

**A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF SERVANT
LEADERSHIP, INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR
AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG CHINESE
HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGE LECTURERS**

HU DONG

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2025

**A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF SERVANT
LEADERSHIP, INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR
AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG CHINESE
HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGE LECTURERS**

by

HU DONG

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Time flies, and the journey of the doctoral studies is nearing its conclusion. In completing this thesis, I have come to deeply appreciate that the pursuit of knowledge and innovation is inseparable from the support and guidance of many individuals. With immense gratitude, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to everyone who has cared for and supported me along the way.

First and foremost, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Thien Lei Mee. Throughout this journey, she not only provided meticulous academic guidance but also offered unwavering support on both personal and professional fronts. Her profound knowledge, rigorous academic approach, and broad intellectual vision have benefited me immensely. It was under her thoughtful mentorship that I was able to grow step by step and eventually complete this study.

Besides that, I would like to extend my special thanks to Professor Hazri Jamil and Associate Professor Ahmad Zamri Khairani. Their selfless sharing of advice and insights during every key stage of the doctoral studies significantly enriched this study perspectives. Additionally, the successful progression of this study would not have been possible without the generous support of Professor Ramayah, whose workshops provided invaluable platforms and resources for data analysis. Special thanks for Professor Kang Xiaoqing and Yan Ning, Associate Professor Zhao Qi, and Associate Professor Wang Yingrang offered invaluable feedback for improving the questionnaire. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Aidi Ahmi and Dr. Ahmed Mohamed for their selfless guidance and constructive advice on my publication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	xiv
ABSTRAK	xv
ABSTRACT.....	xvii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of Study	2
1.3 Problem Statement	7
1.4 Research Objectives	13
1.5 Research Questions	14
1.6 Significance of the Study	15
1.6.1 Theoretical Significance	15
1.6.2 Practical Significance.....	16
1.6.3 The significance of achieving research objectives.....	17
1.7 The Delimitation of the Study.....	18
1.8 Operational Definition	19
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	25
2.1 Servant Leadership.....	25
2.1.1 Servant Leadership: An Overview	25
2.1.2 The Concept of Servant Leadership.....	25
2.1.3 Significance of Servant Leadership	30

2.1.4	Servant Leadership and Other Leaderships	32
2.1.5	The Influencing Effects of Servant Leadership	35
2.1.6	Servant Leadership in China	37
2.1.7	Chinese Relationship Culture (guanxi)	40
2.1.8	Servant Leadership in Higher Education	41
2.1.8(a)	Servant Leadership in Global Higher Education	41
2.1.8(b)	Servant Leadership in Chinese Higher Education	42
2.2	Work Engagement.....	43
2.2.1	The Concept of Work Engagement	43
2.2.2	Significance of Work Engagement.....	45
2.2.3	Servant Leadership and Work Engagement	47
2.3	Employee Innovative Behavior.....	49
2.3.1	The Concept of Innovative Behavior	49
2.3.2	Significance of Employee Innovative Behavior	51
2.3.3	Servant Leadership and Innovation Behavior	53
2.4	Psychological Empowerment.....	55
2.4.1	Concept of Psychological Empowerment	55
2.4.2	Significance of Psychological Empowerment	57
2.4.3	Servant Leadership and Psychological Empowerment.....	59
2.4.4	Psychological Empowerment and Innovation Behavior.....	61
2.4.5	The Mediating Effect of Psychological Empowerment	62
2.5	Perceived Organizational Support	64
2.5.1	Concept of Perceived Organizational Support.....	64
2.5.2	Significance of Perceived Organizational Support	65
2.5.3	Servant Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support.....	66
2.5.4	Perceived Organizational Support and Work Engagement	68
2.5.5	The Mediating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support.....	69

2.6	Leader-member Exchange	71
2.6.1	The Concept of Leader-member Exchange	71
2.6.2	Significance of Leader-member Exchange	72
2.6.3	The Moderating Effect of Leader-member Exchange	74
2.7	Underlying Theory	76
2.7.1	Self-determination Theory	76
2.7.2	Situational Strength Theory	80
2.7.3	Theoretical Framework	83
2.8	Conceptual Framework	87
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY		90
3.1	Introduction.....	90
3.2	Philosophical Foundation of Mixed Methods Research	90
3.3	Research Design.....	92
3.3.1	Quantitative Design	92
3.3.2	Qualitative Design	94
3.4	Location of the Study.....	95
3.5	Targeted Population	96
3.6	Sample.....	96
3.6.1	Quantitative Sample.....	96
3.6.2	Qualitative Sample.....	98
3.7	Data Collection	101
3.7.1	Ethical Issues	101
3.7.1(a)	Ethical Concern on Questionnaire Collection	101
3.7.1(b)	Ethical Concern on Interviews.....	102
3.7.2	Quantitative Data Collection.....	103
3.7.3	Qualitative Data Collection.....	103
3.8	Instruments.....	104

3.8.1	Servant Leadership.....	104
3.8.2	Work Engagement.....	106
3.8.3	Innovative Behavior.....	107
3.8.4	Psychological Empowerment.....	109
3.8.5	Perceived Organizational Support	110
3.8.6	Leader-member Exchange	112
3.9	Interview Protocol.....	114
3.10	Instrumentation	116
3.10.1	The Content Validity	116
3.10.2	Questionnaire Translation	119
3.11	Pre-testing	129
3.12	Pilot Study.....	130
3.12.1	The Confirmatory Factor Analysis.....	130
3.12.2	Results of the confirmatory factor analysis	132
3.12.3	Discriminate validity of the constructs	141
3.13	Descriptive Statistics.....	141
3.14	Data Cleaning.....	142
3.14.1	Missing Value.....	142
3.14.2	Outlier	142
3.14.3	Common Method Variance	142
3.15	Data Analysis for Quantitative.....	143
3.15.1	Specifying the Measurement Model	144
3.15.2	The Measurement Model Assessment	146
3.15.3	The Structural Model Assessment	148
3.15.4	Mediator Analysis	151
3.15.5	Moderator Analysis	151
3.16	Data Analysis for Qualitative.....	152

