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SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWER OUTCOMES AT WORK: THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED LEADER AUTHENTICITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Servant leadership as a pro-social and other-oriented approach to leadership is receiving increasing attention in the academic literature, which demonstrates many benefits of promoting the adoption of servant leadership for individuals, groups, and organisations.

In my study I explored the influence of the perceived authenticity of servant leadership behaviour, as previous research has highlighted the risk of immoral leaders such as those with Machiavellian tendencies adopting positive leadership styles to promote their own ends. I test a model of follower attributions of leader intent moderating follower trust in leader and follower propensity to morally disengage as outcomes of servant leadership. The model includes follower perceptions of leader-member exchange (LMX) and follower propensity to trust in addition to leader political skill as potential antecedents of the attributions of intent. Additionally, I test whether the presence of a serving culture in the organisation serves as a trigger or prompt to Machiavellian leaders to adopt servant leadership behaviour.

A key contribution of this study is the use of attribution theory to inform my investigation. Although my findings did not support my hypotheses in this regard, that the literature has conflicting findings regarding the extent to which followers may see through harmful leaders' manipulative intents with negative consequences suggests this is an area to continue investigating. This further investigation is particularly important given my finding that harmful leaders – in this case those high on Machiavellian tendencies – are more likely to adopt servant leadership behaviour in the presence of a strong serving culture. We need to understand whether these leaders adopting positive leadership styles has negative consequences for promoting servant leadership in organisations. An additional important result is my finding that a leader's servant leadership is related to employees having a lower propensity to morally disengage, which has both theoretical and practical implications.

In summary, my study contributes to the field of organisational psychology by incorporating attribution theory into the study of servant leadership. I also expanded servant leadership's nomological network by adding moral disengagement as an outcome. That the presence of servant leadership can serve as a protective influence to decrease employees' tendency to engage in the cognitive restructuring processes characteristic of moral disengagement can contribute to building more positive work environments for employees and leaders. Themes for further research include continuing the investigation into the influence of perceived leader sincerity, potentially incorporating emotional sincerity into the approach, incorporating longitudinal designs to explore whether the initial positive effects of leader Machiavellianism may weaken over time, and incorporating the construct of relational attributions to better understand what drives employees' perceptions of leader sincerity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Servant leadership is defined as an "(1) other-oriented approach to leadership (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their [followers'] concern for self towards concern for others within the organisation and the larger community" (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114). As a moral or values-based leadership model, that is, one emphasising the necessity of leaders behaving ethically, morally, and with concern and empathy for others (Banks et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2018), servant leadership is receiving increasing attention in the academic literature (Eva et al., 2019; Hoch et al, 2018; Lemoine et al., 2019; van Dierendonck, 2011; Zhang et al., 2021). Scholars commonly point to several corporate scandals involving unethical behaviour of senior leaders as the primary reason for interest in promoting positive leadership styles (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Hoch et al., 2018; Kiker et al, 2019; Marinova & Park, 2014; Sendjaya et al., 2016). Servant leadership is not alone in emphasising a moral orientation, as it is one of several theoretical models viewing leadership from a pro-social and moral perspective (Lemoine et al., 2019; Mumford & Fried, 2014). While the concept of servant leadership was introduced first by Robert Greenleaf in his seminal essay published in 1970, the first of these leadership approaches to receive empirical attention was transformational leadership. A transformational leader attends to followers' needs in order to inspire and transform them to perform beyond expectations for the organisation's benefit (Bass, 1985; Eva et al., 2019; Hoch et al., 2018; Stone et al., 2004). Authentic leadership subsequently developed in response to criticisms of pseudo-transformational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999), with authentic leaders being guided by their internal moral standards, presenting themselves authentically to others, sharing information transparently and inviting feedback from followers (Avolio et al., 2009). Servant leadership, on the other hand, started receiving empirical attention just prior to the new millennium (van Dierendonck, 2011). Conceptually, however, the critical aspect that sets servant leadership

apart from other similar leadership models is that it places serving the needs of followers first and foremost, with all other considerations (i.e., organisational concerns) secondary to that (Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 2002; Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002).

While a review of the literature indicates a variety of definitions of servant leadership, the consistent emphasis on genuine altruism and the ethical nature of servant leaders provides the backdrop for this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which the perceived authenticity of a leader's servant leadership behaviour, and not just the behaviour itself, influences work-related follower outcomes. A study investigating antecedents of servant leadership reported an unexpected finding—that managers' Machiavellian tendencies (i.e., the tendency to be motivated by self-interest and manipulate others to advance one's own personal goals by any means necessary with little regard or for or trust in others; (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) were positively related to displayed servant leadership behaviours (Eva et al., 2017). Conceptually, a servant leader having Machiavellian tendencies contradicts assumptions that servant leaders behave positively, selflessly and ethically (Liden et al., 2008), and that servant leaders act and lead authentically, a capability arising from their secure sense of self and willingness to be vulnerable to others and non-defensive when criticised or challenged (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Sendjaya & Cooper, 2011). Indeed, reflecting on their consolidated definition of servant leadership, Eva and colleagues (2019, p. 114) note, "those who are unwilling to serve others are therefore unfit to be a servant leader". As such, this avenue deserves further investigation.

Research into the impact of a servant leader's perceived authenticity is not only theoretically interesting but also has practical implications for organisations in terms of having the potential to identify conditions where servant leadership may have a greater or lesser, and positive or even negative, impact. An earlier critique of values-based leadership models questioned the narrow focus such models tend to have, typically concentrating on the leader's impact on a single stakeholder

group such as followers only. In this critique, Mumford and Fried (2014) highlighted that such research also typically focuses on motivational criteria rather than performance criteria that could ultimately aid organisations' survival. In contrast, while the key feature of servant leadership is service to others this focus extends beyond the organisation and its members to other stakeholders and the broader community as well (Neubert et al., 2016). Additionally, the rapid increase in interest in servant leadership has resulted in a wealth of empirical studies demonstrating relationships between servant leadership and several different categories of outcomes on the individual, group and organisational level that are beneficial not only for followers but for the leaders themselves (Bobbio et al., 2012; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2007) and organisations as a whole (Huang et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2013; Overstreet et al., 2014). This research interest has culminated in several meta-analyses on servant leadership conducted in the past few years (Banks et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2018; Marinova & Park, 2014; Zhang et al., 2021), with the most comprehensive study published by Lee and colleagues (2020). Hence, while servant leadership scholarship often focuses on follower outcomes since, by definition, servant leaders put their followers' needs first, there is substantial empirical evidence that this focus ultimately leads to organisational benefits as well, in line with a servant leader's longer-term focus on sustainable performance rather than short-term profit-chasing (Chugtai, 2018; Eva et al., 2019).

1.1.1 The bright and dark sides of servant leadership

A review of the leadership literature in general highlights that the majority of work tends to focus on the positive and constructive aspects of leadership, on the behaviour and dynamics between leaders and followers that build trust and confidence and generate positive outcomes (Hoch et al., 2018) and on how leaders achieve their objectives through motivating and influencing their followers (Grant, 2012b; Hoch et al., 2018; Mohr, 2013). For example, in their review of the state of leadership scholarship, Avolio and colleagues (2009) observed that the majority of research and theorising has typically focused on the leader as a "heroic" individual, the attributes of the leader,

the leader's interactions with single subordinates (or groups of subordinates) and the outcomes of leadership, mainly on an individual level. While servant leadership is more of a relationship-based than individual-based model of leadership, the majority of the research has tended to focus on several (beneficial) outcomes and the various mediating paths leading from servant leadership behaviour to follower outcomes, with less attention paid to antecedents of servant leadership as well as boundary conditions influencing the practice of servant leadership and its outcomes (Eva et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021).

Despite the tendency for leadership research to focus on positive outcomes, researchers have been exploring the negative or dark aspects of leadership, because of their impact on company costs, as well as on individual followers (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Schyns and Schilling (2013) highlight various forms of destructive leadership behaviour, differentiating between those describing actual behaviour, such as despotic leadership (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008) and social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002), and those involving others' perceptions of negative leader behaviour, such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) and aversive leadership (Bligh et al., 2007). Additionally, several scholars have examined the influence of the Dark Triad personality traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) when considering harmful or destructive leadership (Furtner et al., 2017; Judge et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). However, destructive and other forms of negative leadership tend to be low base-rate phenomena making the measurement thereof challenging (Mackey et al., 2021), and the literature on negative forms of leadership still lags behind the well-established literature concerning positive leadership (Mohr, 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Sendjaya et al., 2016). My research bridges these two perspectives, bringing in the potential risk of "dark" leader intentions behind traditionally positive leadership behaviour. While "all good leadership starts with a visionary role" (Blanchard, 2001, p. 213), one cannot assume that all leaders have "good" or "moral" visions. An extreme example of how this risk can occur in practice is presented in Mohr's (2013) article *Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Harmful Leadership with a Moral*

Façade. As part of shaping a view of the "harmful leader", Mohr (2013) qualitatively outlined the member attraction and retention strategies of white supremacist leaders and contrasted such with characteristics of transformational, charismatic and servant leadership, finding that "harmful" leaders may also adopt "positive" leadership strategies in order to achieve their own twisted objectives. Mohr (2013, p. 30) concludes their paper noting that it is necessary to broaden the scope and study of leadership and "consider the ways in which harmful leaders use what some leadership theories would consider moral strategies or means to achieve immoral ends".

In a less extreme example, the positive relationship between leaders' transformational behaviours and subordinates' affective commitment within the collectivistic context of China was found to be stronger when the leaders held higher self-transcendent values and weaker when the leaders held higher self-enhancement values (Fu et al., 2010). This evidence lends support to the theorising of Dienesch and Liden (1986) regarding their process-oriented model of the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship (a relationship-based approach to leadership whereby leaders form different relationships with followers, with high-quality LMX relationships characterised by trust, respect, and reciprocal obligation; (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Dienesch and Liden (1986) posit that the member makes attributions about the leader's intentions towards them (i.e., are they being exploited or is the leader genuinely trying to help them?) based on the leader's behaviour towards them. The member's attributions are then one of the considerations influencing his or her view of the LMX relationship. In sum, these studies suggest servant leadership scholarship should not take the authenticity of servant leaders and their intentions for granted. Instead, a fruitful research avenue is to measure these to determine the influence that perceived leader authenticity may have on established outcomes of servant leadership. While follower perceptions of servant leadership behaviour have been demonstrated to be negatively related to perceptions of Machiavellian behaviour (Sendjaya & Cooper, 2011), researchers have noted that those high in Machiavellianism are not always obvious in the expression of the Machiavellianism trait and are good at creating a

desirable image in the minds of others (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Jones & Paulhus, 2009). This raises the possibility that leaders with Machiavellian tendencies may choose to exhibit servant leadership behaviour if they judge doing so would be beneficial for their purposes. Pursuing this avenue is especially important given Eva and colleagues' (2017) finding that leaders with higher Machiavellian tendencies were determined by their followers to be displaying servant leadership behaviour.

1.2 Theoretical Model

I studied servant leadership and the perceived authenticity of servant leadership from the perspective of attribution theory. Attribution theory is a framework of theories describing how people make sense of the social world around them and is broadly accepted as originating from the works of Heider (1958). Attribution theory states that people explain behaviour and the outcomes thereof by attributing cause either to the person (internal or dispositional attributions), the environment (external or situational attributions; (Weiner, 2019), or the relationship between two people (i.e., relational attributions; (Eberly et al., 2011). Drawing on attribution theory, I argue that it is necessary to consider the leader's intentions underlying displayed behaviour and the causal attributions followers make in explaining the leader's behaviour. Considering followers' perceptions of a servant leader's authenticity or, in other words, whether a leader's intentions behind his or her servant leadership behaviour are sincere and aligned with the other-focused nature of servant leadership, allows us to build a better understanding of the impact such a leader's actions may have on his or her followers. Figure 1 presents my proposed theoretical model for this study.

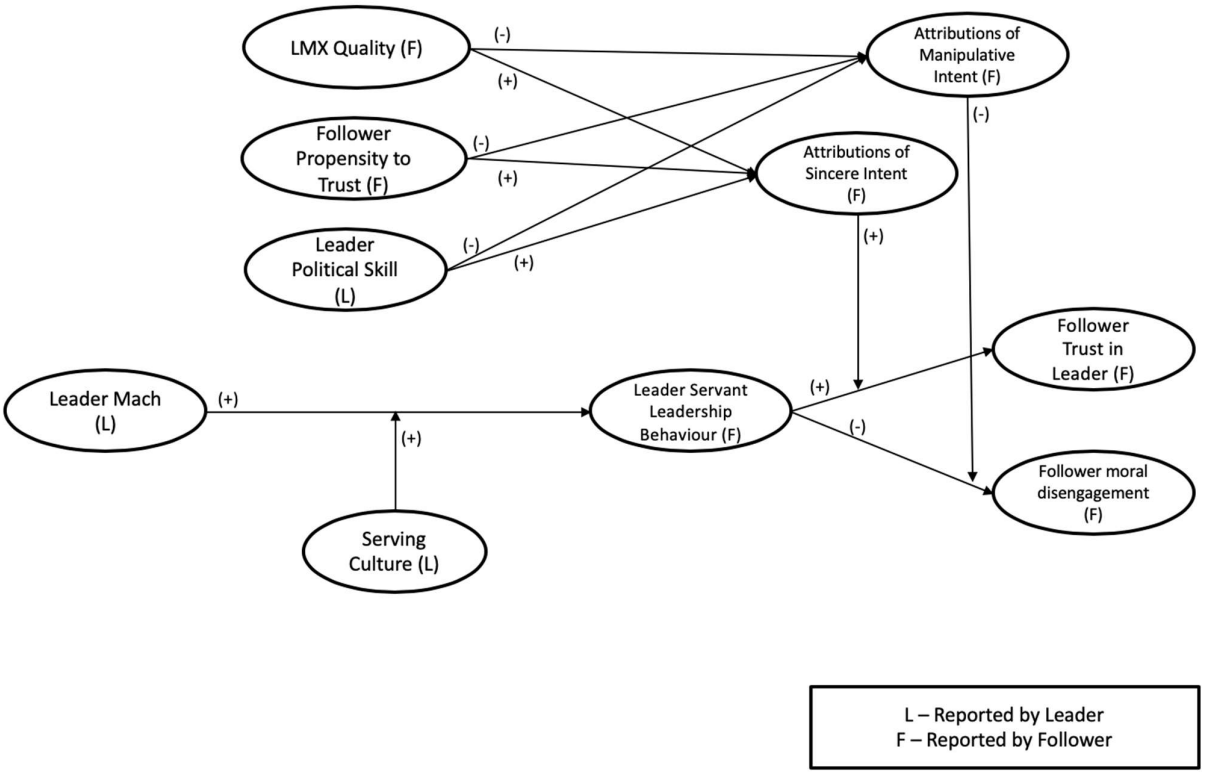

Figure 1: Theoretical model

1.3 Summary of Research Objectives

The main research question guiding this investigation is "How do perceived intentions of a leader influence the relationship between a leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower outcomes?" This question is addressed through the following objectives of the research:

- To what extent does the perceived intent of servant leadership behaviour moderate the effect of servant leadership on follower outcomes (specifically, follower trust in leader and follower moral disengagement)?
- Does serving culture moderate the relationship between a leader's dark personality (i.e., Machiavellianism) and servant leadership behaviour, thereby enabling a Machiavellian leader to adopt the appearance of a servant leader?
- What factors influence the formation of follower perceptions of a leader's intentions underlying his or her enactment of servant leadership behaviour?

1.4 Academic Contribution of the Research

Most research on servant leadership has focused on its positive outcomes, with limited work examining boundary conditions and moderating factors of these relations (Eva et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). I contribute to servant leadership scholarship in four ways. First, I hoped to expand our understanding of boundary conditions in servant leadership scholarship, examining how the influence of servant leadership's effect on follower outcomes may vary based on follower perceptions of leader authenticity. While the influence of follower perceptions of leader intentions on the formation of high-quality leader-member exchange relationships has been theorised previously (Dienesch & Liden, 1986), given the strong relationship observed between LMX and servant leadership (Barbuto & Hayden, 2011), a similar influence of perceived leader intent could be expected in relation to servant leadership. As such, not investigating perceived leader authenticity as a potential moderator variable of the relationship between servant leadership and follower outcomes risks recommending the adoption of servant leadership in scenarios where it may be less effective or may even have a detrimental effect.

Second, I added to the nomological network of servant leadership by introducing follower moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999) as a new outcome and testing its relationship with servant leadership. Described as a system of inter-related laws making up a theory (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955), a nomological network facilitates our understanding of a construct by laying out what it is and how it should relate to other constructs (Conway, 2007). This allows for theory testing by illustrating that a measure's relationships with other similar (or different) constructs in the nomological network are consistent with theoretical predictions (Arvey et al., 2006).

Third, I answer Martinko and colleagues' (2007, 2011) calls to incorporate attribution theory in building our understanding of leadership within the context of organisations. Attribution theory has been widely used in social psychology to provide explanations for behaviour, but despite its

relevance and applicability to organisational research, scholars note it has been underutilised, and its use could be expanded (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko et al., 2011). Specifically, Martinko and colleagues (211, p. 147) advise research into the role of subordinates' attributional styles in forming evaluations of their leaders, thereby moving away from a tendency in leadership research to "treat subordinate ratings as objective indicators of these variables" and acknowledging that the potential for attributions to distort subordinates' perceptions of their leaders' behaviour. I take a first step along that path by incorporating the attributions followers make about the intentions underlying leaders' servant leadership behaviour.

Finally, by examining the potential risk of "dark" leader intentions behind a traditionally positive leadership behaviour, I open the door to a potential dark side of servant leadership. This answers Mohr's (2013) call to broaden the lens with which leadership is studied and specifically consider "the ways in which harmful leaders use what some leadership theories would consider moral strategies or means to achieve immoral ends" (Mohr, 2013, p. 30). In arguing that viewing leadership as a process that may be constructive or harmful is central to deepening our understanding of all forms of leadership, Mohr (2013) draws on the work of Kets de Vries (2004) to highlight that studying the darker sides of leadership advances our understanding not only of dark and harmful leaders themselves but also the motivational forces that may "distort the moral framework of leadership" (Mohr, 2013, p. 30). My findings shed some light on ways in which the negative impact of dark and harmful leaders may be mitigated in organisational life.

A review of the existing literature on servant leadership as it relates to my study is examined in Chapter 2, together with a detailed discussion of the theoretical model to be tested and my proposed hypotheses. Chapter 3 describes the research design, method, and measures. Chapter 4 reports the results of my study, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Leadership is not bullying and leadership is not aggression. Leadership is the expectation that you use your voice for good. That you can make the world a better place.

- Sheryl Sandberg

2.1 Servant Leadership in Organisations

While principles of servant leadership can be traced back to ancient times in the writings of both Eastern and Western philosophers (Valeri, 2007), the concept was first popularised in leadership and management circles in the 1970s by Robert Greenleaf, in his seminal essay *The Servant as Leader.* Greenleaf wrote, "The servant-leader is servant first... Becoming a servant-leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27). As noted by Ehrhart (2004, p. 68), "The basic idea behind servant-leadership is that the servant-leader recognises his or her moral responsibility not only to the success of the organization but also to his or her subordinates, the organization's customers, and other organizational stakeholders".

