is present.

**Structural Model Evaluation (Stage 2)**

Following the Stage 1 measurement model assessment, the structural model was evaluated in Stage 2. Multicollinearity diagnostics indicated inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 1.000 for the Servant Leadership → Cadre Development Program path and 2.136 for predictors of the Cadre Retention construct. All values were below the conservative threshold of 3.3, suggesting that the path coefficient estimates are stable and free from multicollinearity distortion.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) results show that Servant Leadership explains 53.2% of the variance in the Cadre Development Program ( $R^2 = 0.532$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.531$ ). The combined effects of Servant Leadership and the Cadre Development Program explain 50.7% of the variance in Cadre Retention ( $R^2 = 0.507$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.505$ ). These values indicate a moderate yet substantively meaningful explanatory power within the organizational research context.

Effect size ( $f^2$ ) analysis reveals that the effect of Servant Leadership on the Cadre Development Program is very large ( $f^2 = 1.136$ ), while the effect of the Cadre Development Program on Cadre Retention is also large ( $f^2 = 0.431$ ). In contrast, the direct effect of Servant Leadership on Cadre Retention is negligible and can be disregarded ( $f^2 = 0.002$ ). This pattern reinforces the conclusion that cadre retention is predominantly system-driven through institutional mechanisms.

**Tabel 3: Analisis Jalur (Path Coefisien)**

Jalur	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Program Kaderisasi -> Retensi Kader	0.674	0.668	0.05	13.53	0
Servant Leadership -> Program Kaderisasi	0.729	0.732	0.064	11.392	0
Servant Leadership -> Retensi Kader	0.051	0.057	0.052	0.965	0.335

Bootstrapping results further indicate that the Servant Leadership → Cadre Development Program path is statistically significant, with a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.729$  ( $t = 11.392$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The Cadre Development Program → Cadre Retention path is also strongly significant, with  $\beta = 0.674$  ( $t = 13.530$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Conversely, the direct Servant Leadership → Cadre Retention path is not significant ( $\beta = 0.051$ ;  $t = 0.965$ ;  $p = 0.335$ ).

**Tabel 4 : Jalur Mediasi (Spesific Indirect Effect)**

Jalur Mediasi	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
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Servant Leadership -> Program Kaderisasi -> Retensi Kader	0.492	0.488	0.045	10.854	0
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Mediation testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. The indirect path from Servant Leadership to Cadre Retention through the Cadre Development Program was statistically significant, with a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.492$  (Mean = 0.488; STDEV = 0.045;  $t = 10.854$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These results indicate that the effect of Servant Leadership on Cadre Retention operates primarily through the Cadre Development Program as an institutional mechanism.

The total effect of Servant Leadership on Cadre Retention was  $\beta = 0.542$  ( $t = 9.273$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that although the direct effect was not significant, the overall effect became significant through the mediating pathway. This pattern is consistent with indirect-only mediation (full mediation).

Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) assessment yielded a  $Q^2$  value of 0.403 for the Cadre Development Program (SSO = 3,306; SSE = 1,974.31) and 0.419 for Cadre Retention (SSO = 2,755; SSE = 1,599.936). All  $Q^2$  values were positive and substantive, indicating strong predictive relevance of the model.

Model fit was further evaluated using multiple indices. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value was 0.044 for both the saturated and estimated models, indicating excellent model fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.922 suggests a strong overall model fit. Additional discrepancy measures were reported for transparency, with  $d\_ULS = 0.376$  and  $d\_G = 0.255$ .

To assess common method bias, a full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) test was conducted. The VIF values ranged from 1.415 to 2.125, all of which are below the conservative threshold of 3.3. These results indicate that common method bias does not substantively inflate the observed structural relationships.

**Tabel 4 : Kesimpulan Hipotesis**

Kode	Hipotesis	Jalur	$\beta$ (O)	t-value	p-value	Keputusan
H1	Servant Leadership berpengaruh positif terhadap Retensi Kader	SL → Ret	0.05	0.97	0.34	Ditolak
H2	Servant Leadership berpengaruh positif terhadap Program Kaderisasi	SL → PK	0.73	11.4	0	Diterima
H3	Program Kaderisasi berpengaruh positif terhadap Retensi Kader	PK → Ret	0.67	13.5	0	Diterima

<b>H4 (Mediasi)</b>	Program Kaderisasi memediasi pengaruh Servant Leadership terhadap Retensi Kader	SL → PK → Ret	0.49	10.9	0	<b>Mediasi signifikan (Full Mediation)</b>
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Summary of Empirical Findings and Hypothesis Testing

The empirical results consistently demonstrate that servant leadership does not directly enhance cadre retention but operates through the strengthening of the cadre development system. The strong effects observed along the Servant Leadership → Cadre Development Program and Cadre Development Program → Cadre Retention paths, combined with the weak and non-significant direct effect of Servant Leadership → Cadre Retention, provide robust support for an institutionalized leadership mechanism model characterized by full mediation.