3.16.1	Trustworthiness of Qualitative Findings.....	152
3.16.1(a)	Internal Validity	152
3.16.1(b)	Transferability.....	153
3.16.1(c)	Dependability.....	153
3.16.1(d)	Confirmability.....	154
3.16.2	Thematic Analysis.....	154
CHAPTER 4 QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS		158
4.1	Quantitative Analysis	158
4.1.1	Questionnaire collection	158
4.1.2	Data Cleaning.....	158
4.1.3	Missing Value.....	159
4.1.4	Outlier	160
4.1.5	Descriptive Statistics.....	160
4.1.6	Normality	162
4.1.7	Common Method Variance	162
4.1.8	Descriptive Statistics and Correlation.....	164
4.1.9	Measurement Model	167
4.1.10	Structural model.....	175
CHAPTER 5 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS.....		184
5.1	Qualitative Analysis	184
5.1.1	To understand the way of “empowerment” of servant leaders influences on lecturers’ innovation behavior and work engagement	184
5.1.2	To understand the way of the “humility” of servant leaders influence on lecturers’ innovative behavior and work engagement	193
5.1.3	To understand the way of the “stand back” of servant leaders influence on lecturers’ innovative behavior and work engagement	198

5.1.4	To understand the way of the “stewardship” of servant leaders influence on lecturers’ innovative behavior and work engagement	205
5.1.5	To understand the way of the “authenticity” of servant leaders influence on lecturers’ innovative behavior and work engagement	212
5.1.6	To understand the moderating effect of leader-member exchange on servant leadership and organizational support	217
5.2	Findings in different rating groups on servant leadership.....	223
5.2.1	The influence of the college size.....	223
5.2.2	Emotional interaction.....	224
5.2.3	The quality of leader-member exchanges	224
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION		226
6.1	Overview of the study	226
6.2	Discussion	227
6.2.1	Servant leadership and lecturers’ innovative behavior in Chinese higher vocational colleges.....	227
6.2.2	Servant Leadership and Lecturers’ Work Engagement in Chinese Higher Vocational Colleges.....	230
6.2.3	The mediating effect of psychological empowerment between servant leadership and innovative behavior	232
6.2.4	Perceived organizational support mediating the relationship between servant leadership and work engagement	234
6.2.5	Leader-member exchange moderate the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support	237
6.3	Implications.....	238
6.3.1	Theoretical implication	238
6.3.2	Practical implication	240
6.3.3	Policy implication	242
6.4	Future research	243
6.5	Conclusion	245

REFERENCES.....	247
------------------------	------------

APPENDICES

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1 The development of the servant leadership concept.....	27
Table 2.2 The main forms of leadership style	34
Table 2.3 The concept development of work engagement	45
Table 2.4 The concept development of employees' innovative behavior.....	51
Table 2.5 The concept of psychological empowerment	57
Table 2.6 The development of the self-determination theory.....	78
Table 3.1 The number of lecturers in each college and the sample size	98
Table 3.2 The selection of the interviewees	100
Table 3.3 The original items and final adapted items of SLS scale	105
Table 3.4 The original items and final adapted items of UWES-9 scale.....	107
Table 3.5 The original items and final adapted items of the IWB scale.....	108
Table 3.6 The original items and final adapted items of the PE scale.....	109
Table 3.7 The original and final adapted items of the POS scale.....	111
Table 3.8 The Original Items and Final Adapted Items of the LMX- MDM Scale.....	113
Table 3.9 The Prior Theme and the Core Interview Questions	115
Table 3.10 The Content of the Items Before and After Modification	117
Table 3.11 The Translation of Servant Leadership Questionnaire	120
Table 3.12 The Translation of Work Engagement Questionnaire	124
Table 3.13 The Translation of Innovative Behavior Questionnaire	125
Table 3.14 The Translation of Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire.....	126
Table 3.15 The Translation of Perceived Organizational Support Questionnaire.....	127
Table 3.16 The Translation of Leader-member Exchange Questionnaire	128

Table 3.17	The Results of Servant Leadership Construct	133
Table 3.18	The Results of Work Engagement Construct.....	135
Table 3.19	The Results of Perceived Organizational Support Construct	136
Table 3.20	The Results of Psychological Empowerment Construct	138
Table 3.21	The Results of Leader-member Exchange Construct	139
Table 3.22	The Results of Innovative Behavior Construct.....	140
Table 3.23	The Results of Discriminate Validity Between Constructs.....	141
Table 3.24	The Identification Criterion of Reflective Construct or Formative Construct	144
Table 3.25	The Example of the Themes Formation	156
Table 4.1	The Distribution of Validated Questionnaires	159
Table 4.2	The Casewise Diagnostic Results.....	160
Table 4.3	The Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents	161
Table 4.4	The Comparison of Path Coefficient (β) Before and After Marker Variable Included the Model.....	163
Table 4.5	The Comparison of R^2 Before and After Marker Included the Model.....	164
Table 4.6	The Assessment of the First-order Constructs	169
Table 4.7	The Discriminate Validity of the First-order Constructs	172
Table 4.8	The Results of the Confidence Interval of the First-order Construct.....	173
Table 4.9	The Assessment of the Second-order Constructs	174
Table 4.10	The Discriminate Validity of the HTMT	175
Table 4.11	The Results of the Confidence Interval of the Second-order Construct.....	175
Table 4.12	The Collinearity Assessment Between the Constructs	176
Table 4.13	The Hypotheses Testing.....	178
Table 4.14	The PLS-Predict	180