Greenleaf's perspective of the servant as leader came in response to what he termed "a leadership crisis" (2002, p. 22), reacting against the typical power-based authoritarian leadership of the time and arguing for a more humane and purposeful approach. This bears similarities to the standpoint taken by Podolny and colleagues (2005), that the study of leadership went awry after World War II when the focus shifted to an interest in leadership for the impact it could have on economic performance. Prior to this shift, scholars were interested in leadership for its "capacity to infuse purpose and meaning into the lives of individuals" (Podolny et al., 2005, p. 4). One early example of the belief that organisations had responsibilities to society beyond making profits for shareholders is the Ford Motor Company in the early twentieth century, when Henry Ford noted that the purpose of his company was to serve society (Cook & Geldenhuys, 2018). Similarly,

Podolny and colleagues argue for a return to leadership for meaning-making, noting "satisfaction, meaning, social welfare all seem to be regarded as of secondary or mediating significance when compared to economic outcomes such as profitability or survival" (2005, p. 28). Walsh (2018) supports this assertion, arguing that before the rise of globalisation in the 1980s, a focus on human welfare was of greater interest to organisational and management researchers than performance. Reflecting on servant leadership within the context of existing management practices, authors have noted that Greenleaf's original writings on the servant leader can be seen as a direct criticism of the "typical American definition of the leader as a 'stand-alone hero' who always wins" (McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 2002, p. 143) and an "excess emphasis on financial gain" (Jack, 2018, p. 192).

Following Greenleaf's first writings on servant leadership, transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) gained traction and became the dominant model of positive leadership in organisations (Hoch et al., 2018). Subsequently, scholars have distinguished between the beneficial effects of authentic transformational leaders, who are driven by a concern for the common good (i.e., "socialized leaders"; (Howell & Avolio, 1992), and the destructive outcomes associated with pseudo-transformational leaders (i.e., "personalized leaders"; (Howell & Avolio, 1992), who are driven more by self-interests and their own personal gain (Barling et al., 2008; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Price, 2003).[1] Theoretically speaking, while both leadership styles focus on the impact the leader has on the follower (Andersen, 2018; Banks et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2018), a transformational leader's primary focus is on organisational objectives as compared to a servant leader's focus being the needs and well-being of others (Andersen, 2018; Bass, 2000). The servant leader's genuine altruism and concern for others (Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 2002; Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011) is the key differentiator separating servant leadership from transformational leadership (Stone et al., 2004). This theoretical distinction is also empirically

[1] When referring to "transformational leadership" in this thesis, I am referring to authentic transformational leadership unless explicitly stated otherwise.

supported, with a meta-analytic study demonstrating servant leadership explained significant incremental variance beyond transformational leadership in predicting employee engagement, organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Hoch et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020).

2.1.1 Machiavellian leaders and subverting servant leadership for dark ends

In sharp contrast to servant leadership, the construct of Machiavellianism has been termed "the manipulative personality" (Paulhus & Williams, 2002, p. 556), by self-interest and a lack of conventional morality (Kowalski et al., 2018), where the "ends justify the means" (Sendjaya et al., 2016, p. 125). In a Machiavellian worldview, being a leader provides individuals with power, enabling them to use subordinates to achieve their own personal goals and satisfy their own needs. Mumford and Fried (2014, p. 626) note, "evidence suggests that leaders may use their power, and the control over resources that it affords, in a self-serving way, instead of for the greater good". Mohr (2013) notes, "Through a purposeful combination of strategies and methods of working with followers, harmful leaders hope to be successful, admired, and followed" (2013, p. 28) and "they often use these relationships as a means to deceive, abuse, or manipulate followers" (2013, p. 26). This directly contradicts Greenleaf's original writings, where he specifically distinguished the servant leader from other individuals who seek leadership for power or wealth considerations. In Greenleaf's perspective, the "best test" to distinguish between a "servant-first" versus a "leader-first" leader is:

> Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served* [emphasis in original], become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And* [emphasis in original], what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (2002, p. 27)

Servant leadership's focus on placing the needs of others first may appear contrary to the "self-first" tendencies of leaders high in Machiavellianism. However, another central aspect of the

Machiavellian personality is that the "ends justify the means" (Sendjaya et al., 2016, p. 125). Individuals higher in the Machiavellianism trait tend to be highly adaptable (Dahling et al., 2009); essentially, any strategy – moral or immoral – that moves a Machiavellian-oriented leader closer to his or her personal goals would fall within the "ends justify the means" category. As such, adopting seemingly moral behaviours, such as those defining servant leadership, in order to advance one's own goals instead of being motivated by care and concern for others could be a logical strategy for such leaders. This reasoning is a possible explanation that Eva and colleagues (2017) offer for their unexpected finding of leaders' Machiavellianism trait levels being positively related to servant leadership behaviour. Previously, researchers have demonstrated that leaders high in Machiavellianism may still adopt the appearance of authentic leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2016), ethical leadership (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012), and a combination of positive leadership styles (Mohr, 2013). However, Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) also demonstrated how the presence of leader Machiavellianism weakened the positive relationships between ethical leadership behaviour and follower work engagement and personal initiative. The possibility that a similar effect may occur within the servant leadership domain forms the core of my research. Where followers attribute the actions of their leader to self-serving intentions rather than a genuine and sincere concern for others, the perceived value of the leader's contribution to the leader-follower social exchange relationship is lessened, motivating the follower to take (or withhold) action to restore the equilibrium (Blau, 1964). As such, leaving the influence of the perceived authenticity and sincerity of a servant leader unexplored risks recommending the adoption of servant leadership in scenarios where it may be less effective or may even have a detrimental effect.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Attribution theory, which holds that "people interpret behavior in terms of its causes and [that] these interpretations play an important role in determining reactions to the behavior" (Kelley & Michela, 1980, p. 458), serves as the overarching theory guiding my research. The core of my investigation

concerns followers' perceptions of the sincerity and manipulativeness of a leader's servant leadership behaviour and the influence these may have on followers' attitudes and behaviour. Next, I discuss the core tenets of attribution theory and broadly specify how it relates to my proposed study (Section 2.2.1). I then present the theoretical underpinnings of my hypotheses in Section 2.3.

2.2.1 Attribution theory

Attribution theory describes how people make sense of the social world around them, and "explain[s] why events in [one's] environment happened" (Martinko & Mackey, 2019, p. 523). It has its origins in the writings of social psychologist Fritz Heider (1958), who introduced the term "attributions" in his work on social perception, describing how people explain the causes of behaviour displayed by themselves or others. Specifically, he viewed attributions as outputs of cognitive processes used to understand the source or cause of a positive or negative occurrence (Martinko et al., 2007), such as when individuals assign causes to events after they have occurred (McElroy, 1982). Internal attributions assign the cause of behaviour or a specific outcome to something about the person, such as personality, motivation and attitudes, or the person's exerted effort and level of skill, while external attributions allocate cause to the situation, for example, luck, external pressures, or social norms (Martinko et al., 2007; Weiner, 2019). Subsequently, the concept of "relational attributions" (Eberly et al., 2011) was introduced, whereby causal attribution for an experience is given to the relationship one has with another (Burton et al., 2014; Eberly et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2019). s

Organisational scholars have noted that attribution theory has been underutilised in organisational research despite its relevance and applicability (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko et al., 2011), though more recently contributions in the field have been encouraging (Martinko & Mackey, 2019). Some areas where attribution theory has been used in the organisational context include understanding perceived motives for engaging in organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs; (Halbesleben et al.,

2010), exploring the impact of assumptions employees make about the intentions of HR practices (Nishii et al., 2008), as well as in studies of aggression (Brees et al., 2013) and psychological entitlement in the workplace (Harvey & Martinko, 2009).

In the leadership domain, there are content-related attributional leadership theories that seek to define what leadership consists of, and process theories, such as the path-goal model, which describe the process of leadership (McElroy, 1982). Implicit leadership theories, as an example of content theory, view leadership as "a set of lay constructs implicitly held by all, with descriptions of leaders somewhat contingent on the informational cues available to the describers" (McElroy, 1982, p. 414). On the other hand, process-based attributional leadership theories such as the two-step attributional model of leadership (Green & Mitchell, 1979) incorporate the attribution process into understanding their effects on leadership behaviour (McElroy, 1982). According to the two-step attributional model of leadership, "leaders, given evidence of subordinate performance, infer the cause of the performance (i.e., make attributions) before determining the appropriate action to take" (McElroy, 1982, p. 414).

Research in the leadership context has also demonstrated that leaders are not the only ones influenced by causal attributions about their subordinates, but also that subordinates' reactions to their leaders are influenced by subordinates' causal attributions about leaders' behaviour. For example, Sun and colleagues (2019) found that subordinates' relational attributions concerning their leader's servant leadership behaviour acted as a moderator to influence the level of gratitude as a general emotional state experienced by the subordinate. Specifically, where followers did not explain the reasons for their leader's supportive behaviour to them as relating to the nature of the relationship between them, followers' gratitude was higher, and the leader's selfless behaviour served as a greater stimulator for the followers' own citizenship behaviours towards others. I expand on this work by investigating the influence of another explanation subordinates could use to

make sense of a leader's favourable treatment of them--the intentions subordinates perceive to be underlying the leader's actions, and the impact that has on a key attitude subordinates form towards their leader, namely trust. Additionally, I will be investigating what impact leaders' perceived intentions may have on followers' cognitive re-framing of destructive behaviour, known as moral disengagement (Newman et al., 2020).

In positioning my research within the perspective of attribution theory, I draw on Dienesch and Liden's (1986) theorising that member (follower) attributions about the leader's intentions play an important role in the development of an LMX relationship. Building on this proposition, I argue that explanations of sincere and manipulative intent that followers make in understanding the motives underlying their leader's servant leadership behaviour are an important component to consider when expanding our understanding of when and why servant leadership has a beneficial effect for followers and organisations as a whole. While leaders with Machiavellian tendencies may superficially adopt servant leadership behaviours as the popularity of servant leadership as a leadership style has increased, their underlying, self-serving intentions may not necessarily escape their subordinates' notice.

2.3 Servant Leadership, Leader Authenticity, and Follower Outcomes

When reviewing the results of their servant leadership meta-analysis, Hoch and colleagues (2018) observed that nine of the eleven relationships between servant leadership and its outcomes showed significant heterogeneity, meaning that there were highly variable findings within the studies included in the meta-analysis. Edmondson and McManus (2007) note that inconsistent findings in existing literature, such as those observed in the Hoch and colleagues (2018) meta-analysis, are suggestive of possible unidentified moderators influencing the observed relationships of interest. Subsequently, identifying those possible moderators can lead to a more refined specification of factors enhancing or hindering relationships of interest (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), with

implications for theory building as well as for practical applications. Given that Mumford and Fried (2014, p. 628) caution that "any given form of behavior does not always work" and "the value of behaviors depends on the situation"; the paucity of research into boundary conditions within servant leadership scholarship limits our understanding of whether servant leadership behaviour will always have a beneficial effect (Eva et al., 2019; Mumford & Fried, 2014). I seek to address this limitation and draw on the relatively limited research examining the influence of follower attributions of intentionality on our understanding of pseudo forms of leadership (Lin et al., 2017) to do so.

2.3.1 A dark antecedent to servant leadership behaviour

Consistent with existing empirical studies investigating antecedents of servant leadership, my model positions a leader's personality, and specifically a leader's Machiavellian orientation, as an antecedent. To the best of my knowledge, only two empirical studies to date have been conducted examining servant leadership and Machiavellianism together. The first study reported a negative correlation with a large effect size between followers' ratings of their leaders' servant leadership behaviour and the followers' ratings of observed Machiavellian-oriented behaviour demonstrated by their leaders (Sendjaya & Cooper, 2011). The original conceptualisation of Machiavellianism focused on instrumentality (i.e., the likelihood that certain actions will lead to the attainment of desired ends; (Vroom, 1964) and the use of deceitful strategies to achieve one's motives (Fehr et al., 1992). Subsequently, researchers have demonstrated that individuals higher in Machiavellianism tend to place more emphasis on money, power and competition as motives while being less concerned with community building and communal values (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). This, as demonstrated (Sendjaya & Cooper, 2011) substantiates the theoretical contradiction between Machiavellian-oriented and servant leader-oriented behaviour.

The second study reported an unexpectedly positive relationship between leader-reported levels of their own Machiavellian orientation and observed servant leadership behaviour of the leaders as

reported by their followers (Eva et al., 2017). In other words, despite such leaders holding cynical world views, placing their personal interests above those of the organisation and others and being driven to win at any cost (Jones & Paulhus, 2009), they were still able to engage in the altruistic, other-focused and ethical behaviours typifying servant leadership in the eyes of their followers. While at face value this finding appears contrary to expectation, Eva and colleagues (2017) offered three possible explanations, drawing on the Machiavellian literature:

1. The positive employee outcomes associated with servant leadership behaviour, such as performance, commitment and OCBs, can reflect well on a manager, therefore promoting them may contribute to a Machiavellian person's own benefits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).
2. People with a high orientation towards Machiavellianism are argued to be able to read the emotions of others, which they use to determine how to react to any given situation (Bereczkei, 2015).
3. In line with the use of deceitful strategies to achieve one's motives (Fehr et al., 1992), people with high levels of Machiavellianism are prepared to manipulate people in order to achieve the outcome they desire, viewing people as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves (Reimers & Barbuto, 2002).

On reflection, Eva and colleagues (2017, pp. 22-23) note how this "suggests a bleak picture of how a leadership approach that was designed with the best interests of the employees at heart, might be being exploited in order to produce positive behavioral outcomes for the leader". I agree and argue that such a finding is not a result of an idiosyncratic characteristic of the sample studied by Eva and colleagues (2017) but likely to be more prevalent than researchers may have anticipated. Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) asserted that Machiavellians are not necessarily obvious in their manipulative behaviour, an assertion supported by Mohr's (2013) conclusion that harmful leaders adopted servant leader-like behaviours in recruiting followers while advancing their own goals.

Further, Hawley (2003) demonstrated that Machiavellian individuals are able to use both pro-social and coercive strategies in the pursuit of their goals. As the popularity of servant leadership is likely to continue increasing (Liden et al., 2014), and more leaders recognise the benefits of generosity and helping behaviours (Grant, 2012a), leaders with Machiavellian tendencies may be more likely to identify servant leadership as a viable manipulation strategy. Given this, and in replication of the Eva and colleagues (2017) findings,

> *Hypothesis 1: Leader Machiavellianism, as self-reported by leaders, is positively related to observed servant leadership behaviour as rated by followers.*

2.3.1.1 The moderating effect of serving culture

In addition to seeking to replicate the positive relationship between a leader's levels of Machiavellianism and servant leadership behaviour reported by Eva and colleagues (2017), I propose to build on their work by examining when such a relationship is more likely to occur. Specifically, I contend that the degree to which a serving culture exists in the leader's workplace (Liden et al., 2014) moderates the relationship between a leader's Machiavellian orientation and their display of servant leadership behaviour. Organisational culture is a key determinant of employee behaviours (Schein, 1990), as the shared norms and values of an organisation provide the grounding for staff forming a shared understanding of what constitutes acceptable behaviour and what does not. Research has demonstrated the importance of leaders' values and behaviour in shaping organisational culture and that their approach to managing followers plays an essential role in signalling acceptable behaviour in an organisation (Martins & Coetzee, 2007).

Serving culture, specifically, has been defined as a set of behavioural expectations created by servant leaders' role modelling the importance of putting others first (Liden et al., 2014), shared across a team, division or organisation in accordance with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Liden and colleagues (2014) first introduced the serving culture construct in their investigation into

how servant leaders may encourage the adoption of servant leadership behaviours in their followers, demonstrating effects on employee job performance, customer service behaviour and turnover intentions of staff. They drew on a combination of social learning theory and social identity theory to substantiate the role that a serving culture played as a mediating mechanism, with their empirical evidence demonstrating that leaders' servant leadership behaviours encouraged followers to adopt similar focus on serving others in terms of the followers' customer service behaviour. Subsequently, Nowak (2019) demonstrated how serving culture mediated the relationship between the structural component of workplace empowerment and customer service quality.

Within the context of my study, however, I intend to leverage serving culture as a moderator variable, serving as a situational "trigger" to leaders with higher Machiavellian tendencies in identifying situations where adopting the appearance of servant leadership behaviour could serve as a viable manipulation strategy. Specifically, people with higher levels of Machiavellianism have been demonstrated to be more aware of and sensitive to the signals of social context, taking into account the behaviour of those around them in their decision-making (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012). Bereczkei (2015) further argued that it is this sensitivity to the social situation and situational factors, coupled with flexibility, that enables a Machiavellian individual to adapt his or her behaviour in accordance with expectations around them. Thus, the presence of an other-centred serving culture "send[ing] clear signals that self-centered and unethical behaviors are not tolerated" (Liden et al., 2014, p. 1438) would likely prompt a leader with tendencies for Machiavellianism to mask their self-centred orientation and adopt the appearance of being focused on others.

> *Hypothesis 2: Serving culture moderates the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and observed servant leadership behaviour, such that the relationship becomes stronger as the level of serving culture increases.*

2.3.2 Perceived intention as an indicator of authentic servant leadership

While several leadership theories typically concern themselves with the actions of a leader, a distinguishing feature of servant leadership theory is its focus on the moral and altruistic character of the leader (Chandler Lee & Jackson, 2015). In servant leadership, the fundamental motivation arises first from a desire to serve, with the aspiration to lead following after that (Greenleaf, 2002). Thus, for a person's servant leadership behaviour to be considered a genuine representation of one's authentic self (Sendjaya et al., 2008), at his or her core should lie "a heart for serving" (Chandler Lee & Jackson, 2015, p. 278). Indeed, Staats (2015, p. 17) introduces the term pseudo-servant leadership, conceptualised similarly as pseudo-transformational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999), to describe leaders who possess "an unethical character that violates the principle foundation of who a servant leader should be". From this point of view, it would be impossible for a person with high levels of Machiavellianism, who puts his or her own interests first, to engage in genuine and authentic servant leadership. According to Staats (2015), such a leader would be viewed as engaging in pseudo-servant leadership.

The idea that an individual's intentions underlying demonstrated behaviour are core to classifying observed behaviour as a particular construct is not new to the study of industrial psychology and organisational behaviour. For example, one of the key components of the definition of prosocial organisational behaviour put forward by Brief and Motowidlo includes "the *intention* [emphasis added] of promoting the welfare of the individual, group, or organization toward which it is directed" (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 711). Similarly, Ferris and colleagues (1995) argue that a perceiver's attributions of intentionality are what distinguishes organisational politics from organisational citizenship, while Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) position members' attributions about a leader's intentions as informing whether the leader's behaviour is viewed as true or pseudo transformational leadership.

A cynical observer may question whether it matters what a leader's underlying intentions are as long as results are achieved for the business, given evidence that follower performance is higher when leaders demonstrate behaviours that are characteristic of transformational leadership (Hoch et al., 2018), authentic leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2016) or servant leadership (Liden et al., 2015). However, as Dienesch and Liden (1986) argued, a leader's perceived intentions have an influential role in informing a follower's view of the leader in that followers' attributions of the leader's intent towards them make a core contribution to the formulation and development of the relationship between leaders and followers. Moreover, Furnham and colleagues (2013) note that, while some attention has been given to how high levels of dark triad traits can help a person "get ahead" to achieve positions of leadership, "most eventually fall from grace" (2013, p. 206). Mohr's (2013) findings suggest that followers' realisation of a leader's true intentions may contribute to this fall from grace, in that harmful leaders initially attract people through promises of working for "a greater purpose" but ultimately followers become disillusioned as they begin to see through the leader's tactics. Building on this, a leader's apparent prosocial and serving behaviour may have a positive impact on followers and organisations initially, but such positive gains may be eroded should followers start to question the true intent behind the leader's behaviour.

Attribution theory can help shed light on the importance of a leader's perceived intentions when a follower is making sense of why certain leader behaviours were displayed. According to attribution theory, people have an inherent need to understand the cause of their own and others' behaviour and to explain the cause of events around them (Heider, 1958; McElroy, 1982). Ferris and colleagues (1995) draw on Thomas and Pondy's (1977) assertion that people make sense of others' actions through perceptions of their intentions, arguing that perceptions of intentions lie at the heart of attribution theory's attempts to understand the "why" of people's behaviour by examining the perceived motives that gave rise to the behaviour in the first place. Ferris and colleagues (1995) go on to present a process model explaining how attributions of intentionality are formed and note that

the intentionality individuals ascribe to others' behaviour has a large impact on how that behaviour is understood and responded to. In support of their model, the authors highlight research findings on the influence perceived intentionality has on matters such as subordinates' reactions to receiving feedback from supervisors and how individuals respond in interpersonal conflict scenarios (Baron, 1988; Fedor et al., 1989).

Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) build on Ferris and colleagues' (1995) model by tailoring it to apply specifically to transformational leadership, whereby followers' perceptions of a leader's motivations and intentions are what followers use to differentiate between "true" and "pseudo" transformational leadership. Specifically, Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) propose that when followers attribute a leader's transformational behaviour to sincere intentions arising from a desire to advance the interests of the organisation, "true" transformational leadership results and the benefits of transformational leadership follow. On the other hand, when followers determined a leader's transformational behaviour arose from manipulative intent to advance the leader's self-interest, "pseudo" transformational leadership ensues with detrimental impacts. I adopt a similar approach in my research, using the degree to which followers attribute the source of a leader's servant leadership behaviour to sincere intentions (i.e., motivated by the leader's genuine care and concern for others) and manipulative intentions (i.e., arising from a devious attempt to advance the leader's own goals and benefits) as indicators for the perceived authenticity of servant leadership behaviour.

2.3.2.1 Antecedents of attributions of intentionality

While the main focus of my study is on the influence perceived leader authenticity may have on outcomes of servant leadership behaviour, I give some attention to the antecedents of attributions of intentionality to acknowledge the possibility that leaders with Machiavellian tendencies may attempt to adopt the appearance of servant leadership as a manipulative strategy. Factors such as

leader characteristics (i.e., emotional intelligence, Machiavellianism, ingratiation, self-monitoring and political skill), member characteristics (i.e., emotional intelligence, role in the interaction, and experience or tenure) as well as prior interactions between leaders and members/followers have all been put forward as influencing attributions of intentionality (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Ferris et al., 1995). I focus on three potential antecedents of attributions of intentionality in my model, drawn from each of the factors mentioned above. In terms of leader characteristics, Ferris and colleagues (1995) argued that the political skill of the actor (i.e., leader) is likely the most influential factor in informing attributions of intentionality, as holding higher levels of political skill enables one to more effectively manage the impressions others form. LMX quality provides a view into the nature of interactions between the leader and followers (Ferris et al., 1995), as well as the follower's liking for the leader (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). Finally, I introduce a follower's propensity to trust as a member/follower characteristic important to consider in the formation of attributions of intentionality.

2.3.2.1.1 Leader political skill

Political skill has been defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use this knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 1995, p. 127). Although the term "political skill" may hold negative connotations for some, in the academic literature, it is generally viewed as a positive force or set of competencies necessary for enabling success in today's organisations (Bowen et al., 2010). As such, researchers generally distinguish using political skill from engaging in organisational politics, which is primarily self-serving behaviour demonstrated to have largely detrimental effects on workers, work environments and organisational outcomes (Bowen et al., 2010). However, the definition of political skill provided above does not preclude that an individual may utilise his or her political skills for self-centred purposes, with Treadway and colleagues (2007) demonstrating that politically skilled employees were successfully able to disguise their self-serving behaviour.

Political skill itself has been demonstrated to be a multidimensional construct, consisting of social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity. Ferris and colleagues (2005, p. 128) describe a person who is highly politically skilled as "not only know[ing] precisely what to do in different social situations at work, but how to do it in a manner that disguises any ulterior, self-serving motives, and appears to be sincere". This ability arises partly as a result of being able to accurately read others and identify appropriate responses given situational norms (i.e., social astuteness). This awareness enables the leader to address concerns and misunderstandings promptly, reinforcing the perception of sincerity. Such individuals also utilise a subtle and convincing influencing style (i.e., interpersonal influence); leaders with strong political skills are adept at conveying their messages clearly and persuasively, which helps followers understand the leader's intentions and goals, making them more likely to attribute sincere intent. This occurs while projecting high levels of integrity, authenticity, sincerity and genuineness (i.e., apparent sincerity); by being consistent in their actions and words, politically astute leaders can reassure followers that their intentions are genuine. Finally, the networking ability of a highly politically skilled individual enables him or her to develop and use a diverse network of people. When followers see their leader using their network to support and advance the team's interests, they may be more likely to view the leader's intentions as sincere. In accordance with the theorising set out by Ferris and colleagues (1995), I expect that:

> *Hypothesis 3: Leader political skill is (a) positively related to followers' attributions of sincere intent behind their leader's behaviour and (b) negatively related to followers' attributions of manipulative intent behind their leader's behaviour.*

2.3.2.1.2 LMX quality

LMX theory holds that, over time, leaders develop relationships of varying quality with each of their subordinates (members) through a process of social exchange, whereby "consistent honoring of transactional agreements builds mutual respect, trust, affect, and loyalty" (Sue-Chan et al., 2011,

p. 468). Dienesch and Liden (1986) first proposed that member attributions of the leader's intent influenced the nature and development of the LMX relationship, while Bitter and Gardner (1995) took this proposition further in arguing that LMX could also influence the kinds of attributions that members make about their leaders' behaviour (Sue-Chan et al., 2011).

Similarly, Ferris and colleagues (1995) highlighted the history of interactions between two individuals as an important factor likely to influence intentionality attributions, drawing on Kelley's (1972) dimensions informing attributions to argue that behaviour that is consistent, non-distinctive, and generally conforming to consensus anticipated to receive more positive attributions of intentionality (Ferris et al., 1995). Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) concur, proposing that leader behaviour that is inconsistent, distinctive and non-consensual is more likely to cause members to make negative attributions regarding the leader, viewing his or her motives as self-serving and manipulative. Given that LMX quality develops through a process of exchange interactions between leader and member, and the history of interactions between two individuals are likely to influence the attributions of intentionality made, I argue that LMX quality is likely to inform the formation of attributions of sincere and manipulative intent. Specifically, in high-LMX relationships, leaders and followers communicate frequently; this open and frequent interaction would likely help followers understand their leaders' intentions, making them more likely to attribute sincere intent to their leader's actions. Further, leaders in high-LMX relationships provide individualised support and attention to their followers. This personalised approach may help followers feel valued and understood, reinforcing the belief their leaders have sincere intentions. Additionally, the degree to which the perceiver likes the actor based on outcomes of previous interactions – a core characteristic of high quality LMX relationships (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998) – has been theorised to increase the likelihood of positive intentions being attributed by the perceiver (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Ferris et al., 1995).

Hypothesis 4: LMX quality is (a) positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour and (b) negatively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of manipulative intent regarding their leaders' behaviour.

2.3.2.1.3 Follower propensity to trust

Trust has been noted as a crucial factor in interpersonal organisational life, especially between leaders and followers (Goodwin et al., 2011). The presence of trust, particularly of followers in their leaders, can result in better performance and fewer counterproductive work behaviours that harm the organisation (Colquitt et al., 2007), and will be discussed further within the context of follower outcomes of servant leadership in Section 2.3.3. In terms of dispositional factors likely to influence the formation of followers' perceptions of their leader's authenticity, which will have a subsequent influence on the nature of followers' trust in their leader arising from the leader's behaviour, I have chosen to focus on the followers' propensity to trust.

When introducing an integrative model of organisational trust, Mayer and colleagues (1995) highlighted not only the factors we typically consider when determining someone's perceived trustworthiness (i.e., ability, benevolence and integrity) but also the influence our *propensity* to trust has on the degree to which trust may or not develop from our perceptions of another's trustworthiness. Taking a dispositional approach, they define propensity to trust as "the general willingness to trust others" (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 716) and view it as a stable trait on which people differ. For example, when no information about the trustworthiness of a new employee is available, a co-worker higher on propensity to trust would likely trust the new employee until learning to the contrary, while a co-worker lower on propensity to trust would likely require the new employee to first demonstrate that they are worthy of trust (Baer et al., 2018).

To date, to my knowledge, the interplay between propensity to trust and attributions of intentionality does not appear to have been investigated empirically. However, both Ferris and colleagues (1995) and Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) argued that less experienced perceivers would be more likely to make attributions of sincere intent as they were expected to be more naïve and susceptible to impression management tactics. Empirical evidence has subsequently supported this proposition, in that followers with less work experience were found to be more likely to make attributions of sincere intentions than more experienced followers (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2004). Building on the influence limited experience has on informing sincere intent attributions and linking the role propensity to trust plays in the evaluation of a new actor's trustworthiness in the absence of observed evidence, I argue that followers who hold a higher propensity to trust their leaders would be more likely to make positive attributions regarding the origins of the leader's servant leadership behaviour. Followers who tend to be more trusting are less likely to question their leaders' motives constantly – their inclination to believe in their leaders' goodwill would likely make them more likely to attribute sincere intent. Trusting followers may also be more likely to see a consistent pattern of sincerity, as their initial trust biases them towards perceiving their leaders' actions as sincere and the consistency reinforces their belief in their leaders' genuine intentions. Trust may also make followers more open to leaders' explanations – when leaders communicate their intentions, trusting followers are more likely to accept and believe them. In other words, those individuals who have a general willingness to trust others may be more likely to determine that another person's servant leadership behaviour is authentic, that is, that it stems from a genuine concern and sincere care for others.

> *Hypothesis 5: Followers' propensity to trust is (a) positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour, and (b) negatively related to followers making manipulative intent attributions concerning their leader's behaviour.*

2.3.3 The moderating role of intentionality attributions on follower outcomes

Generally speaking, perceived sincerity tends to elicit favourable evaluations of the actor. For example, Grandey (2003) demonstrated that employees with sincere emotion displays were viewed more positively by co-workers, while Basford and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that when followers perceived a leader's apology to be sincere, greater trust in the leader, satisfaction with supervision and LMX quality ensued. This is in line with Dasborough and Ashkanasy's (2002) theorising that when leaders are perceived as sincere, the positive perceptions of the leader's behaviour will be associated with increased liking and respect for the leader. On the other hand, Graham (1991, p. 110) notes that manipulative leadership is "the least satisfying to subordinates". This assertion is upheld by the findings of Berkovich and Eyal (2017), who demonstrated that principals' negative emotionally manipulative behaviour was related to teachers reporting negative affect in interactions with the principal. Specifically relating to perceptions of manipulative intent, Lin and colleagues (2017) demonstrated how follower attributions of manipulative intent underlying their supervisor's behaviour weakened the relationship between the supervisor's transformational leadership and follower levels of organisational identification.

The perspective provided by Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) and Graham (1991), that perceptions of sincere intent lead to positive outcomes while perceptions of manipulative intent lead to negative ones, is supported by the norm of reciprocity and norm of retaliation respectively (Gouldner, 1960). Arguably the fundamental tenet underpinning social exchange theory (Adams, 1965), the norm of reciprocity holds that when an individual receives a benefit from another, an obligation to reciprocate and offer an equivalent benefit in order to return to equilibrium is created. As such, should a follower attribute the source of his or her leader's actions to a sincere and genuine desire to empower others and help subordinates succeed and grow (Liden et al., 2008), the follower's subsequent attitudes and behaviour are more likely to be positive in "repayment" of the leader's supportive actions towards the follower. Conversely, if a follower were to believe his or her

leader's actions stem from a manipulative intent, as could occur in the case of a leader with higher levels of Machiavellianism adopting the appearance of servant leadership, a negative norm of reciprocity – "sentiments of retaliation" – could likely come into play focusing on the return of perceived injury (Gouldner, 1960, p. 172). As such, negative attitudes could be expected to follow in order to "balance out" the perceived deficit created by the leader's exploitative actions.

2.3.3.1 Follower trust in leader

In the organisational literature, trust is typically defined as a willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of others (Mayer et al., 1995). Concerning follower trust in their leader, Mohr (2013, p. 25) notes, "Follower trust is earned when leaders treat followers fairly and demonstrate faith in their abilities". Followers' trust in their leader features heavily in the servant leadership literature; in their conceptual discussion of how servant leadership may facilitate the meaning-based motivations of knowledge workers, de Sousa and van Dierendonck (2010, p. 235) note, "the focus on serving others, *when felt by knowledge workers as being genuine* [emphasis added], will induce trust and mutual respect". When investigating servant leadership as an antecedent of trust in organisations, Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010, p. 644) adopted the definition of trust put forward by Rousseau and colleagues (1998), namely that "trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395).

In the servant leadership scholarship, followers' trust in their leaders arising from the leaders' servant leadership is well established and has typically been identified as a proximal outcome leading to higher team performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011), higher affective commitment (Ling et al., 2017; Zhou & Miao, 2014) and higher employee job satisfaction (Chan & Mak, 2014) as well as increased engagement in OCBs (Shim et al., 2016), and lower turnover intentions (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). In a South African context, specifically, Holtzhausen and de Klerk (2018) found

that both affect- and cognitive-based trust (dimensions of interpersonal trust "grounded in reciprocated interpersonal care and concern" and "individual beliefs about peer reliability and dependability", respectively; (McAllister, 1995, p. 25) mediated the relationship between servant leadership behaviour and team effectiveness in self-organising teams. At the group level in China, trust climate as arising from servant leadership has been shown to relate to employee engagement (Ling et al., 2017). Additionally, the meta-analysis conducted by Lee and colleagues (2020) identified trust in the leader as one of three constructs (the others being procedural justice and leader-member exchange) as a key mediator between servant leadership and a range of follower outcomes both at the individual and team level.

Servant leadership scholars first argued and then demonstrated that mutual trust between leaders and followers arises from servant leaders' empathy, ethical behaviour, and prioritisation of follower needs (Liden et al., 2014; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). In terms of the norm of reciprocity, such "giving" of benefits would engender an obligation to reciprocate which, in this context, takes the form of heightened levels of trust between leader and follower. Further, Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) propose that followers are more likely to attribute leader behaviour to sincere intentions should the followers have developed a liking for the leader based on their previous interactions, leading to increased respect as well.

> *Hypothesis 6: Followers' attributions of sincere leader intent moderate the positive relationship between the leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower trust in leader, such that the relationship will be stronger when sincere intentions are higher.*

2.3.3.2 Follower moral disengagement

Moral disengagement is the "process of cognitive restructuring that allows individuals to disassociate with their internal moral standards and behave unethically without feeling distress" (Newman et al., 2020, p. 535). Initially conceptualised by Bandura (1999), it has been viewed as an

additional driver lacking from previous attempts to explain unethical behaviour in the workplace (Moore et al., 2012). Bandura himself viewed moral disengagement as a facet of social cognitive theory, whereby the "moral self" is situated within a broader socio-cognitive system "governed by self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulative mechanisms" (Newman et al., 2020, p. 539). Research on moral disengagement has suggested that people may sometimes justify their own harmful conduct on the grounds that it serves a greater good (Bolino & Grant, 2016). In other words, through various cognitive mechanisms (i.e., moral justification, euphemistic labelling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, disregard for consequences, dehumanisation and attribution of blame), an individual may disassociate their (im)moral actions from their internal moral self (Bandura, 1999; Newman et al., 2020).

To date, moral disengagement does not appear to have been examined within the context of servant leadership. Given the tendency of servant leadership scholarship to focus mainly on the positive outcomes of such leadership, in line with the broader leadership literature, the closest the servant leadership literature has come to considering such a topic is the examination of reduced workplace deviant behaviour as a follower outcome of servant leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2019). Specifically, employee engagement was found to partially mediate the negative relationship between servant leadership behaviour and organisational workplace deviant behaviour (Sendjaya et al., 2019). Furthermore, the nature of moral disengagement and its distancing of oneself from one's harmful actions goes against the moral fibre and care for others that is inherent in the other-focused nature of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002; Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), as well as the notion that servant leaders inspire servant followers (Chen et al., 2015; Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014). With Bandura (1999) viewing moral disengagement as being state-like in nature influenced by contextual factors, a servant leader's ethical compass and altruistic outlook could serve as a buffer against followers engaging in the cognitive reframing mechanisms characteristic of moral disengagement. As such:

Hypothesis 7: Servant leadership behaviour is negatively related to follower moral disengagement.

One of the core tenets of servant leadership as put forward by Greenleaf (2002) is that servant leaders, through their selfless service to and promotion of those around them, encourage their followers to become servant leaders themselves. This notion that servant leaders inspire and develop servant leaders amongst their followers has been argued for and supported most strongly on the grounds of social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) through the fostering of a service climate (Hunter et al., 2013) and a serving culture (Liden et al., 2014), promoting serving self-efficacy in followers (Wu et al., 2021), as well as based on social identity through developing employee self-efficacy and group identification (Chen et al., 2015). In cases where followers make attributions of sincere intent to explain the motivations behind their leaders' servant leadership behaviour, leaders' altruistic motivations are likely to present them as credible role models to their followers (Brown et al., 2005). However, the role modelling process underpinning social learning theory is not restricted to followers adopting the positive attitudes, values and behaviours that they see in their leader, but the negative aspects as well. A leader's behaviour, whether positive or negative, communicates to followers what kinds of behaviours are considered acceptable in the workplace (Lin et al., 2017). Here, I differentiate from investigating attributions of sincere intent, as per Hypothesis 6, and examine attributions of manipulative intent as the moderator that comes into play when leaders are perceived to be attempting to deceive their followers. While insincerity – as the opposite of sincere behaviour – and manipulation may seem similar because they both involve dishonest behaviour, I would argue they are not exactly the same. For one, insincerity does not always have a harmful intent as it could be used to avoid confrontation or to be diplomatic. On the other hand, the primary motivation of manipulative behaviour is self-interest: manipulative individuals aim to gain an advantage or benefit, usually at the expense of others (Unceta Gómez, 2020). Further, Gouldner (1960) argues that in negative social exchanges the norm of retaliation would apply, whereby actors

seek to regain equilibrium following disadvantageous actions by adopting negative actions. Further, from an empirical perspective, while attributions of sincere and manipulative intent have been demonstrated to be strongly correlated, factor analysis supports treating them as separate constructs (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2004). As such, in instances where followers make attributions of manipulative intent to explain the motivations behind their leaders' servant leadership behaviour, it may lead to the followers adopting the same "pseudo" servant leadership behaviours as their leaders. Drawing again on social learning theory, followers observing their leaders engaging in apparently positive behaviour for manipulative and self-serving purposes may serve to "authorise" the adoption of the same negative behaviours in the followers themselves.

Hypothesis 8: Follower attributions of a leader's manipulative intent moderates the relationship between servant leadership and follower moral disengagement, such that at low levels of manipulative intent the relationship is negative, but when manipulative intent is high, the relationship is positive.

Table 1

Summary of Hypotheses

H_1	Leader Machiavellianism, as self-reported by leaders, is positively related to observed servant leadership behaviour as rated by followers.
H_2	Serving culture moderates the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and observed servant leadership behaviour, such that the relationship becomes stronger as the level of serving culture increases.
H_3	Leader political skill is (a) positively related to followers' attributions of sincere intent behind their leader's behaviour and (b) negatively related to followers' attributions of manipulative intent behind their leader's behaviour.

Summary of Hypotheses

H_4	LMX quality is (a) positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour and (b) negatively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of manipulative intent regarding their leaders' behaviour.
H_5	Followers' propensity to trust is (a) positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour, and (b) negatively related to followers making manipulative intent attributions concerning their leader's behaviour.
H_6	Followers' attributions of sincere leader intent moderate the positive relationship between the leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower trust in leader, such that the relationship will be stronger when sincere intentions are higher.
H_7	Servant leadership behaviour is negatively related to follower moral disengagement.
H_8	Follower attributions of a leader's manipulative intent moderates the relationship between servant leadership and follower moral disengagement, such that at lower levels of manipulative intent the relationship is negative, but when manipulative intent is high, the relationship is positive.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

I adopted a post-positivist paradigm for this study, as I took a hypothetico-deductive approach. I then operationalised the phenomena using valid and reliable measures in order to test the hypotheses (Gray, 2014). A scientific paradigm can be described as a frame of reference that researchers use to organise their observations and reasoning: a researcher's paradigm guides what is studied, the type of questions that the researcher asks, and what research techniques are appropriate to address the questions asked (Neuman, 2000). Post-positivism developed from positivism, which originated as a school of thought from Auguste Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positivistic (The Course of Positive Philosophy)* (1830-1842) and was subsequently influenced by the thinking of John Stuart Mill and Emile Durkheim (Neuman, 2000). Both positivism and the post-positivist paradigm fall within the objectivist epistemology, which views reality as existing independently of people and their perceptions, and as something that can be explored and understood through a rigorous process of scientific enquiry (Gephart, 2004; Gray, 2014). Positivism and post-positivism primarily guide quantitative research (Creswell, 2009; Gephart, 2004; Gray, 2014), since quantitative data and statistics allow for rigorous hypothesis testing that allows researchers to investigate and discover laws about reality (Neuman, 2000). Looking at the post-positivism perspective, a fundamental principle is that while there is a single source of truth (as held by positivists), researchers can only approximate it in (fallible) observational terms. Specifically, Gray (2014, p. 23) notes that "we can only approximate the truth, never explaining it perfectly or completely...post-positivist research lays emphasis on inferential statistics with its emphasis on assigning probabilities that observed findings are correct".