Based on the structural model results, the status of the hypotheses can be summarized as follows. The first hypothesis (H1), which proposed a direct effect of servant leadership on cadre retention, is not supported, as the direct path coefficient is very small and statistically non-significant. The second hypothesis (H2), which posited that servant leadership positively influences the cadre development program (Political HRM), is strongly supported, as indicated by a large and significant path coefficient. The third hypothesis (H3), which predicted that the cadre development program positively affects cadre retention, is also supported, with a large and statistically significant effect. Finally, the fourth hypothesis (H4), concerning the mediating role of the cadre development program in the relationship between servant leadership and cadre retention, is fully supported, as the indirect effect is significant while the direct effect is not, confirming an indirect-only mediation (full mediation) pattern.

**3.2. DISCUSSION**

3.2.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a theoretically meaningful configuration of relationships. Servant leadership does not exert a direct effect on cadre retention; however, it has a very strong influence on cadre development programs, which in turn significantly enhance retention. The presence of a large indirect effect alongside a non-significant direct effect confirms an indirect-only mediation (full mediation) pattern. This configuration indicates that leadership influence on cadre sustainability is not primarily interpersonal, but rather mediated through an institutionalized cadre development system.

Conceptually, these findings shift the understanding of retention in value-based organizations. Cadre retention does not emerge as a direct response to leadership figures, but rather as a consequence of structured, repeated, and long-term organizational experiences. Accordingly, this study affirms that within political cadre organizations, retention is more appropriately conceptualized as an institutional outcome rather than a relational one.

In much leadership research, non-significant hypotheses are often interpreted as model failure. In this context, however, the non-significant direct effect of servant leadership opens an important avenue for theoretical contribution. Cadre retention represents a long-term decision formed through the accumulation of organizational experiences rather than momentary interpersonal interactions. The retention and commitment literature emphasizes

that decisions to remain evolve through dynamic attachment processes embedded in organizational structures, rather than being solely driven by leader–member relationships ((Allen & Meyer, 1990; Hom et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2002)

Supported by the negligible effect size on the direct path, these findings indicate that servant leadership is not irrelevant; rather, its relevance emerges when leadership values are translated into systems that cadres experience continuously. In other words, servant leadership functions not as a direct driver of retention, but as a shaper of institutions that create retention-enabling conditions. This repositions servant leadership conceptually as an *institutional shaper* within political cadre organizations (Avolio et al., 2009; Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019)

The absence of a significant direct effect can also be explained through the phenomena of leader distance and institutional substitution. In political cadre organizations, cadres rarely engage intensively with a single leader. Their experiences are instead shaped by mentors, training structures, hierarchical mechanisms, and organizational routines. In such contexts, leadership influence operates less through interpersonal proximity and more through leaders' capacity to establish consistent rules, norms, and development systems (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2013)

The finding that servant leadership exerts a very large effect on the quality of cadre development programs reinforces this argument. Servant leadership operates as a system-shaping force rather than merely a relational one. Cadre development programs thus act as institutional substitutes for interpersonal leadership influence, whereby leadership values are internalized into organizational routines. This perspective aligns with HRM systems literature, which emphasizes that integrated practices can substitute for individual-level influence in shaping organizational member behavior ((Becker & Huselid, 2006; Jiang et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001)

The primary contribution of this study lies in articulating the institutional mechanism underlying leadership effects. Cadre development programs function as an institutionalization mechanism that transforms leadership values into standardized organizational experiences. The statistically strong indirect effect demonstrates that leadership influence operates through institutional pathways rather than purely relational ones. Methodologically, this mediation configuration meets the stricter criteria of contemporary mediation analysis beyond classical approaches (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Sarstedt et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2010)

Theoretically, this mechanism can be understood as a *leadership-to-system translation* process: leadership shapes organizational architecture through mentoring, evaluation, tiered development pathways, and behavioral standards. By demonstrating full mediation through cadre development systems, this study shifts the discourse on servant leadership from a micro-level psychological focus to a meso-level institutional perspective, thereby extending leadership theory (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019)

This study also strengthens the conceptual legitimacy of Political HRM as a domain-specific form of HRM systems. Cadre education and development programs are not merely training activities, but constitute a human resource architecture that produces political human capital through value-based

selection, competence development, identity internalization, and tiered assignments (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Jiang et al., 2012; Meyer et al., 2002)

The strong effect of cadre development programs on retention, coupled with the substantial variance explained in retention, indicates that Political HRM is not merely a theoretical construct but an empirically operative institutional mechanism. Accordingly, this study shifts the analytical focus from whether leadership affects retention to how leadership becomes a system that sustains cadres.