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 The Theoretical Framework	83
Figure 2.2 The Conceptual Framework of The Study	89
Figure 3.1 The Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design.....	92
Figure 4.1 The Mardia's Multivariate Skewness and Kurtosis	162
Figure 4.2 The Descriptive Statistics and Correlation	166
Figure 4.3 The Assessment of the Second-order Constructs	179
Figure 4.4 The Interaction Plot of Moderating Effect.....	182
Figure 5.1 The Formation of the "Empowerment" Theme	192
Figure 5.2 The Formation of the "Humility" Theme	197
Figure 5.3 The Formation of the "Stand back" Theme	204
Figure 5.4 The Formation of the "Stewardship" Theme.....	211
Figure 5.5 The Formation of the "Authenticity" Theme.....	216
Figure 5.6 The Formation of the "Leader-member exchange" Theme	222

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CB-SEM	Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling
CR	Composite Reliability
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes
HTMT	Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio of Correlations
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	The Permission of the Questionnaire Usage from the Scale Developer
Appendix B1	The Original Documents of the Content Validity Assessment Form
Appendix B2	The Content Validity Assessment for the Second Time
Appendix C1	The Original Material of the Forward Translation
Appendix C2	The Original Material of the Backward Translation
Appendix D	The Original Material of Pre-Testing Feedback for Three Respondents
Appendix E1	The English Version Questionnaire
Appendix E2	The Chinese Version Questionnaire
Appendix F	Interview Protocol Form
Appendix G	The Evidence for Data Preparation
Appendix H	The Evidence for First-Order Construct Loadings and CMV
Appendix I	The RAW Evidence for Structural Model Analysis
Appendix J	The Approval Letter of JEPeM USM
Appendix K	The Demonstration of the Informed Consent Form
Appendix L	The Original Coding Table

**MODEL STRUKTUR KEPIMPINAN KHIDMAT, TINGKAH LAKU
INOVATIF DAN PENGLIBATAN KERJADALAM KALANGAN
PENSYARAH KOLEJ VOKASIONAL TINGGI CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada pengaruh kepemimpinan berorientasi perkhidmatan terhadap tingkah laku inovatif dan penglibatan kerja pensyarah di kolej vokasional tinggi di China. Kajian ini menggunakan teori penentuan sendiri dan teori kekuatan situasi untuk membina rangka kerja bersepadu yang mengkaji kesan perantaraan pemeraksanaan psikologi dan persepsi sokongan organisasi, serta peranan moderasi pertukaran pemimpin-ahli. Kajian kuantitatif ini menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan bercampur-campur berurutan yang menerangkan dan mendapati bahawa kepemimpinan berorientasi perkhidmatan secara signifikan meningkatkan kesan positif tingkah laku kreatif dan penglibatan kerja pensyarah. Pemeraksanaan psikologi dan persepsi sokongan organisasi bertindak sebagai faktor perantaraan. Selain itu, hubungan antara kepemimpinan berorientasi perkhidmatan dan persepsi sokongan organisasi dipengaruhi secara signifikan oleh pertukaran pemimpin-ahli. Seterusnya, kajian kualitatif dijalankan untuk menjelaskan lebih lanjut tentang pengaruh ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pemimpin berorientasi perkhidmatan memenuhi keperluan pensyarah dengan menyediakan sokongan sumber yang berkaitan dengan psikologi dan pekerjaan, yang merangsang motivasi intrinsik pensyarah untuk menunjukkan sikap dan tingkah laku positif. Hasil kajian ini memperluas teori kepemimpinan berorientasi perkhidmatan, mengesahkan kebolehgunaannya dalam konteks kolej vokasional tinggi di China, dan memperluas penggunaan teori penentuan sendiri dan teori kekuatan situasi dalam bidang pendidikan vokasional tinggi. Kajian

ini menekankan peranan penting pemimpin berorientasi perkhidmatan dalam mempromosikan pembaharuan pendidikan vokasional tinggi di China dengan memenuhi keperluan pensyarah dan meningkatkan pemeraksanaan psikologi serta persepsi sokongan organisasi mereka. Kajian ini memberikan rujukan teori dan praktikal untuk amalan kepemimpinan dan pembaharuan pendidikan vokasional di kolej vokasional tinggi, serta memberikan wawasan penting untuk meningkatkan penglibatan kerja dan tingkah laku inovatif pensyarah.

**A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP, INNOVATIVE
BEHAVIOR AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG CHINESE HIGHER
VOCATIONAL COLLEGE LECTURERS**

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the pathways of servant leadership that influence lecturers' innovative behavior and work engagement in Chinese higher vocational colleges. The study employed self-determination theory and situational strength theory to construct an integrative framework that examines the mediating effect of psychological empowerment and perceptions of organizational support, as well as the moderating role of leader-member exchange. The quantitative study used an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design and found that servant leadership greatly increased the positive effects of lecturers' creative behaviors and work engagement. Psychological empowerment and perceived organizational support acted as mediating factors. Additionally, the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support was significantly influenced by leader-member exchange. Subsequently, the qualitative research is conducted to further explain these influence pathways. The research findings revealed that servant leaders meet the needs of lecturers by providing psychological and work-related resources support, which stimulates lecturers' intrinsic motivation to present positive attitudes and behaviors. The findings extend the theory of servant leadership, validate its applicability in the context of Chinese higher vocational colleges, and expand the use of self-determination theory and situational strength theory in the field of higher vocational education. The study highlights the important role of servant leaders in promoting Chinese higher vocational education reform by meeting lecturers' needs and enhancing

their psychological empowerment and perceived organizational support. This study provides theoretical and practical references for leadership practices and vocational education reform in higher vocational colleges and provides important insights for enhancing lecturers' work engagement and innovative behavior.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Leadership can be seen as a comprehensive application of leaders' abilities, leading all organizational components to effectively achieve organizational aims (Suwanto et al., 2022). Effective leadership enhances employees' positive behavior and attitudes (Uppathampracha & Liu, 2022), primarily by prioritizing the needs of the followers rather than maximizing the leaders' own desires (Goestjahjanti et al., 2022).