This study falls in the post-positivistic paradigm because the perspective supports much of what organisational psychology strives to do in terms of measuring and predicting human behaviour.

Thorndike famously stated, “whatever exists, exists in some quantity, and can therefore ultimately be measured” (Cattell, 1943, p. 559). Similarly, Shrout and Rodgers (2018, p. 487) note, “Psychology advances knowledge by testing statistical hypotheses using empirical observations and data”. Thus, a quantitative methodology recommended by the positivist approach supports the intention of my study, which is to measure underlying psychological processes of leaders and followers and make predictions about how such will influence followers’ attitudes and behaviour. Quantitative methodology as a systematic approach that focuses on quantifying relationships, behaviours, and phenomena allows the testing of a hypothesis or research question through empirical data collection and analysis, enabling the calculation of the relationships of interest in my study. Additionally, since servant leadership could be considered a new but already maturing theoretical area and the contribution I intend to make will add a new boundary to the existing theory, utilising quantitative methodology within the post-positivistic paradigm brings consistency and methodological fit between my research question and my research design and methodology (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

I utilised a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data at the same time from more than one source (i.e., leaders and followers). The use of multiple sources reduces the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Methods for determining validity and reliability in quantitative research are well-established. Guidelines and recommendations for conducting survey research remind researchers that the quality of the items, instructions, and response scales used heavily influences the quality of data ultimately collected (Rogelberg et al., 2002). As far as possible, I utilised existing measures with demonstrated validity and reliability.

3.2 Target Population and Sample Method

The target population for this study is dyadic leader-follower relationships representing people working in diverse organisations. I tested my proposed theoretical model and hypotheses in a

"hierarchical leadership" context, where the leader role is formally granted using an individual's position within the organisational structure or hierarchy. This represents the context within which most servant leadership research has been conducted to date, with the majority of the servant leadership literature discussing a servant leader as an individual within a hierarchy (Jack, 2018) and existing servant leadership measures focusing on the traditional leader-follower dyad (Eva et al., 2019).

I initially utilised convenience sampling, approaching colleagues in my professional network and inviting their organisations to participate (Neuman, 2000) as potential data collection sites. As an incentive to participate for organisations, I offered the facilitation of a workshop (post-survey administration) highlighting the importance of authenticity in leadership engagements for a group of the organisation's managers. Agreement to participate was gained with two organisations in South Africa, one operating in the manufacturing industry in Gauteng and the other a government agency in the Eastern Cape. In the manufacturing company, all 33 managers and their 108 subordinates were invited to participate. Of these, 65 followers and 26 leaders completed the surveys (response rates of 73% and 85% respectively). In the government agency a group of 39 senior managers participating in a leadership development program and their 119 subordinates were selected to take part, with 35 followers and 10 leaders completing the surveys (response rates of 48% and 26% respectively). These engagements yielded a sample of 100 dyadic pairs.

A power analysis provided guidance on the sample size recommended in order to test my theoretical model. I used the a-priori calculator for structural equation models made available by Soper (2024), factoring in the number of observed and latent variables in the model, the anticipated effect size, and the desired statistical power level. Based on my model, in order to detect anticipated medium effect sizes at an 80% power level, a sample size of 190 was recommended. As the

engagements with the manufacturing company and government agency had yielded only 100 dyadic pairs, I sought to increase my sample size further.

However, the COVID pandemic posed several challenges to researchers, particularly requiring changes to data collection methods where face-to-face engagements were planned (Chenneville & Schwartz-Mette, 2000; Will et al., 2020). Although my data collection approach of online surveys was not directly impacted by COVID restrictions, I encountered major challenges in gaining additional agreement to participate from further organisations due to the demands and pressures their people were experiencing at the time. Due to these challenges, I decided to work with master's students at the University of Pretoria to collect additional data, asking them to recruit managers in their organisations to participate by completing the leader survey. This involved snowball sampling where the participating managers were then asked to recruit their subordinates as informants to complete the follower survey. Methodological concerns have been raised about the use of snowball sampling in multisource studies, namely (Marcus et al., 2017):

1. The recruitment of informants by target persons may be influenced by characteristics of the targets and their relation to informants, which could result in biased results if those characteristics are of substantive interest to organisational researchers; and
2. Some of the data provided by 'informants' could be fabricated by the original recruits if the researcher does not take additional steps to monitor the identity of informants.

The first concern is judged to be less likely to have occurred, as the students were requested to recruit managers to participate as target persons. The recruited managers were then requested to share the follower survey link with all their direct reports to participate as informants, not recruit participants at their discretion. To address the second concern, guidance was taken from the approach to identify suspicious data where snowball sampling is used as proposed and validated by Marcus and colleagues (2017). First, of the 89 follower participants' data collected through the

snowball sampling, eight were identified as potentially suspicious as they had the same IP address as their matching manager survey, indicating both the manager and follower surveys were completed on the same device. While this could conceivably occur in for example a retail setting where a store has only a single computer, a review of participant email addresses provided for the lucky draw revealed the manager and follower emails were the same for six of the cases, while emails for the follower surveys were not provided for the remaining two. To err on the side of caution, all eight records were removed from the data set. Second, a review of the survey completion timestamps was done to determine if any surveys had been completed in sequence within a short period of time, but no further responses were flagged as potentially suspicious.

Another consideration in the shift to snowball sampling where managers recruited their direct reports to participate concerns the power dynamics implicit in the manager/subordinate relationship and implications for ethical considerations. The position of authority that managers hold over their subordinates could place implicit pressure on them to participate; subordinates may feel obligated to participate in the study due to their desire to maintain a positive relationship with their manager or to avoid any potential negative consequences. To mitigate this, the informed consent presented prior to the survey informed all participants about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, with participation being voluntary clearly highlighted along with a note that there would be no repercussions for choosing not to participate. Further, the confidentiality of responses and data was emphasised, providing participants with reassurance that their individual responses would not be disclosed to their managers or affect their job status.

3.3 Data Collection and Measurement Methods

3.3.1 Data collection approach

I used survey methodology for the data collection, utilising Qualtrics as an online survey platform and email invitations (refer to Appendix A for the full surveys). In survey research, and particularly online surveys, low response rates are a critical concern for survey researchers, as smaller than expected sample sizes can decrease statistical power and limit the type of statistical analyses that can be done (Anseel et al., 2010), and may threaten the external validity and generalisation of findings (Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007, as cited in Anseel et al., 2010). In response to this risk, Anseel and colleagues (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of response rates in the organisational sciences, providing empirically based guidelines to researchers to proactively apply to the design of their survey studies to increase the likelihood of a good response rate. Their findings suggest that web-based administration is particularly effective in increasing the response rate of non-managerial employees, as the majority of participants completing the follower survey in my study are likely to be. University sponsorship (i.e., conducting research in collaboration with a university or from within a university, as is the case with the research here being for my doctoral degree) was found to be an effective response rate encouragement primarily for managerial employees, as the majority of participants completing the leader survey in my study, although this strategy is also recommended across the board for increasing credibility of the research in the eyes of participants (Rogelberg et al., 2002).

An unexpected finding in the Anseel and colleagues (2010) study was that the use of incentives was typically found to be less likely to influence response rates for employees (both managerial and non-managerial). However, this finding is contradicted by anecdotal evidence from colleagues working specifically in the South African context, who have found offering an incentive in the form of completion earning the participant an entry into a lucky draw, to dramatically increase response

rates. As such, I offered the opportunity to win one of several R500 (approximately $30) gift vouchers for the Takealot online shopping platform as incentives to participants.

In organisation 1, all managers and their subordinates were invited to participate. Of the 33 managers invited, 28 completed the online survey for a response rate of 85%. In total, 108 employees were invited to participate, of which 79 completed the online survey (a response rate of 73%). Matching the data resulted in 65 employee-manager dyads.

In organisation 2, 39 managers were invited to participate and 10 completed the online survey, for a response rate of 26%. Of the 119 subordinates invited to participate, 57 completed the online survey (a response rate of 48%). Matching the data only resulted in 35 employee-manager dyads.

3.3.2 Demographic information

Demographic information was collected for both leaders and followers, encompassing age, sex, race, highest level of education, and overall length of work experience. Followers were asked to report their length of time working with the leader, while leaders were asked to report on their length of experience in a leadership role. The demographic information of the follower sample is summarised in Table 2. The demographic characteristics between the participants from organisational sites and those recruited through the engagement with the students appear reasonably similar, although those managers recruited by students appear to have a greater spread of diversity, particularly in terms of level of education, length of work experience, and manager level in the organisation. In organisation 1, each manager was rated by on average 2.5 employees, while in organisation 2, each manager was rated by 3.5 employees on average.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Research Sample

	Organisation 1		Organisation 2		Student-Recruited	
	Employee	Manager	Employee	Manager	Employee	Manager
Age						
18 – 29 years old	9%	-	6%	-	32%	8%
30 – 39 years old	59%	31%	26%	-	31%	23%
40 – 49 years old	15%	35%	40%	70%	24%	33%
50 – 59 years old	17%	34%	29%	30%	14%	36%
Sex						
Male	55%	73%	54%	60%	43%	59%
Female	45%	27%	46%	40%	57%	39%
Prefer not to respond	-	-	-	-	-	2%
Ethnicity						
Black African	15%	4%	80%	60%	49%	23%
Coloured	9%	4%	3%	10%	3%	-
Indian	3%	15%	3%	20%	9%	10%
Other	3%	-	-	-	-	-
White	65%	73%	11%	10%	38%	64%
Prefer not to respond	5%	4%	3%	-	-	3%
Highest level of education						
Grade 10	-	-	-	-	1%	5%
Grade 12	31%	12%	-	-	21%	5%
Post-matric certificate	5%	12%	3%	-	5%	3%
National diploma	12%	19%	6%	-	9%	8%
Bachelor's degree	20%	12%	26%	10%	28%	31%
Postgraduate	22%	42%	66%	90%	30%	49%
Other	11%	4%	-	-	5%	-

Demographic Information of Research Sample

	Organisation 1		Organisation 2		Student-Recruited	
	Employee	Manager	Employee	Manager	Employee	Manager
Prefer not to respond	-	-	-	-	1%	-
Length of work experience [2]						
Less than 1 year	-	-	-	-	1%	-
1 to 2 years	-	-	3%	-	12%	-
3 to 5 years	2%	-	3%	-	16%	8%
More than 5 years	98%	96%	94%	100%	70%	92%
Prefer not to respond	-	4%	-	-	-	-
Length of time working with your current manager [2]						
Less than 6 months	3%	-	-	-	14%	-
6 months to 1 year	9%	-	3%	-	10%	-
1 to 2 years	31%	-	14%	-	32%	-
3 to 5 years	48%	-	14%	-	20%	-
More than 5 years	9%	-	69%	-	25%	-
Length of experience in a leadership role [2]						
Less than 6 months	-	-	-	-	-	-
6 months to 1 year	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 to 2 years	-	8%	-	-	-	8%
3 to 5 years	-	8%	-	-	-	15%
More than 5 years	-	84%	-	100%	-	77%
N	**65**	**26**	**35**	**10**	**81**	**39**

[2] Following the data collection phase, an error was identified in the survey design related to the overlap in the length of experience, length of working with current manager, and length of leadership experience requested from participants. Specifically, the categories '6 months to 1 year' and '1 to 2 years' overlap, which may have caused confusion and inconsistencies in the responses.

3.3.3 Measures: Follower survey

The follower-reported variables in my proposed model are followers' perceptions of their leader's servant leadership behaviour, their attributions of leader sincere and manipulative intent, their propensity to trust and perceived LMX quality, as well as their trust in the leader and their own propensity for moral disengagement. The following sections describe the scales used.

3.3.3.1 Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SL-7)

In the interests of not making the follower survey overly long (Eva et al., 2019), I used the SL-7 (Liden et al., 2015), a seven-item shortened version of the original 28-item servant leadership scale (SL-28; (Liden et al., 2008). The SL-7 uses a seven-point Likert response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with sample items including *"My leader emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community"* and *"My leader puts my best interests ahead of his/her own"*. When validating the SL-7, Liden and colleagues (2015) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between .81 and .89 across three separate samples, well above Nunnally's (1978) .70 threshold. In the first use of the SL-7 in the South African context, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .88 was found for a large sample fairly representative of the South African workforce as a whole (Grobler & Flotman, 2020). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained in my sample was good (α = .87).

Both the SL-7 and SL-28 have demonstrated convergent, discriminant and nomological validity in both Eastern and Western contexts (Hu & Liden, 2011; Liden et al., 2015; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2016). Additionally, the SL-7 has evidence of convergent and discriminant validity collected specifically in the South African context (Grobler & Flotman, 2020), in line with findings supporting the cross-cultural applicability of various servant leadership measures in different contexts. For example, van Dierendonck et al. (2017) examined the cross-cultural equivalence of the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) and found it to be construct and measurement invariant across

eight countries.[3] Additionally, the SLS has been used before in the South African context (Holtzhausen & de Klerk, 2018) as has the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), demonstrating evidence regarding reliability and construct validity for a number of South African-based samples (Du Plessis et al., 2015; Krog & Govender, 2015; Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013, 2014).

In their systematic review of servant leadership scholarship, Eva and colleagues (2019) reviewed and evaluated 16 existing measures of servant leadership, recommending that the SL-7 (Liden et al., 2015), SLBS-6 (Sendjaya et al., 2019) and SLS (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) be utilised in further research studies based on the rigour followed in their construction and validation. Of the three recommended measures, I chose the SL-7 given its unique focus on the servant leader's "conscious and genuine concern towards creating value for the community around the organization" (Eva et al., 2019, p. 116), for two reasons. Firstly, this focus on community resonates strongly with the humaneness and communality that is the African concept of *ubuntu*, defined as "a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness – that individuals and groups display for one another" (Mangaliso, 2001, p. 24). The second reason is based on the results of an exploratory investigation into how South Africans conceptualise servant leadership, where the SL-7/SL-28 dimension of "creating value for the community" was the only characteristic to be unanimously identified as highly relevant to the South African context (Dowdeswell & Doyle, 2019). This investigation is discussed further in the section below.

3.3.3.1.1 Pilot investigation of South Africans' conceptualisation of servant leadership

While still conceptualising my intended research focus, I co-facilitated a conference workshop entitled "Servant Leadership for Mzansi" at the October 2019 Regional Scrum Gathering in Cape

[3] Namely, the Netherlands, Portugal, Iceland, Italy, Finland, Germany, Turkey and Spain.

Town (Dowdeswell & Doyle, 2019). The first group exercise of the workshop required delegates (in 11 groups of six to eight people each) to sort cards presenting the dimension names and definitions of the SL-7, SLBS-6 and SLS into three categories: highly relevant or essential in the South African context, less relevant or not currently seen in the South African context, or universally applicable. As noted previously, "creating value for the community" was the only characteristic to be unanimously identified as highly relevant to the South African context. Other dimensions identified as relevant to the South African context that had high levels of agreement (i.e., chosen by more than 70% of the groups) included "emotional healing" and "helping subordinates grow" (SL-7), "authentic self" (SLBS-6), and "humility" and "stewardship" (SLS).

Additionally, prior to the start of the workshop and discussion of international perspectives on defining servant leadership, delegates were invited to participate in a live online poll describing servant leadership in one word. Almost 70% of the 85 words received could be mapped onto the "helping subordinates grow", "putting subordinates first" and "emotional healing" dimensions (SL-7) as well as "humility" (SLS). Less than 10% of responses were not identified as relating to one of the existing measures' dimensions, instead clustering around a "leading by example" concept that could be indicative of theorising by Liden and colleagues (2014) that servant leaders inspire followers to become servant leaders themselves through a role-modelling social learning process. Given the above, I believe there is reasonable evidence to expect that the existing, internationally developed servant leadership measures should provide a reasonable reflection of servant leadership in the South African context.

Figure 2: Online poll results describing servant leadership in one word

3.3.3.2 Attributions of intentionality scale

In line with the approach taken by Sun and colleagues (2019), the attributions of intentionality scale was presented to participants immediately following the servant leadership scale (SL-7), with the instruction to consider the behaviours of their leader that they had just rated and then indicate to what extent each attribution item explains the intent underlying their leader's behaviour.

3.3.3.2.1 Attributions of sincere intent

Dasborough and Ashkanasy's (2004) original measure of sincere intentions consisted of five items also using a five-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). However, their original study reported a reliability coefficient of .66, falling somewhat short of the .70 standard (Nunnally, 1978), with two of the items showing noticeably lower factor loadings than the rest (namely, *"Your leader was behaving on the basis of ethical considerations"* and *"Your leader was acting to benefit the organization"*). Subsequent studies have either dropped or amended these items to be more in line with the focus of their research (Eberly & Fong, 2013). Since my study investigates attributions of the intentionality underlying leaders' behavioural tendencies rather than specific video vignettes in a laboratory setting (Dasborough & Ashkanasy,

2004) measure, I slightly modified the items to be more general. The modified wording of the three items showing acceptable factor loadings is *"Your leader behaves on the basis of moral conviction", "Your leader behaves on the basis of his/her true beliefs",* and *"Your leader acts sincerely"*). I also retained the essence of the first item identified with a lower factor loading (i.e., *"Your leader behaves on the basis of ethical considerations"*), given the importance of ethical considerations to the heart of servant leadership. Finally, I amended the second item that had a lower factor loading to be more fitting for research into servant leadership, namely, *"Your leader acts in ways to genuinely benefit you",* given the essence of "authentic" servant leadership is that it arises from a genuine desire to help others first and foremost. The five items were averaged to create an overall score reflecting attributions of sincere intent (α = .80).

3.3.3.2.2 Attributions of manipulative intent

To measure followers' attributions of their leaders' intentions, I drew on the work of Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2004). Their three-item measure of manipulative intentions utilises a five-point Likert response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with sample items including *"Your leader was acting in a self-serving manner", "Your leader was manipulating you"*, and *"Your leader was behaving on the basis of beliefs about potential rewards he may gain"*. An acceptable reliability coefficient of .72 was reported in the original study conducted in the U.S. (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2004), while a subsequent study conducted in Taiwan using the same scale reported a reliability coefficient of .87 (Lin et al., 2017). I adjusted the items in a similar manner as the items concerning sincere intent (i.e., to be concerned with more general behavioural tendencies rather than a specific event) and to be more applicable to servant leadership.

However, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained in my sample was .62, below the acceptable threshold for reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Since the scale only consisted of three items, removing a poor performing item was not an option. Instead, I decided to follow the approach used by Eberly

and Fong (2013), who used a selection of items from both the manipulative and sincere intent scales, and reverse scored the manipulative items to create a single attributions of intentionality scale, with higher scores reflecting increased perceptions of sincerity. Doing so yielded a scale with acceptable reliability (α = .76).

3.3.3.3 Propensity to trust scale

I used the propensity to trust scale published in Mayer and Davis (1999), which consists of eight items and utilises a five-point Likert response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include *"Most people can be counted on to do what they say they will do"* and *"These days you must be alert, or someone is likely to take advantage of you"* (reverse-scored). The scale has been used in several studies with acceptable reliability coefficients reported in terms of Nunnally's (1978) standards (e.g., Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .70; (Hansen et al., 2016) and ranging between .70 and .87 across three separate studies; (Alarcon et al., 2018). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .68 was obtained in my study, falling just short of the .70 threshold. Given that potentially removing one or more items did not result in significant improvement in reliability, I decided to proceed with the scale as is to maintain the overall measurement of the construct.