The research context can be understood as a stress-test case, wherein cadre retention faces social, economic, and organizational pressures. The high predictive relevance of the model indicates that institutional mechanisms remain dominant even under challenging conditions. This reinforces the claim that cadre development systems function as internal institutions that stabilize commitment amid external volatility (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2001; Sarstedt et al., 2019)

Moreover, strong discriminant validity, the absence of multicollinearity, and robust global model fit indicators confirm that the institutional mediation findings rest on a methodologically sound model. This is critical, as mechanistic arguments are only meaningful when supported by strong measurement quality and estimation rigor (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015; Sarstedt et al., 2019)

Overall, the study demonstrates that leadership sustainability in value-based organizations is not primarily determined by the quality of leader–follower relationships, but by leadership’s capacity to be institutionalized into systems that shape follower experiences repeatedly and over the long term. Servant leadership thus becomes effective not because of interpersonal closeness, but because of its ability to translate service-oriented values into structured development architectures—rendering cadre retention an institutional outcome rather than personal loyalty. This perspective shifts leadership theory from relational influence toward institutionalized influence, positioning organizational systems as the primary medium through which leadership values endure across time and generations.

### 3.2 Contributions, Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Agenda Theoretical Contributions

This study offers three main theoretical contributions. First, it advances servant leadership theory by demonstrating that its effect on cadre retention is not direct but operates through institutional mechanisms in the form of cadre development systems, thereby affirming that leadership effectiveness in value-based organizations is system-contingent (Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019)

Second, the study enriches retention literature by positioning retention decisions not merely as individual affective outcomes, but as products of institutional embeddedness formed through routines, development structures, and repeated organizational experiences (Hom et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2002; Mitchell et al., 2001)

Third, the study extends HRM systems theory into the political organization domain by validating Political Human Resource Management (Political HRM) as an institutional architecture that translates leadership values into integrated cadre development systems. By positioning cadre development practices as the key institutional mechanism linking leadership and retention, this research

conceptually bridges leadership, HRM systems, and political organization literatures within a coherent mechanistic framework, while formalizing Political HRM as a testable domain-specific construct (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Jiang et al., 2012)

#### Practical Implications

The findings underscore that the sustainability of cadre-based organizations cannot rely solely on morally or relationally strong leadership figures, but requires institutional capacity to translate leadership values into consistent and tiered development systems. For cadre-based political organizations, strategic focus should extend beyond individual leader development toward building integrated cadre development architectures—including systematic mentoring mechanisms, transparent evaluation processes, structured assignment pathways, and identity internalization through repeated collective experiences.

In essence, building cadre retention means building systems that make commitment an outcome of stable institutional experiences rather than personal loyalty to particular leaders. This perspective encourages a strategic shift in political organization management from leader-centric to system-centric approaches, which are more resilient to leadership turnover and short-term political dynamics.

#### Limitations and Future Research Agenda

The cross-sectional design limits long-term causal inference, indicating the need for longitudinal studies to capture institutionalization processes over time. Cross-context replication across different political organizations is also necessary to test the stability of the Political HRM mechanism. Future research may integrate psychological and institutional mediators simultaneously to map interactions between micro- and meso-level pathways (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Sarstedt et al., 2019)

Overall, this study demonstrates that servant leadership remains important for cadre retention, but its influence operates through institutionalization within cadre development programs conceptualized as Political HRM. Cadre retention thus emerges as a product of organizational systems rather than interpersonal relationships. These findings extend leadership theory toward a more institutional understanding, emphasizing that sustainability in value-based organizations depends on leadership's capacity to build systems that allow values to endure beyond individual leaders.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the influence of servant leadership on cadre retention in value-based political organizations does not operate through direct interpersonal pathways, but rather through institutionalization processes embodied in cadre development systems conceptualized as Political Human Resource Management (Political HRM). Accordingly, cadre retention does not arise as an immediate response to leadership figures, but as the result of structured, repeated, and long-term organizational experiences. These findings affirm that the sustainability of cadre attachment is more strongly determined by the quality of development systems than by relational dynamics between leaders and followers.

Conceptually, the study clarifies that the effectiveness of servant leadership in cadre organizations is system-contingent. Servant leadership becomes relevant for retention when its values are translated into institutional architectures that shape development pathways, identity internalization, and continuity of organizational experiences. Leadership thus

functions as a source of normative legitimacy whose effects become sustainable through organizational systems rather than interpersonal interaction alone.

The study further extends the understanding of retention in value-based organizations by conceptualizing it as a form of institutional embeddedness. Cadres' decisions to remain reflect not only personal loyalty, but also attachment to development structures, organizational socialization patterns, and institutionalized career pathways. This perspective reinforces the view that the stability of cadre organizations depends on institutional capacity to sustain attachment across time, rather than episodic leadership quality.

More broadly, the findings demonstrate that the sustainability of cadre-based political organizations is determined not by leadership figures alone, but by the organization's ability to institutionalize leadership values into systems that support regeneration, commitment, and continuity of cadre participation. By positioning Political HRM as the bridge between leadership and retention, this study offers a conceptual framework that integrates leadership, organizational retention, and HRM systems literatures within the context of political organizations.

Ultimately, the study affirms that leadership with long-term impact is leadership that builds systems capable of sustaining its values beyond the individual leader. Thus, sustainability in value-based organizations is fundamentally a function of institutional development strength rather than personal leadership charisma.

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