Servant leadership is other-centered, prioritizing the needs, well-being, and growth of followers and focusing on the development of individuals within a community (Takamatsu, 2022). Servant leaders are considered more likely to motivate employee innovation (Nguyen et al., 2023; Vuong, 2022) and positively influence work engagement (Yagil & Oren, 2021). Consequently, servant leadership acquired increasing attention in leadership research (Zarei et al., 2022).

Studying servant leadership in higher education institutions is crucial (Ghasemy et al., 2023). This is because the core mission of these institutions--to nurture talent, create knowledge, and serve society--fundamentally requires a leadership philosophy centered on service, support, empowering faculty and staff, and commitment to a shared vision. This approach directly addresses the complex challenges facing higher education, such as improving teaching quality, ethical campus culture, and better meeting the diverse needs of stakeholders. When higher education leaders demonstrate service, humility, and empowerment toward individual faculty members, they can ultimately inspire the lecturer's internal motivation and inspire them to serve others.

However, applying this leadership philosophy into tangible outcomes for lecturers' work engagement and innovative behavior within the demanding context of contemporary Chinese higher vocational education reform remains a critical challenge. Under such context, the task of higher vocational colleges are rapidly upgrading the quality of skilled personnel to meet national economic needs, and placing immense pressure on lecturers (Shao et al., 2023). This study therefore focuses explicitly on examining how servant leadership functions within Chinese higher vocational colleges to influence lecturers' work engagement and innovative behavior, key drivers of successful educational reform and talent cultivation quality.

1.2 Background of Study

Higher education institutions are facing challenges, as in any sector in the world (Ghasemy et al., 2023). Chinese higher education institutions are no exception. Within this context, the potential relevance of servant leadership, introduced earlier as a philosophy centered on follower needs and development, becomes particularly salient for addressing the specific challenges faced by Chinese higher vocational colleges (HEIs). Universities and higher vocational colleges comprise Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs). The higher vocational colleges primarily preparing highly skilled talents for positions at the forefront of various industries, including manufacturing, construction, and service sectors (Tang, 2021).

In the era of globalization, competition among countries extends beyond low-cost production to a contest of innovative capability and high-end manufacturing. Highly skilled talents are crucial for supporting the development of high-end manufacturing, particularly in cultivating their innovative ability and professionalism. However, the current cultivation of highly skilled talents does not meet the number of

national requirements (Shao et al., 2023). A report by the Chinese government shows that there are 200 million skilled workers, but only 60 million of them are highly skilled talents (Song, 2022). The Chinese manufacturing industry is facing pressure from a shortage of highly skilled talents (Shao et al., 2023).

Enhancing the cultivation quality of skilled personnel is crucial in addressing the issue of the highly skilled talent shortage. High-quality lecturers are the key to improving the quality of highly skilled talents (Tan & Xiao, 2022). To this end, the State Council of China put forward the “*national vocational education reform implementation plan*”. The reform plan aims to enhance the quality of vocational education and, by bolstering the quality and competence development of lecturers, cultivate high-quality skilled talents with innovative abilities and practical skills. As the core participants of the reform, lecturers’ morals and innovative abilities play a crucial role in its success.

The most important is high-quality lecturers achieve this by demonstrating high levels of work engagement characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in their teaching and reform duties (Schaufeli et al., 2002a), which drives their commitment to student development and institutional goals. Furthermore, their innovative behavior including encompassing the generation, promotion, and realization of new ideas in teaching, curriculum, and industry integration (Janssen, 2000), is essential for adapting pedagogy, creating relevant courses, and ensuring graduates possess the cutting-edge skills demanded by the evolving job market (Zheng & Yu, 2021).

The reform plan prioritizes morality, as it significantly impacts lecturers’ behavior and motivates them to participate in the reform process. Tan (2021) views

work engagement as a measurement of a lecturer's morality. Only engaged lecturers will view teaching and educating students, exploring the truth, serving society, and passing on culture as their mission and responsibility. Higher vocational colleges place great importance on the work engagement of their lecturers. Lecturers' high work engagement will not only effectively enhance their work positivity but also help improve the quality of talent cultivation in higher vocational colleges (Meng, 2016).

In addition, the innovative behavior of lecturers is an important driver of educational change and also a determining factor for the outcome of the higher vocational education reform (Zheng & Yu, 2021). The innovation of lecturers in higher vocational education reform is evident in their enhancement of teaching methods, the creation of new courses, and their close integration with industrial practices. Innovative lecturers tend to introduce new technologies and methods in teaching and learning to adapt to the changing needs. The innovative behavior not only improves skilled talents' competitiveness in employment but also offers strong supports for the sustainable development of vocational education. Furthermore, educational reform necessitates that lecturers possess pioneering, innovative thinking. Lecturers' innovative thinking aids in enhancing vocational education keep up with the rapid pace of economic development, and producing skilled talent that meets market demand.

In pushing lecturers to be proactive, innovative, engaged, and successful in achieving reform tasks, the workload and work intensity of lecturers increased. These consumes more of their time and energy (Fetherston et al., 2020), and indirectly affect their enthusiasm for innovation and engagement in their work (Turner, 2022). Lecturers require additional resources to enhance their engagement and maintain optimal working conditions. Leadership is considered key in determining the effectiveness of the task (Xiao, 2020). Fernandez and Shaw (2020) suggested that

effective leadership should be characterized by building trust, distributing power, and communicating clearly. This is consistent with servant leadership (Ghasemy & Frömbing, 2022). Servant leadership is dedicated to serving subordinates, emphasizing empowerment, supporting the subordinates, and prioritizing their needs to create trust between leaders and subordinates, and striving to establish a service community in the organization (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

In China, President Xi Jinping posted, “*The purpose of problem solving is to serve the people*” and further emphasized the importance of the concept of “*serving for people*”. China has applied the concept of servant leadership in various fields. For example, in the government sector, as the implementers of policies, civil servants show service consciousness and humanistic care in their work (Zhang, 2023). Some business organizations also practiced servant leadership in daily management and advocated respecting and serving employees. Similarly, servant leadership is seen as a leadership style suitable for Chinese higher education and a better way to mobilize lecturers’ motivation and enthusiasm (Zeng, 2017a; Zhang, 2023).