3.3.3.4 Trust in leader scale

I utilised the measure of trust developed by Yang and Mossholder (2010). Key reasons for this choice include that the chosen measure distinguishes between cognitive and affective bases of trust, references the leader's sincerity, and utilises relatively simple language. The scale uses a five-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with sample items being *"I can rely on my supervisor to do what is best at work"* (cognitive trust in supervisor) and *"I feel secure with my supervisor because of his/her sincerity"*. Yang and Mossholder (2010) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients of .94 (cognitive trust in supervisor) and .95 (affective trust in supervisor), well above the threshold required for acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Excellent

reliability coefficients were obtained in my study for cognitive trust in leader (α = .91), affective trust in leader (α = .91) and an overall measure of trust in leader (α = .94).

3.3.3.5 Moral disengagement scale

I utilised the eight-item Propensity to Morally Disengage Scale, developed for application in the workplace by Moore and colleagues (2012). While originally developed from a conceptualisation of moral disengagement as dispositional and trait-like, subsequent studies have demonstrated the scale may also be used to measure moral disengagement as a state-like variable influenced by contextual factors (Moore et al., 2019; Valle et al., 2019). Additionally, in their systematic review of moral disengagement in the workplace Newman and colleagues (2019, p. 561) recommend the use of this scale for research going forward given its documented convergent and discriminant validity, its parsimonious nature, and the demonstration that it captures moral disengagement "as both a state-like and trait-like construct".

The scale makes use of a seven-point Likert response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with sample items including *"People shouldn't be held accountable for doing questionable things when they were just doing what an authority figure told them to do"* and *"People who get mistreated have usually done something to bring it on themselves"*. Moore and colleagues (2012) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .70 and .90 across the five studies describing the original development of the scale. An acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained in my study (α = .70).

3.3.3.6 LMX scale

I used the LMX-MDM, a well-established 12-item multidimensional measure of LMX developed by Liden and Maslyn (1998). The measure makes use of a seven-point Likert response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with the four dimensions (i.e., affect, loyalty, contribution

and professional respect) measured by three items each. A sample item of the "affect" dimension is "*I like my supervisor very much as a person*", while a sample item of the "loyalty" dimension is "*My supervisor would come to my defense if I were 'attacked' by others"*. A sample item of the "contribution" dimension is "*I do work for my supervisor that goes beyond what's specified in my job description"* while a sample item of the "professional respect" dimension is "*I respect my supervisor's knowledge of and competence on the job".*

In the original development of the LMX-MDM, acceptable reliabilities across two samples were reported for affect (α = .90 in both studies), loyalty (α = .78 and α = .74), and professional respect (α = .92 and α = .89), but not for contribution. Further research into the contribution scale with amended items subsequently yielded acceptable reliability coefficients (i.e., α = .74 and α = .77), reported as an addendum to the original publication (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Subsequent studies have further evidenced the construct validity of the LMX-MDM and demonstrated support for utilising the LMX-MDM as a single-factor measure, with O'Donnell, Yukl and Taber (2012) reporting a composite alpha coefficient of 0.95. Following on from this, after observing that younger respondents were not familiar with the term "job description," the contribution item noted above was revised to "*I do work for my supervisor that goes beyond what is expected of me in my job"* (R. C. Liden, personal communication, July 10, 2020). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .93 was obtained in my study for the LMX-MDM as a single-factor measure.

3.3.4 Measurement scales: Leader survey

The leader-reported variables in my proposed model are the leader's orientation towards Machiavellianism, leader political skill, and the degree to which a serving culture is present in the organisation. The following scales were used.

3.3.4.1 Leader Machiavellianism

Various scales exist to measure an individual's Machiavellian orientation, with the most widely used being the Mach-IV, first introduced by Christie and Geis (1970). However, the scale has been criticised regarding problems with internal reliability, dimensionality, and item choice and phrasing (Láng, 2020), in addition to using dated language. Attempts to address the issues raised concerning the Mach-IV have resulted in the presentation of the Trimmed Mach*, a five-item unidimensional version of the Mach-IV determined using item response theory (Rauthmann, 2013), as well as the development of a new Machiavellianism scale, the Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS; (Dahling et al., 2009).

I chose to use the MPS, a 16-item measure based on a multi-dimensional conceptualisation of Machiavellianism developed by Dahling and colleagues (2009). The "amoral manipulation" subscale consists of five items, with a sample item being *"I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over others".* The "distrust of others" subscale consists of five items, with a sample item being *"People are only motivated by personal gain"*. The "desire for status" subscale consists of three items, with a sample item being *"Status is a good sign of success in life"*, while the "desire for control" subscale has three items, with a sample item being *"I enjoy having control over other people"*. Across two studies, Dahling and colleagues (2009) reported good Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the MPS as a whole (α = .82 and α = .84), and acceptable to good reliabilities for the subscales (i.e., α = .83 and α = .85 for amoral manipulation, α = .72 and α = .74 for distrust of others, α = .70 and α = .84 for desire for status, and α = .75 and α = .80 for desire for control). In my study, acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found for the MPS as a whole (α = .84), and for three of the four subscales (i.e., α = .77 for amoral manipulation, α = .76 for distrust of others, and α = .77 for desire for control). While the fourth subscale, desire for status, reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .64, overall the MPS scale demonstrated high

reliability indicating strong internal consistency across the full set of items. I proceeded with this overall score to obtain a comprehensive perspective of leaders' potential Machiavellian tendencies.

3.3.4.2 Political Skill Inventory

I used the Political Skill Inventory developed by Ferris and colleagues (2005). The 18-item inventory consists of four dimensions: social astuteness (five items), interpersonal influence (four items), networking ability (six items) and apparent sincerity (three items) and uses a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item of the "social astuteness" subscale is: *"I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others"* while a sample item of the "interpersonal influence" subscale is: *"I am good at getting people to like me"*. A sample item of the "networking ability" subscale is: *"I am good at building relationships with influential people at work"* while a sample item of the "apparent sincerity" subscale is: *"It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do"*. Across three studies, Ferris and colleagues (2005) reported acceptable levels of reliability for the political skill overall score (Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between .87 and .90) as well as for the subscales of their inventory (Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between .71 and .80 for social astuteness, .73 and .87 for interpersonal influence, .76 and .87 for networking ability, and .58 and .81 for apparent sincerity). In my study, acceptable levels of reliability were found for the political skill overall score ($\alpha = .94$) as well as for the subscales social astuteness ($\alpha = .88$), interpersonal influence ($\alpha = .77$) and networking ability ($\alpha = .90$). However, the three-item subscale apparent sincerity showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient below the .70 threshold ($\alpha = .63$). Given the central importance of apparent sincerity to a leader's perceived authenticity, and that I was examining political skill as a whole which displayed excellent reliability, I proceeded with the scale as is.

3.3.4.3 Serving culture scale

Liden and colleagues (2014) used the referent-shift consensus model (Chan, 1998) to modify the items of the SL-7, replacing "managers" with "managers and employees" to measure the degree to which individual followers felt everyone within their store exhibited such behaviours. However, where Liden and colleagues (2014) then aggregated the individual follower responses to form a collective perception at the unit level, I focused instead on the leader's individual perspective, for two reasons. First, given that I propose the presence of a serving culture is a "trigger" for Machiavellian leaders to adopt the appearance of servant leadership behaviour, it is necessary for my operationalisation of serving culture to represent each individual leader's perception of the degree to which a serving culture exists in their specific context. Second, separating the ratings of serving culture from the ratings of servant leadership behaviour (by followers) reduces the risk of shared variance occurring. The serving culture scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = .83$) in my study.

3.4 Data Analysis Strategy

I used SPSS v29 and Mplus 8.11 to conduct the statistical analyses for my study.

3.4.1 Pilot Study

Given that I adapted Dasborough and Ashkanasy's (2004) attributions of intentionality scales and included established scales not previously utilised in the South African context, I conducted a pilot study prior to commencing with the actual data collection. The purpose of the pilot study was to provide an indication of how the scales were likely to function in the research sample, by examining scale reliabilities. Where items were adapted, both the original and adapted items were administered for comparison purposes as well as to provide validity evidence for the adapted attributions of intentionality scales (Heggestad et al., 2019).

3.4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Prior to testing my proposed model, confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the construct validity of all measures used for the leader-reported and the follower-reported surveys. Building on Hu and Bentler (1999) and reflecting on the evaluations and recommendations from various other papers (Hooper et al., 2008; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003), the following model fit indices are reported: the Chi-square statistic, its degrees of freedom and p value, the root mean-squared error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI).

3.4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Finally, I used the statistical program Mplus 8.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to test my proposed models and to deal with potential nesting in the data at a leader work group level, using multilevel modelling. Mplus code written and made available by Stride and colleagues (2015), based on Hayes' PROCESS module in SPSS (Hayes, 2017), was used for the moderation testing.

3.4.4 Control Variables

In addition to controlling for employees nested in managers, I controlled for potential changes in the leader/follower relationship arising due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the emergence of the pandemic, managers around the world became distance managers overnight as organisations shifted to remote working, with researchers observing that changes required in leadership behaviours to promote effective working from home may be difficult to realise in times of crisis (Stoker et al., 2022). Participants completing the follower survey were asked to indicate if their relationship with their manager had changed since the start of the pandemic, responding on a seven-point scale ranging from very negative changes to very positive changes. This variable was then included as an independent variable in my model testing.

3.5 Data Retention

In accordance with Clause 2.1.4 of the University of Pretoria's "Policy for the Preservation and Retention of Research Data", the data collected for the purposes of this study will be retained for a minimum of ten years after conclusion of the study. During this time, the collected data will be kept in a password-protected OneDrive folder with access limited to the principal investigator and supervisor, with identifiable information removed from the final dataset. When the designated period of data retention has lapsed, the data will be deleted, following the guidance provided by OneDrive to ensure the deletion is permanent.

3.6 Research Ethics

As an industrial/organisational psychologist registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), I have an ethical obligation to adhere to the Professional Board for Psychology's code of conduct for psychologists. Specifically, Clause 86 states "A psychologist shall plan and conduct research in a manner consistent with the law, and with internationally acceptable standards for the conduct of research." (Ethical Rules of Conduct for Practitioners Registered under the Health Professions Act, 1975, 2006, p. 41). Centrally, the code requires institutional review board approval as well as any host organisation/s consent (Clause 87) and participant informed consent (Clause 89) while offering guidance on related points. Accordingly, I:

1. Sought written approval from an appropriate ethics committee prior to commencing with this research, in line with the University of Pretoria's policy and procedures for responsible research (University of Pretoria Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity, 2007).
2. Obtained written approval from any hosting organisations to conduct the research within their environment, after sharing the university's ethical clearance and approved research protocol.

3. Briefed participants, via invitation mail, that their participation is voluntary, they would not be penalised in any way should they decide not to participate, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Additionally, the participants were informed that their responses will be kept strictly confidential, with results shared only at an aggregate level and not allow for the identification of any individual participant.

The primary ethical concern I had in this study is ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, since the data gathered will be of a personal nature and the participants may be concerned about how their standing in the organisation could be affected if their supervisors were to become aware of how they responded, particularly in relation to the perceived leader authenticity measure. As such the privacy and confidentiality of participants is protected through:

- Removing identifiable information from the collected dataset once the matching of leader and follower responses had taken place. The merging key will be retained in a password-protected file saved on a secure server that only I am able to access, for in case it is necessary to revert to the raw data, for quality assurance purposes.
- Direct access to the data is restricted to myself and my supervisor only. All other parties will only have access to the results in an aggregated format, and to the interpreted findings of the research as presented in this dissertation and any subsequent conference presentations of journal publications.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analyses for this study. First, the results of the pilot study are discussed, and then the measurement model is presented. After that, the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among study variables are presented. Finally, I present the results of the hypothesis testing.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the attributions of manipulative intent scale had a low Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .62$). Deleting any one of the three items resulted in the reliability weakening further, so I took the decision to follow the example of Eberly and Fong (2013) in reverse scoring the three items and including them with the items from the attributions of sincere intent scale, creating a single attributions of intentionality scale where higher scores represent stronger perceptions of sincere intention on the part of the manager. This change necessitated some amendments to Hypotheses 3, 4, 5 and 8, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Revised Hypotheses

	Original Hypothesis	Revised Hypothesis
Hypothesis 3	Leader political skill is (a) positively related to followers' attributions of sincere intent behind their leader's behaviour and (b) negatively related to followers' attributions of manipulative intent behind their leader's behaviour.	Leader political skill is positively related to followers' tendency to make attributions of sincere intent for their leader's behaviour.

Revised Hypotheses

	Original Hypothesis	Revised Hypothesis
Hypothesis 4	LMX quality is (a) positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour and (b) negatively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of manipulative intent regarding their leaders' behaviour.	LMX quality is positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour
Hypothesis 5	Followers' propensity to trust is (a) positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour, and (b) negatively related to followers making manipulative intent attributions concerning their leader's behaviour.	Followers' propensity to trust is positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour.
Hypothesis 8	Follower attributions of a leader's manipulative intent moderate the relationship between servant leadership and follower moral disengagement, such that at low levels of manipulative intent the relationship is negative, but when manipulative intent is high, the relationship is positive.	Follower attributions of a leader's intent moderate the relationship between servant leadership and follower moral disengagement, such that at low levels of intent (i.e., less sincere) the relationship is positive, but at high levels of intent (i.e., more sincere), the relationship is negative.

4.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken to serve as a pre-test of the scales identified for use, providing an indication of how they were likely to function in the research sample (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), as well as to provide validity evidence for the adapted attributions of intentionality scales (Heggestad et al., 2019). Data collection ran from November to December 2020. A second phase was run in April 2021 after the analysis of the initial data collected failed to extract two variables.

4.1.1 Pilot sample description

A summary of the demographic composition of the participants for the two phases is provided in Table 4. In terms of sampling strategies for pilot studies, Heggestad and colleagues (2019) note a pilot sample does not need to be the same as the research sample provided the pilot sample used is appropriate for the construct being adapted (i.e., sample of working adults when examining adapted measures of work-related constructs). With more than half of the sample in both phases holding more than five years and over 80 percent having at least one or more years of work experience, the current samples appear appropriate for the testing of both work-related and more general psychological measures.

To source participants for the first phase of the pilot, the 2018, 2019 and 2020 Department of Human Resource Management Master's degree cohorts were invited to participate, with the department's postgraduate co-ordinator sending out the invitation to protect the personal information of the students. The students were also requested to share the pilot survey link within their networks to encourage overall completion. For the second phase, my supervisor and I distributed the survey link amongst our professional networks. For both phases, in appreciation of participants' time, I offered a lucky draw chance to win one of four Takealot (similar to Amazon.com) vouchers (to the value of R500 or approximately $30). On completion of the pilot survey, participants had the option of providing their email addresses in order to participate in the

lucky draw. Once the lucky draw was completed and vouchers provided to the winners, all email addresses were deleted from the data file.

Table 4

Demographic Information of Pilot Participants

	Phase 1	Phase 2
Age		
18 – 29 years old	44.7%	16.1%
30 – 39 years old	28.9%	38.7%
40 – 49 years old	26.3%	25.8%
50 – 59 years old	-	16.1%
Prefer not to respond	-	3.2%
Sex		
Male	15.8%	19.4%
Female	84.2%	77.4%
Prefer not to respond	-	3.2%
Ethnicity		
Black African	34.2%	-
Coloured	13.2%	3.2%
Indian	-	3.2%
White	52.6%	90.3%
Prefer not to respond	-	3.2%
Highest level of education		
Grade 12	5.3%	-
Post-matric certificate	2.6%	3.2%

Demographic Information of Pilot Participants

		Phase 1	Phase 2
National diploma		-	3.2%
Bachelor's degree		-	9.7%
Postgraduate		92.1%	74.2%
Other		-	6.5%
Prefer not to respond		-	3.2%
Length of work experience			
Less than 1 year		10.5%	-
1 to 2 years		15.8%	-
3 to 5 years		15.8%	12.9%
More than 5 years		55.3%	83.9%
Prefer not to respond		2.6%	3.2%
	N	**38**	**31**

4.1.2 Performance of existing scales

Participants in phase 1 completed the full follower and leader surveys to provide an indication of how the existing scales utilised in previous research were likely to function in the research sample. The means and standard deviations as well as reliability coefficients and intercorrelations among the follower survey scales are presented in Table 5. Beyond the original attributions of manipulative intent scale, all scales displayed acceptable levels of reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .73 to .94). In general, the pattern of relationships between scales appeared to follow theoretical expectations. For example, perceptions of leaders' servant leadership were positively related to followers' attributions of sincere intent, cognitive and affective trust in leader, and negatively related to followers' attributions of manipulative intent.

Interestingly, propensity to morally disengage appears to be a low base rate phenomenon; in the original development of the scale, Moore and colleagues (2012) reported mean scores ranging between 2.12 and 2.79 on a seven-point Likert scale. The mean score of 1.60 observed in the pilot sample is significantly lower than those previously reported, suggesting the South African sample may have a strong aversion to attitudes related to moral disengagement or may be higher in social desirability. However, my South African pilot sample's mean was not significantly different from those reported in two of the three samples studied in subsequent research conducted in the United States and China (Moore et al., 2019).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Follower Survey Pilot Scales (Phase 1)

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.	Age [a]	0.82	0.83														
2.	Sex [b]	0.84	0.37	-.01													
3.	Race [c]	0.47	0.51	-.34*	.12												
4.	Work Experience [d]	2.19	1.08	.74**	.15	-.40*											
5.	Servant Leadership	4.75	1.22	.08	-.12	.05	-.10	(.86)									
6.	Attributions of Manipulative Intent (Original)	2.69	0.77	.02	.17	.15	.31	-.62**	(.69)								
7.	Attributions of Sincere Intent (Original)	3.76	0.57	.09	-.19	-.16	-.13	.78**	-.67**	(.75)							
8.	Attributions of Manipulative Intent (Adapted)	2.42	0.82	-.15	.11	.07	.19	-.62**	.84**	-.65**	(.75)						
9.	Attributions of Sincere Intent (Adapted)	3.69	0.68	-.08	-.18	-.19	-.29	.77**	-.71**	.90**	-.71**	(.89)					
10.	Propensity to Trust	2.88	0.58	.02	.05	-.23	-.01	.11	.15	.06	.10	.17	(.75)				

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Follower Survey Pilot Scales (Phase 1)

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11.	Cognitive Trust in Leader	3.97	0.85	.11	-.08	-.12	-.18	.71**	-.64**	.75**	-.62**	.70**	.31	(.94)			
12.	Affective Trust in Leader	3.51	0.95	-.02	-.11	.05	-.29	.81**	-.67**	.74**	-.67**	.77**	-.06	.66**	(.93)		
13.	Propensity to Morally Disengage	1.60	0.47	.06	.16	.18	-.02	.28	-.20	.14	-.11	.10	-.15	.20	.20	(.73)	
14.	Leader-Member Exchange	5.19	1.21	.03	-.12	.01	-.16	.81**	-.63**	.76**	-.64**	.79**	-.01	.73**	.84**	.28	(.93)

[a] *Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.*

[b] *Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.*

[c] *Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.*

[d] *Work experience: 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = More than 5 years.*

** p < .05. ** p < .01.*

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

N=38

The means and standard deviations as well as reliability coefficients and intercorrelations among the leader survey scales are presented in Table 6. All scales displayed acceptable levels of reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .85 to .89).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Leader Survey Pilot Scales (Phase 1)

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Age [a]	0.82	0.83							
2.	Sex [b]	0.84	0.37	-.01						
3.	Race [c]	0.47	0.51	-.34*	.12					
4.	Work Experience [d]	2.19	1.08	.74**	.15	.40*				
5.	Political Skill	5.37	0.68	-.21	.33*	.13	-.06	(.89)		
6.	Serving Culture	4.99	1.03	.04	-.19	.15	-.08	.18	(.85)	
7.	Machiavellianism	2.27	0.59	-.24	-.05	.09	-.08	-.01	.10	(.89)

[a] *Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.*

[b] *Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.*

[c] *Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.*

[d] *Work experience: 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = More than 5 years.*

** p < .05. ** p < .01.*

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

N=38

4.1.3 Evaluation of adapted scales

In line with Heggestad and colleagues' (2019) recommendation that both the original and adapted items by administered together for comparison purposes, participants first completed the attributions of intentionality scales in their original form, along with a summary of the servant leadership behaviours rated on the previous screen to keep in mind while completing the intentionality items. In the first phase of the pilot, participants were then presented with adapted forms together with an introductory note that "These next items may seem repetitive but are

different to the previous items in subtle ways". In the second phase of the pilot, the summary of servant leadership behaviours was presented for both the original and adapted items in case the absence thereof was influencing participants' responses to the adapted items.

In phase 2 the survey was also shortened to focus specifically on servant leadership and the attributions of intentionality. To build support for the validity of the adapted scale versions, correlations between the original and adapted composite scale scores were explored in addition to item analyses and confirmatory factor analysis, as I made changes to the context of the items from specific to being more general (Heggestad et al., 2019). The means and standard deviations as well as reliability coefficients and intercorrelations among the original and adapted versions of the attributions of intentionality scales for both phases are presented in Table 7 and Table 8.

In phase 1, the original and adapted attributions of sincere intent scales displayed acceptable levels of reliability ($\alpha = .75$ and $\alpha = .89$ respectively) along with the adapted attributions of manipulative intent scale ($\alpha = .75$), which was an improvement over the original measure ($\alpha = .69$). All reliability coefficients obtained in phase 2 – for the original and adapted scales – were above the .70 threshold of acceptability (Nunnally, 1978). In line with Dasborough and Ashkanasy's (2004) original study, attributions of manipulative and sincere intent were negatively related for both the original and adapted scales in both phases. Additionally, the original attributions of manipulative intent scales displayed strong correlations with their adapted versions, as did the original attributions of sincere intent scales with their adapted versions. This suggests a high degree of similarity in how participants responded to the two versions.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Original and Adapted Attributions of Intentionality Scales (Phase 1)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age [a]	0.82	0.83								
2. Sex [b]	0.84	0.37	-.01							
3. Race [c]	0.47	0.51	.34*	.12						
4. Work Experience [d]	2.19	1.08	.74**	.15	-.40*					
Original measures:										
5. Attributions of Manipulative Intent	2.69	0.77	.02	.17	.15	.31	(.69)			
6. Attributions of Sincere Intent	3.76	0.57	.09	-.19	-.16	-.13	-.67**	(.75)		
Adapted measures:										
7. Attributions of Manipulative Intent	2.42	0.82	-.15	.11	.07	.19	.84**	-.65**	(.75)	
8. Attributions of Sincere Intent	3.69	0.68	-.08	-.18	-.19	-.29	-.71**	.90**	-.71**	(.89)

[a] *Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.*

[b] *Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.*

[c] *Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.*

[d] *Work experience: 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = More than 5 years.*

** $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.*

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

N=38

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Original and Adapted Attributions of Intentionality Scales (Phase 2)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age [a]	1.58	1.23								
2. Sex [b]	0.80	0.41	-.04							
3. Race [c]	0.07	0.25	-.12	-.20						
4. Work Experience [d]	2.87	0.35	.59**	-.20	.11					
Original measures:										
5. Attributions of Manipulative Intent	2.62	0.90	-.11	.28	-.02	-.26	(.75)			
6. Attributions of Sincere Intent	3.81	0.67	-.08	-.08	.15	.43*	-.58**	(.86)		
Adapted measures:										
7. Attributions of Manipulative Intent	2.50	0.85	-.19	.17	.06	-.20	.91**	-.51**	(.76)	
8. Attributions of Sincere Intent	3.73	0.65	-.06	-.07	.19	.32	-.57**	.92**	-.48**	(.84)

[a] *Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.*

[b] *Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.*

[c] *Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.*

[d] *Work experience: 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = More than 5 years.*

** p < .05. ** p < .01.*

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

N=31

In the first phase, exploratory factor analysis failed to extract two clean factors for the adapted scale. However, confirmatory factor analysis yielded good model fit indicators (see Table 9).

Table 9

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Original and Adapted Attributions of Intentionality Scales

Item (adapted)	CFA standardised factor loadings			
	Phase 1		Phase 2	
	Original	Adapted	Original	Adapted
Attributions of Manipulative Intent				
Your manager tends to manipulate you	.920	.775	.607	1.177
Your manager acts in a self-serving manner	.781	.908	1.150	.764
Your manager behaves on the basis of beliefs about potential rewards [s]he may gain	.342	.497	.514	.454
Attributions of Sincere Intent				
Your manager behaves on the basis of moral conviction	.226	.606	.810	.767
Your manager behaves on the basis of his/her true beliefs	.589	.614	.596	.788
Your manager acts sincerely	.924	.902	.833	.646
Your manager behaves on the basis of ethical considerations	.805	.926	.879	.984
Your manager acts in ways to genuinely benefit you	.550	.884	.666	.449
CFI	1.000	1.000	.894	.904
RMSEA	0.000	0.000	.155	.155
Chi-square (df)	16.099 (19)	10.549 (19)	30.34 (19)	30.41 (19)
Chi-square significance	0.651	0.938	0.048	0.047

N=38 (Phase 1)

N=31 (Phase 2)

In both phases of the pilot, the attributions of sincere intent scale meet Field's (2005) view that a factor is reliable if it has four or more loadings of at least 0.6, regardless of sample size. However, the attributions of manipulative intent item *Your manager behaves on the basis of beliefs about potential rewards [s]he may gain* showed a factor loading of .496 in the first phase and .454 in the second phase, which may be considered fair (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Finally, the confirmatory factor analysis run on the phase 2 data yielded an acceptable CFI (.904) alongside a poor RMSEA (.155), which could be a function of the small sample size of the pilot and degrees of freedom included in the model (Kenny et al., 2015).

Based on the results of the pilot, I decided to proceed with collecting data for my research sample using the adapted items as shown here.

4.2 Measurement Model

Before examining the descriptive statistics or proceeding with the hypothesis testing, I examined the validity of the measurement scales using confirmatory factor analysis because I used scales that have been previously validated in the literature. I conducted four sets of confirmatory factor analyses in Mplus to determine the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model, namely:

1. Model 1: Leader-reported variables (Machiavellianism, serving culture, political skill)
2. Model 2: Employee-reported antecedents of intentionality (LMX, propensity to trust)
3. Model 3: Employee-reported predictors (servant leadership, attributions of intentionality)
4. Model 4: Employee-reported outcomes (trust in leader, propensity to morally disengage)

The results of the initial confirmatory factor analyses are presented in Table 10. I report the Chi-square statistic, its degrees of freedom and p value, the root mean-squared error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). For the CFI, values greater than .95 are generally considered to reflect acceptable fit and

values greater than .97 reflect good fit good fit (Cangur & Ercan, 2015; Hooper et al., 2008; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003), although values greater than 0.90 could also be considered (Byrne, 1994). For RMSEA, values below .05 are considered excellent fit, values between .05 and .08 are considered good fit, and values between .08 and .10 are considered adequate fit (Maccallum et al., 1996). For SRMR, a good fit is reflected by values lower than .08 (Byrne, 1994; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 10

Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Base Scales)

	Proposed Model				Alternative Model			
Description	**χ^2 (df)**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**	**χ^2 (df)**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Model 1: Leader-reported variables (Machiavellianism, serving culture, and political skill)	1332.23 (768)***	.684	.099	.124	1460.78 (776)***	.617	.108	.120
Model 2: Employee-reported antecedents of intentionality (LMX and propensity to trust)	349.924 (165)***	.907	.079	.065	498.468 (169)***	.834	.104	.069
Model 3: Employee-reported predictors (servant leadership and attributions of intentionality)	202.409 (87)***	.898	.086	.065	230.337 (89)***	.876	.094	.070
Model 4: Employee-reported outcomes (trust in leader and propensity to morally disengage)	390.072 (266)***	.924	.051	.101	402.431 (134)***	.843	.105	.072

Alternative Model 1: Machiavellianism and political skill treated as single factors rather than multidimensional with higher order factors.

Alternative Model 2: LMX as a single factor and propensity to trust.

Alternative Model 3: Servant leadership with attributions of intentionality treated as a single scale (manipulative intent items reversed scored).

Alternative Model 4: Trust in leader as a single factor and propensity to morally disengage.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

N=75 (Model 1)

N=181 (Models 2-4)

4.2.1 Model 1: Leader-reported variables

In this model, I included the leader-reported variables, namely Machiavellianism, serving culture, and political skill. A sample size of 75 managers was available for confirmatory factor analysis. The original model, which treated Machiavellianism and political skill as multidimensional constructs with higher order factors in line with how the scales were developed, provided an inadequate fit to the data (CFI = .684). The alternate model, viewing Machiavellianism and political skill as unidimensional factors, yielded an even worse fit (CFI = .617). In pursuing an improved fit to the data, I first explored the impact of item parcelling, as the practice has been demonstrated to improve model estimation and fit (Meade & Kroustalis, 2006). I created item parcels based on item-total correlations, pairing the item with the strongest item-total correlation with the weakest, and so on. Doing so resulted in some improvement in the model fit, but not to a level to be considered an adequate fit to the data (CFI = .863, RMSEA = .125, SRMR = .101). Given this, and that the practice of item parcelling has been criticised by some researchers for potentially leading to biased results (Little et al., 2013), I decided not to pursue this course of action further.

To understand where the problems with model fit were originating, I ran individual confirmatory factor analyses with each of the scales separately (see Table 11). Only serving culture showed an acceptable level of fit (CFI = .922); while the RMSEA value falls outside an acceptable fit, this may be due to the challenges associated with RMSEA often falsely providing indications of poor fit when working with models with small degrees of freedom and sample size (Kenny et al., 2015).

Table 11

Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Individual Leader Scales)

	Proposed Model			
Description	**χ^2 (df)**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Machiavellianism				
Four first-order factors: Desire for Control, Desire for Status, Amoral Manipulation, Distrust of Others	135.74 (98)**	.892	.072	.086
Adding a second-order Machiavellianism factor	141.20 (100)*	.884	.074	.093
Serving Culture				
One factor	28.09 (14)*	.922	.116	.061
Political Skill				
Four first-order factors: Social Astuteness, Interpersonal Influence, Apparent Sincerity, Networking Ability	231.85 (129)***	.878	.103	.073
Adding a second-order Political Skill factor	252.71 (131)***	.855	.111	.087

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$
N=75

Treating Machiavellianism as a first order four-factor model resulted in a poor fit (CFI = .892), while adding an overall 'Machiavellianism' second order factor to the model resulted in the model fit worsening (CFI = .884). These model fit indices mirror results found in a 2017 investigation

questioning the dimensionality of the Machiavellian Personality Scale (Gu et al., 2017). Furthermore, despite Dahling and colleagues (2009) finding good fit for a four-factor first order model and a second order factor structure for the MPS during the scale's development, the results of several studies have led researchers to raise concerns that the MPS may suffer from similar problems as the Mach IV (Miller et al., 2015). With this in mind, I decided to follow the approach as recommended by Miller and colleagues (2015) and apply the specificity matching principle (Epstein, 1979; Fleeson, 2004; Swann et al., 2007). Since I am interested in a specific outcome – the degree to which followers may feel their Machiavellian leaders' servant leadership behaviour is a manipulation attempt – I decided to explore the hypothesis testing also using the amoral manipulation subscale as a specific example of Machiavellian behaviour I was most interested in.

Similar to what was observed with the individual Machiavellianism confirmatory factor analysis, treating political skill as a first order four-factor model resulted in poor fit (CFI = .878), while adding a single overall 'political skill' second order factor to the model resulted in the model fit worsening (CFI = .855). This is generally in contrast to the literature concerning the Political Skill Inventory; for example, researchers found good fit in data across five countries when examining the measurement invariance of the inventory in a non-American context (Lvina et al., 2012). As the poor fit observed may be due to unique characteristics of my sample, I decided to apply the specificity matching principle again and selected the apparent sincerity subscale as the closest theoretical match to my model. This decision is supported by Coole's (2007) view of apparent sincerity as the "execution" or "delivery factor" of political skill, in that a leader's influence attempts will likely only be successful when they are perceived as being genuine.

I then tested a revised model incorporating amoral manipulation as the focal behaviour for Machiavellianism, serving culture, and apparent sincerity as the focal behaviour for political skill. The results, displayed in Table 12, reflect very good fit.

Table 12

Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Selected Leader Dimensions)				
	Proposed Model			
Description	**χ^2 (df)**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Original Model 1	1332.23 (768)***	.684	.099	.124
Revised Model 1: Amoral manipulation, apparent sincerity, serving culture	80.396 (74)	.981	.034	.066

$p < .05$

**$p < .01$*

***$p < .001$*

N=75

4.2.2 Model 2: Employee-reported antecedents of intentionality

In this model, I included LMX and propensity to trust as employee-rated antecedents of attributions of intentionality. A sample size of 181 employees was available for confirmatory factor analysis. The focal model tested and reported in Table 10, which treated LMX as a multidimensional construct as per its original conceptualisation (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) yielded good fit indices (CFI = .907, RMSEA = .079, SRMR = .065). The alternate model explored, where LMX was viewed as a single factor, resulted in poor fit. As such, I proceeded with the model testing using LMX as a multidimensional construct.

4.2.3 Model 3: Employee-reported predictors

In this model, I included the employee-rated servant leadership and attributions of intentionality. A sample size of 181 employees was available for confirmatory factor analysis. The original model tested was a three-factor model comprising of servant leadership, attributions of manipulative intent, and attributions of sincere intent. This model provided an inadequate fit to the data (CFI =

.898, RMSEA = .086, SRMR = .065). The alternate model tested, reverse scoring the manipulative intent items to create a single attributions of intentionality scale aligned with Eberly and Fong's (2013) approach, yielded a slightly worse fit to the data (CFI = .876, RMSEA = .094, SRMR = .070). Examining fit to the data by the individual scales (see Table 13), the servant leadership and attributions of sincere intent showed excellent fit. The attributions of manipulative intent scale was a saturated model. The perfect fit observed may be due to the scale consisting of only three items: the model is inherently simple, reducing the likelihood of misfit as fewer parameters need to be estimated. However, caution is advised when interpreting a perfect fit, as it might not always indicate a truly robust or generalisable model (Harrington, 2009). With the issues experienced with this scale from a reliability and model fit perspective, I made the decision to drop it and focus on the attributions of sincere intent scale.

Table 13

Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Individual Servant Leadership and Attributions of Intentionality Scales)

	Proposed Model			
Description	**χ^2 (df)**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Servant Leadership				
One factor	25.176 (14)*	.979	.066	.037
Attributions of Manipulative Intent				
One factor	0 (0)***	1.000	.000	.000
Attributions of Sincere Intent				
One factor	7.027 (5)	.992	.047	.025

**p < .05*

***p < .01*

****p < .001*

N=181

The model fit achieved for the servant leadership and attributions of sincere intent scales as a two-factor solution yielded very good fit (see Table 14).

Table 14

Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Adjusted Attributions of Intentionality)

	Proposed Model			
Description	**χ^2 (df)**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**
Original Model 3	202.409 (87)***	.898	.086	.065
Revised Model 3: Servant leadership, attributions of sincere intent	107.369 (53)***	.945	.075	.051

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

N=181

4.2.4 Model 4: Employee-reported outcomes

In this model, I included the employee-reported outcomes, namely trust in leader and propensity to morally disengage. A sample size of 181 employees was available for confirmatory factor analysis. The focal model tested and reported in Table 10, which treated trust in leader as a multidimensional construct as per its original conceptualisation (Yang & Mossholder, 2010) yielded good fit indices (CFI = .924, RMSEA = .051, SRMR = .101). The alternate model explored, where trust in leader was viewed as a single factor, resulted in poor fit. As such, I proceeded with the model testing using trust in leader as a multidimensional construct.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

The means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and intercorrelations for the follower-reported variables are presented in Table 15. An analysis of skewness highlighted several of the scales had values falling outside of the -1 to 1 guidance (Hair et al., 2014). Servant leadership, trust in leader, and three of the four LMX dimensions were negatively skewed, reflecting employees reporting

fairly favourable impressions of their managers. Propensity to morally disengage reflected a positive skew; similar to what was observed in the pilot studies, a low base rate was observed (a mean of 1.96 on a seven-point scale). Given this, I used Robust Maximum Likelihood estimation when conducting my model testing, as it is the preferred approach when data departs from a normal distribution (Li, 2016). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients observed were above Nunnally's (1978) .70 threshold in all but two cases (as already flagged, attributions of manipulative intent reported a coefficient of .62, while propensity to trust fell just short at a coefficient of .68).

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics: Follower Survey

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	Age [a]	1.40	0.99																	
2	Sex [b]	0.50	0.50	-.22**																
3	Race [c]	0.57	0.50	-.12	.07															
4	Work Experience [d]	2.78	0.57	.50**	-.11	-.19*														
5	Servant Leadership	5.62	1.04	-.03	-.08	.07	-.10	(.87)												
6	Attributions of Manipulative Intent	2.44	0.82	.06	-.01	-.15*	.09	-.40**	(.62)											
7	Attributions of Sincere Intent	4.00	0.63	-.05	-.14	.01	-.05	.70**	-.34**	(.80)										
8	Propensity to Trust	2.69	0.53	-.20**	-.03	.00	.09	.15	-.10	.13	(.68)									
9	Trust in Leader: Cognitive	4.28	0.66	-.09	.01	.07	-.12	.74**	-.30**	.64**	.11	(.91)								
10	Trust in Leader: Affective	4.03	0.78	-.09	-.06	.14	-.13	.84**	-.38**	.71**	.13	.78**	(.91)							
11	Trust in Leader	4.15	0.68	-.10	-.03	.11	-.13	.84**	-.37**	.72**	.13	.93**	.95**	(.94)						

Descriptive Statistics: Follower Survey

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
12	Propensity to Morally Disengage	1.96	0.70	-.10	.22**	.01	-.04	-.26**	.24**	-.27**	.06	-.23**	-.30**	-.29**	(.70)					
13	LMX: Affect	5.62	1.21	-.01	-.01	.05	-.09	.74**	-.30**	.64**	.19*	.67**	.74**	.75**	-.13	(.88)				
14	LMX: Loyalty	5.48	1.11	-.02	-.05	-.06	-.06	.60**	-.21**	.57**	.19**	.51**	.61**	.60**	-.09	.70**	(.74)			
15	LMX: Contribution	5.98	0.99	.01	-.02	-.06	-.09	.56**	-.17*	.50**	.16*	.52**	.53**	.56**	-.02	.73**	.70**	(.84)		
16	LMX: Professional Respect	6.27	0.93	-.09	.13	.02	-.17*	.61**	-.32**	.55**	.19**	.72**	.64**	.71**	-.10	.74**	.62**	.69**	(.91)	
17	LMX	5.83	0.93	-.03	.01	-.01	-.11	.72**	-.28**	.65**	.21**	.68**	.72**	.75**	-.10	.91*	.87**	.88**	.86**	(0.93)
18	Changes in relationship with manager due to COVID	4.77	1.10	.03	-.09	.03	.08	.24**	-.03	.22**	0.08	.27**	.29**	.29**	-.05	.18*	.23**	.18*	.14	.21**

[a] *Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.*

[b] *Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.*

[c] *Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.*

[d] *Work experience: 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = More than 5 years.*

** p < .05. ** p < .01.*

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

N = 181

Since roughly half of my data was collected at organisational sites and half was collected through snowball sampling, I compared the mean scores of both sources to determine if there were significant differences between the two (see Table 16). Based on a series of *t*-tests, statistically significant differences were observed on five scales: attributions of sincere intent, cognitive trust in leader, affective trust in leader, overall trust in leader, and LMX: professional respect. In all cases, the snowball sample scored higher; however, looking at the Cohen's *d* statistic for these scales, the practical effect size is small, suggesting the samples score relatively similar to one another. These results lend support to treating the sample as a single dataset.