In higher vocational colleges, lecturers teach various courses. Leaders cannot possibly guide all the lecturers’ courses. In this case, it is better for leaders to reduce their intervention with lecturers and provide them with more material and psychological support. Only using simple external authority and administrative orders to require lecturers to participate in activities can reduce their proactivity and motivation (Pan & Luo, 2007). Servant leaders provide support and resources to their lecturers, thereby enhancing their perception of organizational support. The sufficient support is considered the driving force behind individuals’ internal motivation for engagement (Lin, 2022).

As a highly educated group, lecturers are also concerned about their personal dignity, social reputation, and academic liberty (Zeng, 2017b). Gaining more autonomy can enhance their sense of respect and instill confidence in their ability to perform their jobs effectively. This motivation is believed to be effective in predicting an employee's innovation (Wu et al., 2022). This process is known as psychological empowerment and implies the intrinsic motivation and autonomy that employees feel at work (Spreitzer, 1995). During the works, servant leaders put lecturers' development at the core consideration, care about their well-being, and empower lecturers to a certain extent (Wang, 2020). Psychologically empowered higher vocational college lecturers tend to think more diversely and demonstrate more innovative behaviors.

Servant leadership emphasizes empowering followers, providing support, and building trusting relationships, which fosters high-quality leader-member exchanges (LMX) (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Within higher education, servant leaders seek to empower lecturers through support and trust, aiming to cultivate these high-quality leader-member exchanges where mutual respect, influence, and obligation exist. This process, however, is not culturally neutral. The development of trust and high-quality LMX is significantly constrained by the prevailing cultural environment and social relationship norms (Shi et al., 2022).

Crucially, the nature of high-quality LMX differs between Western and Chinese contexts due to the profound influence of "guanxi". In typical Western organizational settings, high-quality LMX and trust are often built selectively between leaders and a small group of subordinates perceived as highly competent or reliable, based primarily on workplace performance and potential. In contrast, within the Chinese cultural context characterized by "guanxi", a personalized networks system

and reciprocal obligations based on factors like kinship, friendship, or shared interest (Feng, 2021), the formation of high-quality LMX follows a distinct pattern.

Here, leaders are more likely to establish high-trust, high-quality exchanges with employees who share a pre-existing “guanxi” connection, treating them as part of an “in-circle.” Leaders tend to extend greater psychological and material support, along with higher levels of trust, to these “in-circle” members (Shi et al., 2022). Therefore, within the Chinese “guanxi” culture, the very process through which servant leaders build trust and high-quality exchanges with lecturers is likely shaped by these relational ties. This cultural lens suggests that servant leadership behaviors and lecturers’ perceptions of support and exchange quality may be significantly influenced by the dynamics of leader-member “guanxi”.

1.3 Problem Statement

Even though lecturers’ engagement and innovation are crucial to the reform of higher vocational education in China, there are still some current problems in these areas that hinder further progress.

The first aspect to consider is the impact of reforms on the innovation and work engagement of lecturers. On the one hand, the implementation of educational reforms has resulted in an increase in work pressures and tasks, which has led to a decline in work engagement among lecturers (Tang et al., 2022). This study addresses issue by investigating whether and how servant leadership, characterized by support, empowerment, and prioritizing lecturer well-being, can reduce lecturers’ pressures and foster higher levels of work engagement in Chinese higher vocational education context. Lecturers are required to be involved in more administrative work, teaching assessment, and student management. These tedious tasks obstruct them from personal

development in teaching and research (Wu et al., 2022). On the other hand, despite educational reforms that promote innovation, a lack of necessary support and resources discourages many lecturers from pursuing it. Studies have shown that lack of support in training, resources, and time is the main barrier that prevents lecturers from teaching innovation (Li et al., 2019).

In addition, the centralized and top-down leadership mainly adopted in higher education influenced lecturers' behavior and attitude (Wei, 2012; Yu, 2020). Some lecturers only carry out tasks as directed and assigned by their leaders (Lei, 2021). This has led to a decrease in the innovative behaviors of lecturers at higher vocational colleges (Zheng & Yu, 2021). Furthermore, it is believed that centralized leadership directly undermines the autonomy of lecturers, subsequently impacting their work engagement (Chen, 2021; Zeng, 2017b). The study emphasizes this critical problem by positioning servant leadership as a counterpoint to centralized leadership, specifically examining its potential to enhance lecturer autonomy and, consequently, their work engagement.

Servant leaders provide care and support for the development of each lecturer within the organization, with a long-term orientation that prioritizes their sustainable growth over time. This leadership with service consciousness seems more relevant to higher education institutions (Zeng, 2017b; Zheng & Yu, 2021). However, even researchers have carefully examined different leadership styles in the higher education setting (Ghasemy et al., 2021), and Chinese researchers have also given them attention (Zhong & Mao, 2020). The proposed servant leadership by Wheeler (2012) in higher education a decade ago still has received little attention in higher education research nowadays.

Furthermore, contradictory findings were found in the existing empirical research on the impact of servant leadership on work engagement and innovative behavior. In the profit oriented organization, it showed that servant leadership positively influences work engagement (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Ozturk et al., 2021; Yagil & Oren, 2021). But a study of non-profit oriented organizations in Spanish found that there is no positive relationship between a servant leadership style and work engagement ($\beta=-0.092$, $p=0.062$) (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2020b). The inconsistency highlights the critical role of organizational context. non-profit organizations often face unique constraints like resource scarcity, complex stakeholder demands, and mission-driven rather than profit-driven goals, which may influence servant leaders' behaviors and even the outcomes that influence by servant leaders.

While in the research of servant leaders on innovative behavior. Servant leadership has a significant influence on employees' innovative behavior in companies (Iqbal et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Su et al., 2020). But a study of non-government organizations found servant leadership not related to community service employees' innovative behavior ($\beta=0.073$, $p=0.253$) (Ji & Yoon, 2021). These inconsistency studies provide gaps in understanding of the impact of servant leadership on employees' innovative behavior and work engagement in non-profit oriented organizations. Resolving this requires investigating the mediating pathways that might influence differently in non-profits. For instance, the pathway from servant leadership to innovation might depend heavily on resources or autonomy, which could be more constrained in non-profit oriented organizations, thus compare the link observed in business settings.

This study aims to resolve these inconsistencies by rigorously examining the mediating pathways, especially perceived organizational support for work engagement

and psychological empowerment for innovative behavior within the context of Chinese higher vocational colleges. Importantly, it further investigates how the Chinese cultural context, particularly the role of “guanxi” in shaping leader-member exchange, moderates the relationship between servant leadership and lecturers perceived organizational support, providing an explanation for when and why servant leadership effects might vary, thereby addressing the gap highlighted by the contradictory findings.

In reviewing the literature, certain issues that mediate between servant leadership, innovative behavior, and work engagement are also being identified. Higher vocational college leaders, in their pursuit of policies, often impose additional workloads on their lecturers, which inevitably leads to increased stress and demotivation among them (Yang, 2020). In addition, some higher vocational college leaders lack planning for lecturers’ growth and career development. Even many training activities deviate from the lecturers’ needs in terms of content and form (Wang, 2020). Inadequate organizational support has led to a weakened feeling of personal achievement, low mood, and a decline in work proactivity and motivation among higher vocational college lecturers (Wang, 2020). Thus, stimulating lecturers’ motivation, proactiveness, and innovation has become an urgent concern.

The effectiveness of servant leadership connects through how employees perceive the behavior of these leaders (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2020b). This perception could create an emotional connection between employees and leaders, which in turn stimulates employees’ work engagement and leads to more innovative behavior at work. Research found that psychological empowerment is effective in motivating employees’ intrinsic motivation and work competence. It has become an effective way to enhance lecturers’ proactiveness, motivation, and innovation in higher education

institutes (Tang et al., 2022). Moreover, organizations must genuinely care about the development of their lecturers and provide them with the necessary support. More organizational support also becomes the key to promoting lecturers' intrinsic motivation (Lin, 2022). However, even previous studies in the business context provided valuable information for understanding the mediating role of perceived organizational support between servant leadership and employees' positive outcomes (e.g., Huning et al., 2020; Zhou & Miao, 2014), as well as the mediating effect of psychological empowerment between servant leadership and employee innovative behavior, which has also been validated (Khan et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019), research in nonprofit organizations still remains scarce. Therefore, rigorously examining these mediating pathways within the specific, often challenging context of non-profit oriented organizations like higher vocational colleges is essential to understand why and how servant leaders influence employee outcomes, thereby understanding the reason of the inconsistencies.

Furthermore, the situation influences the expression of individual behavior (Meyer et al., 2010), the Western leader-member exchange differs from that in China in that it is based on the employees' competence. In China, people value relationships more than just competence. Leaders and employees might be friends, relatives, or people with common interests linked with each other. The situation is influenced by the Chinese relationship (Guanxi) culture. In the exchange between leader and subordinate, no matter if an individual's capabilities are strong or weak, employees can obtain support, trust, and resources from leaders. Leaders not only have high-quality exchanges with capable employees but also with employees who have relationships. This characteristic of LMX, particularly its basis in "guanxi" within the Chinese

context, positions it as a critical moderator of the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support.

This could result in two possible outcomes: firstly, when servant leadership behaviors occur within a high-quality LMX relationship (often rooted in “guanxi”), the inherent trust and reciprocity may amplify the positive impact of servant leadership, leading to an increase in high-quality exchanges that could enhance the overall perception of organizational support among employees within these relationships. It is also possible that the leaders’ resources are limited, and servant leaders’ high-quality exchange with employees who have relationships might be perceived by capable employees outside these “guanxi” circles as unfair favoritism or resource diversion. This perception could trigger LMX to act as a negative moderator, whereby the preferential treatment based on “guanxi” would estrange the capable employees. This relationship might negatively affect capable employees’ perception of servant leaders specifically because of the nature of the LMX distribution, thereby lowering their organizational support perception. Thus, the quality and, crucially, the basis of LMX significantly moderates how servant leadership translates into perceived organizational support, potentially strengthening it within guanxi-based exchanges but weakening it for capable employees excluded from them.

In the current literature, there is very limited research on how situational constraints strengthen or weaken servant leadership based on individual perceptions (Eva et al., 2019). Furthermore, despite LMX potential as a key contextual factor, its role as a moderator in servant leadership research remains largely unexplored, with no research explicitly examining its moderating role between servant leadership and perceived organizational support. This specific gap, understanding how LMX, especially under the influence of “guanxi” culture, moderates the relationship

between servant leadership and perceived organizational support, provides a rationale for this study to choose leader-member exchange as the focal moderator variable for the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support.

In the current literature, there is very limited research on how situational constraints strengthen or weaken servant leadership based on individual perceptions (Eva et al., 2019). Furthermore, the role of leader-member exchange as a moderator in servant leadership research remains largely unexplored, with no research examining its role as a moderator between servant leadership and perceived organizational support. This provides a gap for this study to choose leader-member exchange as a moderator for the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the influence of servant leadership on lecturers' innovative behavior in Chinese higher vocational colleges.
2. To examine the influence of servant leadership on lecturers' work engagement in Chinese higher vocational colleges.
3. To examine the mediating effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between servant leadership and lecturers' innovative behavior in Chinese higher vocational colleges.
4. To examine the mediating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between servant leadership and lecturers' work engagement in Chinese higher vocational colleges.