Table 16

Differences Between Data Collection Method on Follower Survey Variables

	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		*t*(179)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	SD	M	SD			
Servant Leadership	5.51	1.10	5.74	0.95	-1.481	.140	0.22
Attributions of Manipulative Intent	2.44	0.86	2.44	0.77	0.031	.975	-0.01
Attributions of Sincere Intent	3.90	0.65	4.13	0.58	-2.522	.013	0.38
Propensity to Trust	2.63	0.52	2.76	0.53	-1.645	.102	0.25
Trust in Leader: Cognitive	4.16	0.71	4.42	0.55	-2.766	.006	0.41
Trust in Leader: Affective	3.92	0.81	4.16	0.72	-2.034	.043	0.30
Trust in Leader	4.04	0.72	4.29	0.60	-2.513	.013	0.38
Propensity to Morally Disengage	1.90	0.67	2.04	0.74	-1.382	.169	0.21
LMX: Affect	5.48	1.26	5.79	1.14	-1.741	.083	0.26
LMX: Loyalty	5.35	1.16	5.63	1.03	-1.699	.091	0.25
LMX: Contribution	5.97	0.93	5.98	1.06	-0.091	.927	0.01

Differences Between Data Collection Method on Follower Survey Variables							
	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		*t*(179)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	SD	M	SD			
LMX: Professional Respect	6.12	0.98	6.44	0.83	-2.365	.019	0.35
LMX	5.73	0.96	5.96	0.89	-1.680	.095	0.25

The means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and intercorrelations for the leader-reported variables are presented in Table 17. An analysis of skewness highlighted several of the scales had values falling outside of the -1 to 1 guidance (Hair et al., 2014). Social astuteness, networking ability, overall political skill and serving culture were negatively skewed, reflecting positive impressions. Amoral manipulation was positively skewed, indicating leaders were less likely to endorse items in this scale. These results support the decision to use Robust Maximum Likelihood estimation when conducting my model testing, given the deviations from a normal distribution observed (Li, 2016). With the exception of Machiavellianism: Desire for Status and Political Skill: Apparent Sincerity, as discussed in the preceding chapter, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients observed were above Nunnally's (1978) .70 threshold.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics: Leader Survey

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.	Age [a]	2.04	0.86															
2.	Sex [b]	0.35	0.50	.00														
3.	Race [c]	0.38	0.49	-.18	-.01													
4.	Work Experience [d]	2.92	0.40	.13	.15	-.15												
5.	Political Skill: Social Astuteness	5.76	0.93	-.02	.08	.13	.02	(.88)										
6.	Political Skill: Interpersonal Influence	5.82	0.75	-.01	.20	.25*	-.08	.83**	(.77)									
7.	Political Skill: Apparent Sincerity	6.34	0.61	.09	.29*	.03	.19	.44**	.51**	(.63)								
8.	Political Skill: Networking Ability	5.58	0.96	.03	.20	.12	.10	.77**	.76**	.66**	(.90)							
9.	Political Skill	5.81	0.75	.02	.21	.15	.06	.91**	.90**	.68**	.94**	(.94)						
10.	Serving Culture	5.11	1.03	.02	.00	.10	-.11	.41**	.44**	.46**	.39**	.47**	(.83)					
11.	Machiavellianism: Desire for Control	2.96	0.88	-.15	-.10	-.07	-.08	.17	.23	-.10	.07	.13	-.08	(.77)				
12.	Machiavellianism: Desire for Status	2.96	0.91	-.30**	-.09	.13	-.10	.13	.13	-.14	.07	.08	-.15	.45**	(.64)			

Descriptive Statistics: Leader Survey

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
13.	Machiavellianism: Amoral Manipulation	1.33	0.48	.03	-.10	.09	.13	-.08	-.20	-.48**	-.21	-.22	-.35**	.35**	.38**	(.77)		
14.	Machiavellianism: Distrust of Others	2.30	0.75	-.18	-.08	.17	.04	-.15	-.13	-.22	-.16	-.18	-.42**	.32**	.31**	.49**	(.76)	
15.	Machiavellianism	2.24	0.53	-.22	-.12	.12	.00	.01	.00	-.31**	-.08	-.08	-.36**	.70**	.71**	.74**	.78**	(.84)

[a] *Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.*

[b] *Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.*

[c] *Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.*

[d] *Work experience: 0 = less than 1 year, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3 to 5 years, 3 = More than 5 years.*

** p < .05. ** p < .01.*

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

N = 75

Similar to the comparison of mean scores run for the follower survey, I compared the mean scores obtained by the organisationally sourced and snowball sampled groups on the scales of the leader survey to determine if there were significant differences between the two (see Table 18). Based on a series of *t*-tests, no statistically significant differences were observed. This suggests that the samples score relatively similar to one another and lends support to treating the sample as a single dataset.

Table 18

Differences Between Data Collection Method on Leader Survey Variables

	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		*t*(73)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	SD	M	SD			
Political Skill: Social Astuteness	5.87	0.84			1.030	.306	-.24
Political Skill: Interpersonal Influence	5.89	0.77	5.76	0.73	0.727	.469	-0.17
Political Skill: Apparent Sincerity	6.36	0.58	6.31	0.64	0.510	.612	-0.12
Political Skill: Networking Ability	5.68	0.83	5.50	1.06	0.813	.419	-0.19
Political Skill	5.90	0.68	5.73	0.82	0.928	.357	-0.21
Serving Culture	5.25	0.84	4.99	1.17	1.134	.261	-0.26
Machiavellianism: Desire for Control	2.90	0.98	3.01	0.79	-0.542	.590	.13
Machiavellianism: Desire for Status	2.80	1.00	3.12	0.80	-1.555	.124	0.36

Differences Between Data Collection Method on Leader Survey Variables							
	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		*t*(73)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	SD	M	SD			
Machiavellianism: Amoral Manipulation	1.24	0.43	1.41	0.51	-1.569	.121	0.36
Machiavellianism: Distrust of Others	2.13	0.73	2.45	0.75	-1.897	.062	0.44
Machiavellianism	2.12	0.55	2.36	0.49	-1.969	.053	0.46

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

In this section I review each hypothesis and present the results of the data analysis.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that leader Machiavellianism, as self-reported by leaders, is positively related to observed servant leadership behaviour as rated by followers, while Hypothesis 2 suggested that serving culture would moderate the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and observed servant leadership behaviour, such that the relationship becomes stronger as the level of serving culture increases. I used multilevel modelling in Mplus to test the hypotheses, controlling for nesting effects as well as the impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on the employee-manager relationship. In all instances, the p-values for the control variable were non-significant. This indicates that, based on the current sample and analysis, there isn't enough evidence to conclude that the control variable has a statistically significant effect on the relationships of interest. Robust maximum likelihood estimation was used given the skewness observed in several of the follower and leader variables. The moderation in Hypothesis 2 was tested using Mplus code developed by researchers to replicate Hayes' PROCESS SPSS procedure (Hayes, 2017) in Mplus (Stride et

al., 2015). Results are presented first when utilising overall Machiavellianism in the analysis, as per my hypotheses (see Table 19) and then when using amoral manipulation as a standalone measure (see Table 20).

Results failed to provide support for Hypothesis 1, suggesting that there is no significant relationship between a leader's Machiavellian tendencies and employee perceptions of servant leadership behaviour ($\beta = -0.136$, $p = .530$). However, in relation to Hypothesis 2, anticipating that serving culture would have a moderating effect on the relationship between Machiavellianism and observed servant leadership behaviour, the interaction term was statistically significant. To determine how serving culture influenced the potential relationship between Machiavellianism and servant leadership, I used the moderated regression equation Y = b0+ b1X + b2W + b3X*W (where Y is predicted servant leadership, X is Machiavellianism and W is serving culture as the moderator) to plot the interaction. Values displayed are one standard deviation above and below the mean for Machiavellianism, and at the 16th, 50th and 84th percentile for serving culture given the skewness present in the moderator, as recommended by Hayes (2017). Figure 3 shows that the relationship between Machiavellianism and servant leadership is positive when serving culture is at a high level. As such, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported, since the relation is non-significant at lower levels of serving culture.

Table 19

The Moderating Effect of Serving Culture on Machiavellianism and Servant Leadership

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Machiavellianism	-.136	.216	-0.628	.530
Serving culture	.000	.112	0.004	.997
Machiavellianism x serving culture	.368	.173	2.126	.033

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

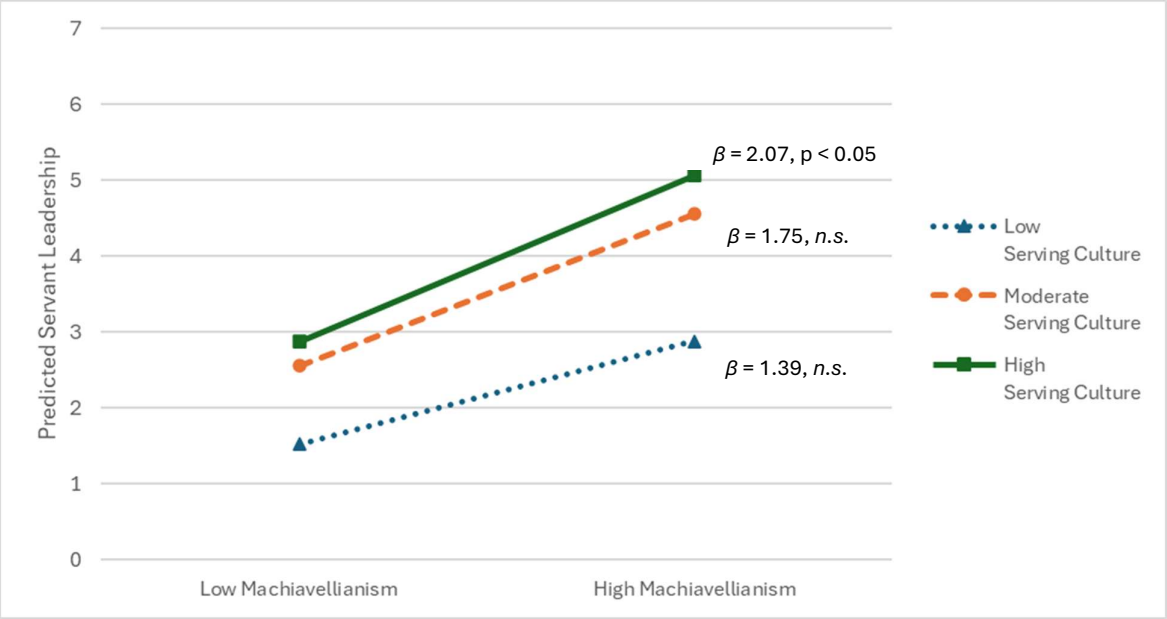

Figure 3: Moderating effect of serving culture on the relationship between Machiavellianism and servant leadership

When considering amoral manipulation alone, no significant relationship was observed with employee perceptions of servant leadership behaviour (β = .104, *p* = .638). However, in Hypothesis 2, support was found for serving culture having a moderating effect on the relationship between amoral manipulation and observed servant leadership behaviour (see Figure 4). The shape of the plots indicates that servant leadership is highest when leaders are highest in amoral manipulation in the highest serving cultures.

Table 20

The Moderating Effect of Serving Culture on Amoral Manipulation and Servant Leadership

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Amoral manipulation	.104	.220	0.471	.638
Serving culture	.068	.099	0.688	.491
Amoral manipulation x serving culture	.401	.172	2.336	.019

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

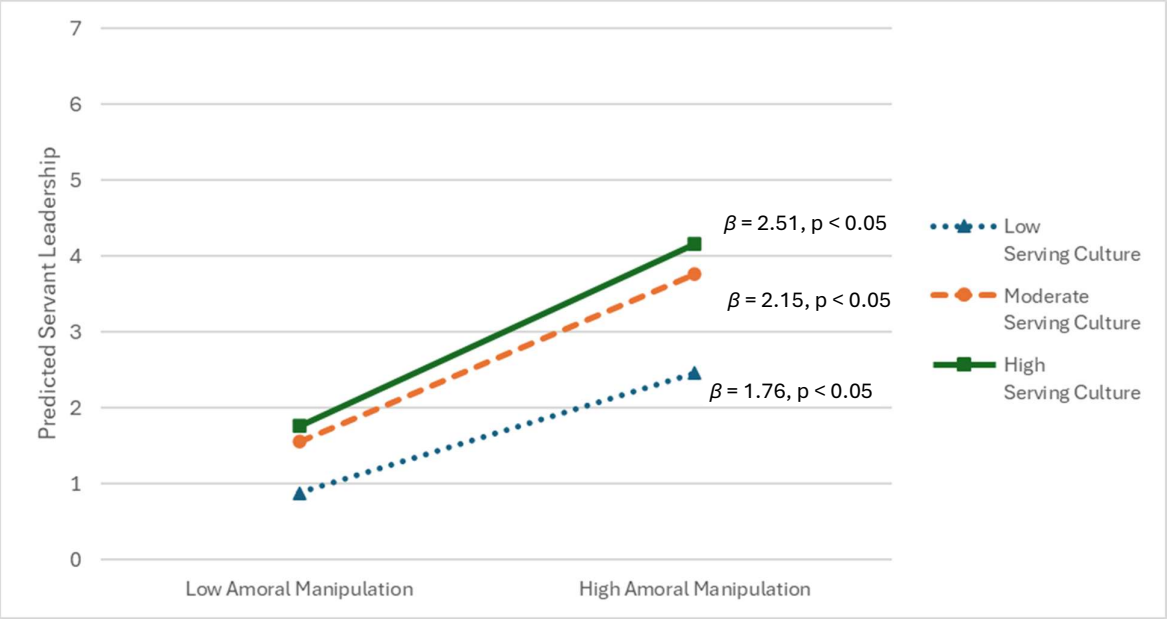

Figure 4: Moderating effect of serving culture on the relationship between amoral manipulation and servant leadership

Turning to the antecedents of attributions of intentionality, Hypothesis 3 anticipated that leader political skill would be positively related to followers' attributions of intentionality behind their leader's behaviour. Hypothesis 4 proposed that LMX quality would be positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour, while Hypothesis 5 suggested that followers' propensity to trust is positively

related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour.

Table 21

Antecedents of Attributions of Sincere Intent

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Political skill	-.008	.068	-0.113	.910
LMX	.440	.051	8.621	.000
Propensity to trust	.191	.145	1.314	.189

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

Results did not support Hypothesis 3 (β = -.008, p = .910), suggesting that higher political skill on the leader's part did not translate to higher attributions of sincere intent being made by their followers. A similar pattern of results was observed when considering the apparent sincerity subscale only (β = -.023, p = .721). Hypothesis 4, that LMX quality would be positively related to attributions of sincere intent was supported (β = .440, p = .000). However, the results did not support Hypothesis 5 (β = .191, p = .189), that followers with a higher propensity to trust were more inclined to make attributions of sincere intent about their leaders' motivations.

Hypothesis 6 suggested followers' attributions of sincere leader intent would moderate the positive relationship between the leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower trust in leader, such that the relationship will be stronger when sincere intentions are higher. While the positive relationship between leaders' servant leadership behaviour and follower trust in leader established in the literature was observed in my research sample (β = .331, p = .000), and attributions of sincere intent had a significant, positive relationship with trust in leader (β

= .256, p = .003), the interaction term was not significant. As such, Hypothesis 6 is not supported.

Table 22

The Moderating Effect of Attributions of Sincere Intent on Servant Leadership and Trust in Leader

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Servant leadership	.331	.057	5.854	.000
Attributions of sincere intent	.256	.086	2.974	.003
Servant leadership x attributions of sincere intent	-.068	.063	-1.077	.282

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that servant leadership behaviour would be negatively related to follower moral disengagement, while Hypothesis 8 suggested that follower attributions of a leader's intent would moderate the relationship between servant leadership and follower moral disengagement. The results presented in Table 23 support Hypothesis 7, in those followers observing higher levels of servant leadership behaviour in their leaders also reported lower levels of propensity to morally disengage (β = -.283, p = .024). However, a consequence of my decision to drop the attributions of manipulative intent scale due to poor measurement qualities demonstrated in the confirmatory factor analysis is that Hypothesis 8 could not be tested. Hypothesis 8 draws on social learning theory and focuses specifically on the manipulative intent of the leader potentially "authorising" the adoption of the same negative behaviours in the followers themselves, thereby leading to higher levels of moral disengagement. My initial intention of combining the attributions of intent scales by reverse scoring the manipulative intent items retained the measure of manipulative intent as a construct. However, employees rating their leaders lower on sincere intent attributions alone

does not necessarily equate to indicating that their manager is actively manipulating them and acting in a self-serving manner. As such there is an insufficient theoretical basis to revise Hypothesis 8 further around attributions of sincere intent.

Table 23

The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Propensity to Morally Disengage

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Propensity to morally disengage	-.283	.125	-2.258	.024

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

4.5 Post-hoc Analyses

My anonymous examiners asked that I test additional questions to demonstrate the rigour of my theoretical model. In the following sections I outline the reasons for the requests, present the results of the post-hoc analyses, and discuss the results.

4.5.1 LMX in the place of attributions of sincere intent

One anonymous examiner raised the question of whether LMX, as an antecedent of followers' attributions of intent, also affected their ratings of servant leadership, making the attribution variable spurious. They referred to a recent study that found positive leadership styles – including servant leadership – have shared variance mainly represented by the affective quality of the leader-follower relationship (Eva et al., 2024). As such, if followers have a good relational quality with their leaders, they will score them higher on attributions of sincerity as well as on servant leadership.

I tested a competing model where LMX directly predicts servant leadership, outside of the attributions of sincere intent variable. The results, presented in Table 24, demonstrate an

extremely strong relationship between follower ratings of servant leadership and LMX, in line with the recent findings of Eva and colleagues (2024). This suggests the followers participating in this study viewed their leaders' servant leadership and LMX as practically one and the same.

Table 24

The Relationship between LMX and Servant Leadership

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Servant leadership	.963	.084	11.465	.000

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

To further investigate the role followers' perceptions of the quality of relationship with their leaders may be playing, I tested whether follower ratings of LMX moderated their levels of trust in leader reported. The results in Table 25 demonstrate that, while ratings of servant leadership and LMX are positively related to followers' trust in their leader, the interaction term is not significant. This indicates that, despite the distinct relationship between ratings of servant leadership and LMX, the quality of the leader/follower relationship does not moderate the relationship between servant leadership and trust in leader. This may mean an alternate mechanism may be necessary to explore whether followers pick up on pseudo servant leadership behaviours and what the subsequent impact thereof is, which is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Table 25

The Moderating Effect of LMX on Servant Leadership and Trust in Leader

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Servant leadership	.331	.057	5.854	.000
LMX	.256	.086	2.974	.003
Servant leadership x LMX	-.068	.063	-1.077	.282

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

4.5.2 LMX as a moderator on Machiavellianism and servant leadership

An anonymous examiner suggesting giving some attention to potential reversal causality, given my data is cross-sectional. Specifically, they advised considering the possibility that LMX is triggered by Machiavellian leaders and that a possible reason why Hypothesis 1 was not supported could be that followers would not have high LMX with Machiavellian leaders who are shown to be selfish and manipulative in prior interactions, and that negative effect could have weakened the overall effect of Machiavellian leaders on followers' rating of servant leadership. As such, I tested the potential moderating effect LMX could have on the relationship between Machiavellianism and servant leadership, with the results presented in Table 26.