5. To investigate the moderating effect of leader-member exchange on the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support in Chinese higher vocational colleges.
6. To understand the ways (empowerment, standing back, humility, authenticity, stewardship) of servant leadership influencing lecturers' work engagement and innovative behavior in Chinese higher vocational colleges.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Is there any significant influence between servant leadership and lecturers' innovative behavior in Chinese higher vocational colleges?
2. Is there any significant influence between servant leadership and lecturers' work engagement in Chinese higher vocational colleges?
3. Does psychological empowerment mediate the relationship between servant leadership and lecturers' innovative behavior in Chinese higher vocational colleges?
4. Does perceived organizational support mediate the relationship between servant leadership and lecturers' work engagement in Chinese higher vocational colleges?
5. Does leader-member exchange moderate the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support in Chinese higher vocational colleges?

6. In what ways (empowerment, standing back, humility, authenticity, stewardship) of servant leadership influence innovative behavior and work engagement among higher vocational college lecturers?

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Firstly, this study integrated servant leadership, work engagement, and innovative behavior in one framework and tests in higher vocational colleges. Meanwhile, consider the mediating way of perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment, as well as the moderating effect of leader-member exchange in higher vocational colleges. The research findings provide new evidence for the developing of servant leadership theory.

Additionally, this study presents a new conceptual framework that explains the impact of servant leadership on work engagement and innovative behavior, drawing from the perspectives of self-determination theory and situational strength theory. This responded to Eva et al. (2019) calls for more theoretical perspectives to expand servant leadership research.

Third, the moderating effect of leader-member exchange on servant leadership and employees perceived organizational support may be different under the Chinese relationship culture. Previous research on the moderating effect of leader-member exchange on servant leaders' service behavior remains scarce. The findings of this study provide new insight for the development of leader-member exchange theory and understanding the boundary condition that influences servant leadership.

Finally, this study offers a novel theoretical contribution by revealing how Guanxi (relationships) reshapes servant leadership in China's high-power-distance culture. Unlike Western contexts, servant leaders' empowering behaviors strengthen organizational support for employees within Guanxi circles but may weaken support for competent outsiders due to perceived favoritism. This fundamentally challenges the assumption that servant leadership's effects are culture-neutral, demonstrating how Guanxi uniquely influence servant leaders in hierarchical contexts. It further provides a critical theoretical lens for decoding when relationship-driven strengthens or weakens organizational support in high-power-distance societies.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

First, this study hypothesizes that servant leadership strengthens work engagement and innovative behavior by stimulating lecturers' intrinsic motivation in Chinese higher vocational colleges. The findings of this study provide a reference for higher vocational college leaders who would like to promote lecturers' work engagement and innovative behavior through servant leadership.

Second, this study explored the mediating role of perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment, as well as the moderating role of leader-member exchange. Afterwards, the interview facilitated a deeper comprehension of the distinct pathways of influence. The findings are more comprehensive and provide a reference for researchers to better understand how servant leadership motivates lecturers' innovative behavior and work engagement.

Third, low-power distance countries are believed to benefit more from servant leadership than high-power distance countries, most servant leadership research takes

place in these countries. However, the current study does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how servant leadership functions in high-power distance countries, particularly in the higher education sector. The findings of this study provide empirical references for understanding servant leadership in higher education contexts in high-power distance countries.

1.6.3 The significance of achieving research objectives

First, by clarifying how servant leadership influences lecturer innovative behavior (Objective 1) and work engagement (Objective 2), and identifying the underlying mechanisms (Objective 3 & 4), this research provides actionable insights for higher vocational college leaders seeking to mitigate the negative impacts of reform pressures and centralized leadership traditions on lecturer motivation and effectiveness. This directly addresses the core problems hindering talent cultivation quality identified in the problem statement.

Second, the investigation of mediating pathways (Objectives 3 & 4) and the moderating role of leader-member exchange, especially considering the influence of “guanxi” culture on leader-member exchange formation (Objective 5), offers a crucial contextual lens. This helps explain the previously contradictory findings regarding servant leadership outcomes in non-profit settings like education, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of its boundary conditions.

Third, understanding the specific servant leadership behaviors (Objective 6) most influential on lecturer outcomes provides concrete guidance for leadership development programs within Chinese higher vocational colleges. Leaders can be trained to adopt these specific behaviors to foster a more supportive and motivating environment.

Fourth, focusing on Chinese higher vocational colleges, a high-power distance context with strong “guanxi” norms, fills a gap in understanding how servant leadership operates outside the Western, low-power distance, for business settings. The findings on how leader-member exchange moderates the link between servant leadership and perceived organizational support (Objective 5) provide unique theoretical insights into the cultural contingency of servant leadership effects.

1.7 The Delimitation of the Study

The delimitations of this study are mainly as follows:

- (1) **Research Geographic:** Even the research sample is collected from higher vocational college lecturers in Ningxia province instead of being collected from nationwide, the implementation of education policy has led to uniformity among higher vocational colleges in China, under the leadership of the Chinese government. The study’s findings from the lecturers could serve as a valuable reference not only for the leaders of higher vocational colleges in Ningxia province but also for other higher vocational college leaders across China.
- (2) **Research Methodology:** The study employs a mixed research methods approach, with quantitative research conducted through surveys and qualitative research through semi-structured interviews. Other research methods, such as experimental designs or longitudinal studies, are not used.

1.8 Operational Definition

Servant leadership

Servant leadership is operationalized as the extent of empowerment, humility, standing back, stewardship, and authenticity of leaders (Van Dierendonck et al., 2017).

(1) Empowerment refers to the extent to which the leaders encourage followers' growth and provide freedom and autonomy in the work. This dimension emphasizes leaders fostering subordinate autonomy and responsibility through delegating authority and providing decision-making latitude, representing a core distinction from controlling leadership styles. (2) Humility refers to the extent to which servant leaders understand their strong and weak points, acknowledge their limitations, and positively seek to overcome limitations from the contributions of others. This reflects leaders' acceptance of their own imperfections while actively soliciting and acknowledging others' opinion to cultivate a learning-oriented environment. (3) Standing back refers to the extent to which the leaders give priority to the interests of others and give them the necessary credit and support. This aspect prioritizes subordinate development and accomplishments over personal recognition, with leaders consciously allowing employees to take prominence. (4) Stewardship refers to the extent to which the leaders stimulate others to act for the common interest by setting the right example. Leaders inspire altruism and social responsibility through demonstrating commitment to collective well-being in their own conduct. (5) Authenticity refers to the extent to which the leaders truly express their inner thoughts and feelings. This requires consistency between words and actions, transparency, and moral integrity to establish trust-based authentic relationships.

Servant leadership will be measured using the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) developed by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), as adapted and validated in subsequent studies. Lecturers will rate their direct leaders on items corresponding to the five dimensions (e.g., My leader gives me the responsibility to make decisions that are important for my own work for Empowerment) using a 6-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree).

Innovation behavior

Innovative behavior is operationalized as the frequency of employees' intentional generation, promotion, and realization of new ideas in a work role, group, or organization to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization (Janssen, 2000). (1) Idea generation refers to the frequency of creating novel and useful ideas in any domain. The initial phase focuses on generating original solutions or improvements possessing potential value. (2) Idea promotion refers to the frequency of promoting the ideas to potential allies and searching for the support of friends, backers, and sponsors through social activities. This stage involves employing tactics and building cooperation to get essential resources and organizational support while overcoming innovation resistance. (3) Ideas realization refers to the frequency of the innovation ideas effectively applied in the work role, group, or the whole organization. The implementation phase entails translating concepts into operational plans, executing them, and producing measurable outcomes.

Lecturers' innovative behavior will be measured using the 9-item Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) scale developed by Janssen (2000). Lecturers will self-report the frequency with which they engage in idea generation, promotion, and realization

behaviors (e.g., I create new ideas for difficult issues) using a 7-point Likert scale (1=Never to 7=Always).

Work engagement

Work engagement is operationalized as the level of frequency at which employees show a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002a). (1) Vigor refers to the frequency to which the employees are full of resilience and energy at work, where employees are willing to make an effort in their work and persevere even when facing difficulties. It manifests as high levels of mental energy and resilience that drive proactive task engagement and challenge overcoming. (2) Dedication refers to the frequency to which the employees derive a sense of significance from work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about the job and feeling inspired and challenged by it. This reflects profound emotional connection to work, deep involvement, and pride derived from work's significance. (3) Absorption refers to the frequency to which the employees are totally and happily immersed in work and have difficulties detaching from it. This describes states of intense concentration and pleasurable absorption where time perception alters significantly, analogous to flow experiences.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), short version developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). This scale measures vigor (3 items, e.g., At my work, I feel bursting with energy), dedication (3 items, e.g., I am enthusiastic about my job), and absorption (3 items, e.g., I am immersed in my work). Lecturers will indicate how often they experience these feelings using a 7-point frequency scale (0=Never to 6=Always).

Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment is operationalized as the level of extent of employees' psychological perception toward meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in their work and their organizational roles (Spreitzer, 1995). (1) Meaning refers to the extent to which the employees judge the value of work goals by their ideals or standards. This relates to congruence between work objectives and personal beliefs or values, serving as an intrinsic motivation source. (2) Competence refers to the extent to which the employees' confidence or belief that their skills are competent to their specific work role. This dimension equates to job-specific self-efficacy, the belief in possessing necessary capabilities for task success. (3) Self-determination refers to the extent to which the employees' autonomy of behavior and choice at the initiation and continuation of the work. It encompasses feelings of autonomy regarding work methods, pace, and decisions, functioning as a key intrinsic motivator. (4) Impact refers to the extent to which the employees can influence important work outcomes as strategic, operating, and administrative. This reflects employees perceiving their impact on departmental or organizational outcomes.

The 12-item Psychological Empowerment Instrument developed by Spreitzer (1995). It measures meaning (3 items, e.g., The work I do is meaningful to me), competence (3 items, e.g., I am confident about my ability to do my job), self-determination (3 items, e.g., I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job), and impact (3 items, e.g., I have significant influence over what happens in my department). Responses will be recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

Perceived organizational support

Perceived organizational support is operationalized as a unidimensional construct. Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which the employees feel actively supported by their organization to use their unique strengths at work (Eisenberger et al., 2002). This concept denotes employees' global belief that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, motivating reciprocal positive attitudes and behaviors.

The used Perceived Organizational Support scale is the 8-item short form validated by Eisenberger et al. (1997). Lecturers will indicate their agreement with statements like “The organization values my contribution to its well-being” on a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree).

Leader-member exchange

Leader-member exchange is operationalized as the level of quality of the exchange between leaders and subordinates and a multidimensional construct with contribution, affect, loyalty, and professional respect (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). (1) Contribution refers to the extent to which the subordinate of the dyad takes responsibility and completes missions that extend beyond the employment contract and job description, as well as the supervisor providing opportunities and resources for such activity. This dimension captures mutual provision of extra-role effort and support for achieving work objectives. (2) Affect refers to the extent to which the dyad members have a mutual affection for each other based on interpersonal attraction. It derives from interpersonal attraction, indicating mutual liking and affective bonding. (3) Loyalty refers to the extent to which the expression of one support for personal character and goals of the other member in the dyad. This aspect involves public

endorsement, defending the other party, and demonstrating loyalty to personal qualities and goals. (4) Professional respect refers to the extent to which one member in the dyad has established a reputation within or outside the organization for excellence in their field of work. It originates from reciprocal recognition and respect for professional competence, expertise, and domain-specific reputation.

The multidimensional Leader-Member Exchange (LMX-MDM) scale developed by Liden and Maslyn (1998). This scale measures contribution (3 items, e.g., I do work for my supervisor that goes beyond what is specified in my job description), affect (3 items, e.g., I like my supervisor very much as a person), loyalty (3 items, e.g., I would defend my supervisor to others in the organization if he made an unpopular decision), and professional respect (3 items, e.g., I am impressed with my supervisor's knowledge of his job). Lecturers will rate their agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).