Table 26

The Moderating Effect of LMX on Machiavellianism and Servant Leadership

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Machiavellianism	-1.932	.834	-2.317	.020
LMX	.963	.084	11.465	.000
Machiavellianism x LMX	.318	.149	2.130	.033

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

Testing this model resulted in Machiavellianism having a significant negative direct relationship with servant leadership (β = -1.932, p = .020). Further, the Machiavellianism x LMX interaction term was significant (β = .318, p = .033). In the same way as when I tested Hypothesis 2, I plotted the interaction using values one standard deviation above and below the mean for Machiavellianism, and at the 16th, 50th and 84th percentile for LMX given the skewness present in the moderator, as per Hayes's recommendation (2017). The resulting plot and slope tests (see Figure 5) illustrate that the interaction is significant only at low levels of LMX, where high Machiavellian leaders are rated slightly lower in terms of their displayed servant leadership behaviour. This suggests that in low LMX relationships, the Machiavellian traits of a leader could dominate, potentially leading to less effective attempts to display the appearance of servant leadership to others. Given my data are cross-sectional in nature, exploring this longitudinally could shed further light on the influence LMX has on the relationship.

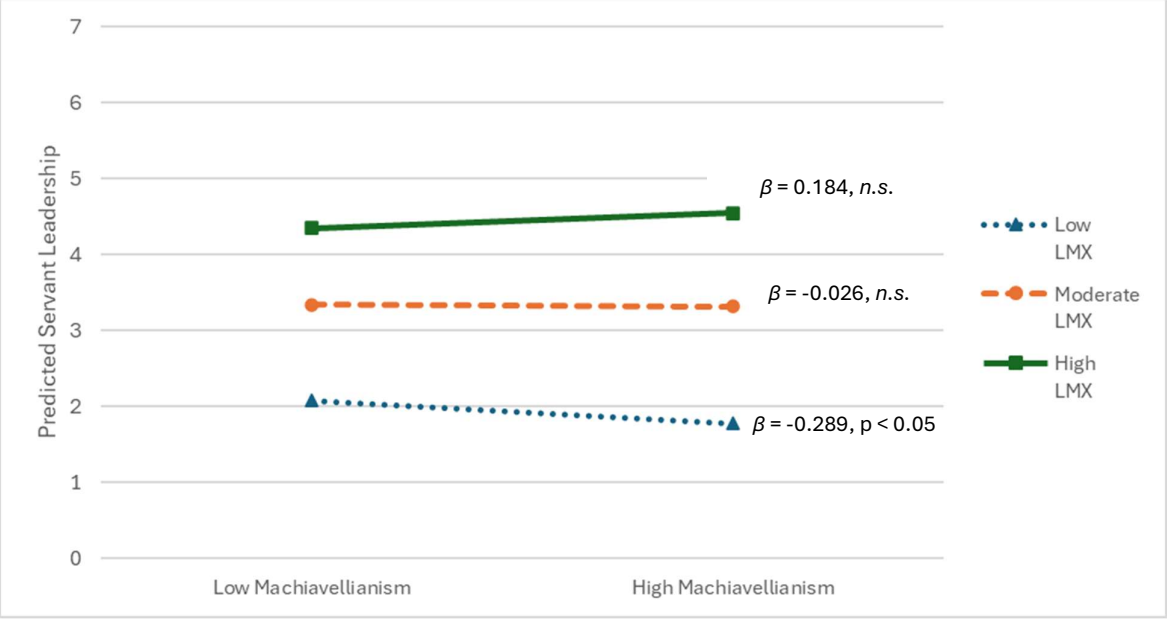

Figure 5: Moderating effect LMX on the relationship between Machiavellianism and servant leadership

However, it is important to note that when testing the moderating effect of LMX on the relationship between amoral manipulation and servant leadership – which demonstrated better psychometric properties than overall Machiavellianism in terms of the confirmatory factor analysis results – the interaction term is non-significant (see Table 27). This could suggest that the degree to which followers see Machiavellian leaders for the manipulative and selfish beings that they are is influenced by other factors, particularly if they are skilled at managing how they come across to others. For example, scholars have found that leaders who are both strongly politically skilled and high on Machiavellianism are rated highly by their subordinates on transformational leadership and on leader effectiveness by their superiors (Genau et al., 2022). Further, the relationships are reversed for leaders low on political skill but high on Machiavellianism.

Table 27

The Moderating Effect of LMX on Amoral Manipulation and Servant Leadership

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Amoral manipulation	-1.616	.971	-1.664	.096
LMX	.993	.085	11.622	.000
Amoral manipulation x LMX	.288	.175	1.647	.100

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

4.5.3 Attributions of intent as a single construct

An anonymous examiner asked whether the two moderators – attributions of manipulative and sincere intent – could possibly be the opposite ends of the same construct and, as such, a single 'attributions of intent' variable could be included in the model for simplicity. They raised this point highlighting the two separate attributions of intent having the same antecedents and outcomes in the model, with the relationships being opposite, and their

moderation effects on the main relationship being opposite as well. As such, they suggested presenting the analysis with and without merging them. While, on completion of the reliability analysis reported in Chapter 3, I'd intended to reverse-score the attributions of manipulative intent items alongside the attributions of sincere intent items to form a single attributions of intentionally variable, the confirmatory factor analysis did not support doing so. However, in response to the examiner's recommendation, I calculated a merged 'attributions of intent' variable and tested its moderating effect on the relationships between servant leadership and trust in leader as well as propensity to morally disengage (see Table 28).

Table 28

The Moderating Effect of Attributions of Intent on Servant Leadership and Follower Outcomes

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Outcome: Trust in Leader				
Servant leadership	.370	.062	6.002	.000
Attributions of intent	.114	.095	1.199	.230
Servant leadership x attributions of intent	-.049	.065	-.757	.449
Outcome: Moral Disengagement				
Servant leadership	-.247	.120	-2.060	.039
Attributions of intent	-.177	.182	-.976	.329
Servant leadership x attributions of intent	-.093	.127	-.734	.463

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

Similar to the results presented in Section 4.4 investigating attributions of sincere intent alone as a moderator, the interaction effect for the trust in leader outcome is not significant for the

merged attributions of intent variable. The same is true for the moral disengagement outcome, which was not originally tested. Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) observe that it is challenging for followers to distinguish between genuine and insincere leaders because, although their intentions may differ, their displayed behaviours are similar. It may be that, given this challenge, a different mechanism is needed to explore whether followers detect pseudo servant leadership and the influence such has on their reactions, which is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.5.4 Attributions of intent as first stage moderator

An anonymous examiner offered a potential explanation for why the attributions of sincere intent did not moderate the relationship between servant leadership and follower outcomes. The model of emotions and leadership intentionality (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002) suggests that the attribution of intentions determines whether a leader's behaviour will be seen as genuine or pseudo-servant leadership. Consequently, leaders with Machiavellian traits may not be viewed as servant leaders if followers perceive them as manipulative, indicating that the assignment of intentions might be more crucial as a first stage rather than a second stage moderating factor. As such, I ran post-hoc analysis to test whether attributions of sincere intent moderated the relationship between leader Machiavellianism and follower-rated servant leadership, with the results presented in Table 29.

Table 29

The Moderating Effect of Attributions of Sincere Intent on Machiavellianism / Amoral Manipulation and Servant Leadership

	β	SE	Est. SE	p
Predictor: Machiavellianism				
Machiavellianism	-.091	.126	-.718	.473
Attributions of sincere intent	1.426	.153	9.344	.000
Machiavellianism x attributions of sincere intent	.228	.210	1.086	.278
Predictor: Amoral Manipulation				
Amoral manipulation	.062	.160	.384	.701
Attributions of sincere intent	1.455	.157	9.287	.000
Amoral manipulation x attributions of sincere intent	.299	.259	1.154	.249

N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.

As noted previously, Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) point out that followers find it difficult to distinguish authentic leaders from insincere ones because their exhibited behaviours are quite alike, despite having different intentions. Further, Machiavellian leaders are adept at deception (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). They can carefully craft their words and actions to appear altruistic, while actually serving their own interests, making it difficult for followers to see their true motives. This may be one reason why the interaction between leader Machiavellianism and follower attributions of sincere intent does not moderate Machiavellianism's relationship with servant leadership. Another explanation could be that it would be better to explore this relationship over time using cross-lagged or longitudinal designs, as researchers have recommended due to the covert nature of Machiavellianism (Jones & Mueller, 2022).

4.6 Summary of Results

Figure 6 presents a summary of the results of the hypothesis testing in visual form, supported by Table 30. The "Base Scales" column refers to the hypothesis testing run according to my original hypotheses (i.e., utilising leader Machiavellianism and political skill as overall scales) while the "Revised Scales" column refers to where selected subscales (i.e., amoral manipulation and apparent sincerity) were tested.

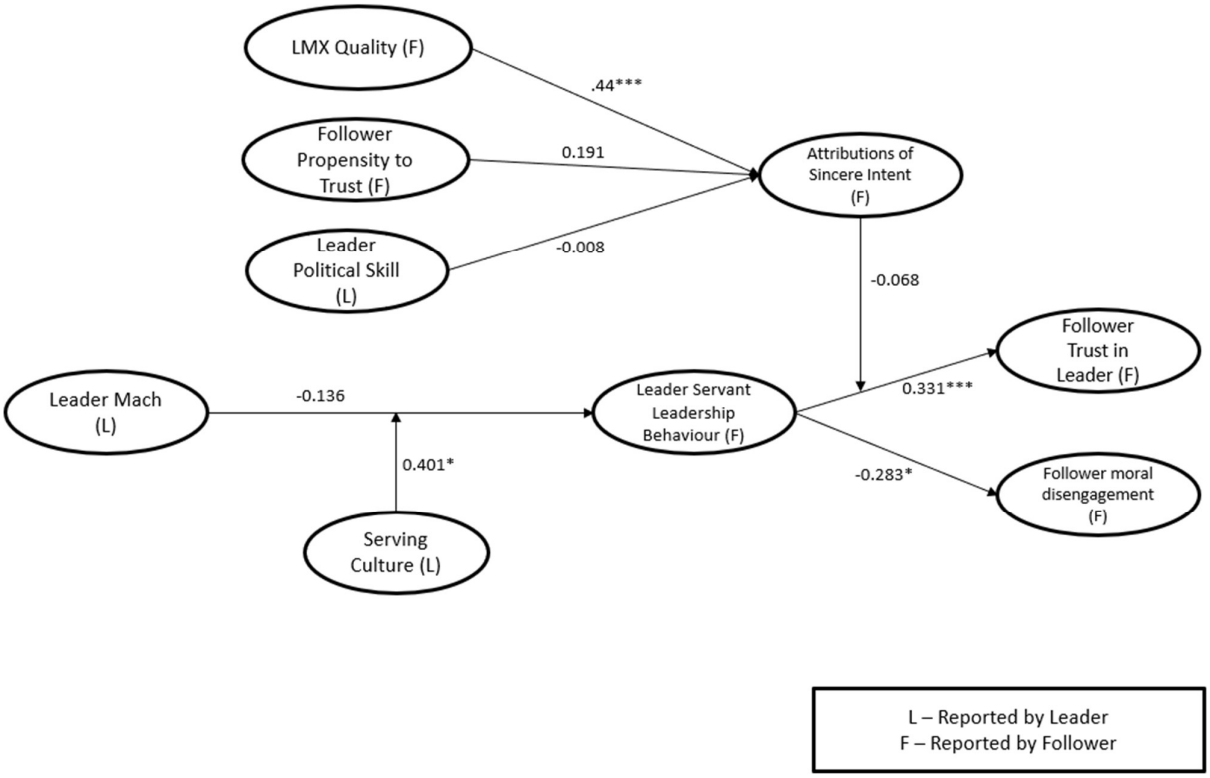

Figure 6: Hypothesized model with coefficient estimation results

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed)

Table 30

Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing

		Base Scales	***Revised Scales***
H_1	Leader Machiavellianism, as self-reported by leaders, is positively related to observed servant leadership behaviour as rated by followers.	No	No
H_2	Serving culture moderates the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and observed servant leadership behaviour, such that the relationship becomes stronger as the level of serving culture increases.	Partially Supported	Supported
H_3	Leader political skill is positively related to followers' tendency to make attributions of sincere intent for their leader's behaviour.	No	No
H_4	LMX quality is positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour regarding their leaders' behaviour.	Supported	N/A
H_5	Followers' propensity to trust is positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour.	No	N/A
H_6	Followers' attributions of sincere leader intent moderate the positive relationship between the leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower	No	N/A

Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing

		Base Scales	***Revised Scales***
	trust in leader, such that the relationship will be stronger when sincere intentions are higher.		
H_7	Servant leadership behaviour is negatively related to follower moral disengagement.	Supported	N/A
H_8	Follower attributions of a leader's intent moderate the relationship between servant leadership and follower moral disengagement, such that at low levels of intent (i.e., less sincere) the relationship is positive, but at high levels of intent (i.e., more sincere), the relationship is negative.	Not tested	

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a review of the purpose of the study coupled with a discussion of the results within the context of the research questions and existing literature. I then highlight the limitations of the study, followed by a discussion of the theoretical contribution and practical implications of the findings. Finally, I suggest potential avenues for future research that could build on my theoretical model and findings.

5.1 Servant Leadership as a Machiavellian Manipulation Strategy

Hypotheses 1 and 2 relate to the research question *"Does serving culture moderate the relationship between a leader's dark personality (i.e., Machiavellianism) and servant leadership behaviour, thereby enabling a Machiavellian leader to adopt the appearance of a servant leader?"*

My results did not support Hypothesis 1, which sought to replicate Eva and colleagues' (2017) finding of leader Machiavellian tendencies being positively related to follower ratings of servant leadership behaviour. At the time of designing my study, the only other research I found concerning servant leadership and Machiavellianism was Sendjaya and Cooper's (2011) development of the Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale, which showed a strong negative correlation between the two in line with conceptual expectations. However, their study was based on followers providing ratings of both their leader's servant leadership behaviour and perceived Machiavellian tendencies. My approach and results align to a recent study by Xiu and colleagues (2024), who also found no relationship between follower ratings of servant leadership behaviour and leader-reported Machiavellianism. While this may be an encouraging finding from a practical perspective – indicating that in this sample Machiavellian leaders are not systematically using servant leadership behaviour to further

their own ends – it does not preclude the possibility that some high Machiavellianism leaders do, just as some low Machiavellian leaders do. Indeed, Xiu and colleagues (2024) found that the relationship between servant leadership behaviour and perceived leadership effectiveness was stronger for high Machiavellian leaders than for low. The authors position their observation of no relationship between servant leadership behaviour and Machiavellianism as support for their argument that "the values behind a leader's behavior and their actual behavior might differ and should be acknowledged as such" (Xiu et al., 2024, p. 296). While this may be the case for some leadership theories, servant leadership theory specifically places the leader's "other-oriented approach" as a key motive of servant leadership fundamental to its definition (Eva et al., 2019). As such, Machiavellian leaders engaging in servant leadership behaviour would not be considered true servant leaders, but rather *pseudo* servant leaders (Staats, 2015). The question remains whether followers can see through such manipulation attempts, which is addressed in Section 5.3.

Hypothesis 2 argued that the relationship between leader Machiavellianism and observed servant leadership behaviour would be contingent on the level of serving culture in the organisation, with the relationship being stronger in organisations that fostered strong serving cultures. While the path from Machiavellianism to servant leadership was not significant, entering the interaction term of Machiavellianism x serving culture had a significant effect, partially supporting Hypothesis 2. While observed levels of servant leadership were higher for both low and high Machiavellian leaders where serving culture was strong, the effect was stronger for high Machiavellian leaders. In other words, in organisations where serving culture was strong, high Machiavellian leaders were more likely to be rated as demonstrating servant leadership behaviour. This aligns with my expectation that serving culture serves as a situational "trigger" for leaders with higher Machiavellian tendencies; the presence of an

other-centred serving culture likely prompts a leader with tendencies for Machiavellianism to mask their self-centred orientation and adopt the appearance of being focused on others. This finding is also supported by the view of Jones and Mueller (2022, p. 535), informed by Trait Activation Theory, that "Machiavellianism is a trait that is associated with person x environment interactions".

5.2 Antecedents of Attributions of Leader Intentionality

Hypotheses 3, 4 and 5 concerned the research question regarding what factors influence the formation of follower perceptions of a leader's intentions underlying their enactment of servant leadership behaviour.

5.2.1 Political Skill

Hypothesis 3, anticipating that leader political skill would be positively related to followers' attributions of intentionality behind their leader's behaviour, was not supported whether considering political skill as a whole or the apparent sincerity subscale as a standalone indicator. A possible explanation for this non-finding could be related to the role of leader emotions. Ferris and colleagues (1995) refer to the leader's strategic display of emotion being designed to make actions more believable; as such, could the formation of follower attributions of sincere intent be less about the political skill of the leader (i.e., the ability to read situations, accurately utilise situational norms with a convincing influencing style) and more about *how* the leader puts their political skill into play? Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) proposed that when leaders are in a positive mood, members are more likely to attribute leader behaviours to sincere organisational intent. Could it be that the emotional intelligence of a leader plays a greater role in informing attributions of sincere intent than the leader's political skill? Or possibly in combination with the leader's political skill.

Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) posited that leaders with high emotional intelligence would be more likely to present an impression they are behaving in a truly transformational manner because they are more in control of their emotions. Additionally, Bowen and colleagues (2010) note that political skill typically covaries modestly with emotional intelligence, as high degrees of both are required to influence workers. It may be that the influence of leader political skill on the formation of follower intentionality attributions needs to be studied in combination with emotional intelligence.

A potential alternate explanation for the non-finding may be due to the nature of follower attributions of sincere intent. Two meta-analyses concerning political skill have noted that "political skill has a more potent impact on behavior and performance when outcomes concern the leader's relationship with others" (Blickle et al., 2014, p. 274). The attributions of sincere intent that I focus on in my theoretical model concern followers making determinations about the motivations of their leaders that underpin the leader's behaviour, but do not consider the relationship between the leader and follower. It may be that leader political skill comes into play more when relational attributions are the focus of the investigation, not intentionality attributions.

A third alternate explanation could potentially be found in considering the largely favourable perceptions of leaders reported by the followers in my dataset. In terms of LMX quality, 86% of followers agreed they had good quality relationships with their leaders, while 71% of followers reported holding trust in their leaders. In contrast, Lacost (2005) found that unfavourable outcomes for individuals led to perceptions of political individuals and political organisations as the cause for the unfavourable outcomes. Therefore, it may be that the

largely favourable perceptions reported of leaders led to a discounting of potentially political actions.

Finally, the majority of managers responded positively to the survey questions about political skill (92% of managers showed agreement overall), reflecting a high level of confidence in their political skills. However, Ferris and colleagues (2005) emphasize the importance of not relying exclusively on self-reports for the measurement of political skill, highlighting in particular the apparent sincerity questions covering how the leader intends to come across, which may not be directly related to how they actually come across to their subordinates. It may be that exploring a referent-change measure of leader political skill as perceived by the subordinates could yield more insight into the role it plays in the formation of attributions of intentionality.

5.2.2 LMX Quality

Hypothesis 4 – that LMX quality would be positively related to followers' tendencies to make attributions of sincere intent regarding their leaders' behaviour – was supported. As such, followers experiencing higher quality relationships with their managers are more likely to attribute their leader's behaviour to sincere intentions. My results align with previous research findings concerning leader sincerity as perceived by followers. For example, in investigating follower reactions to leader apologies, followers were found to perceive the leader's apology to be sincere when they had viewed their leader as trustworthy or caring prior to the incident of wrongdoing (Basford et al., 2014). In their study, Basford and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that follower attributions of apology sincerity were related to higher levels of trust in leadership, satisfaction with supervision and affective organisational

commitment in addition to forgiveness, underscoring the importance of examining a leaders' perceived sincerity in the eyes of their followers.

The supported results extend existing literature on the antecedents of sincere intent by testing the relationship between LMX quality and attributions of sincere intent, finding a positive association. While this relationship has been theorised previously (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002), to the best of my knowledge this association has as yet not been tested empirically. These results add attributions of sincere intent to the known benefits of quality leader/member relationships, such as increased organisational citizenship behaviour and job performance, stronger organisational commitment, and perceptions of organisational justice to name but a few (Dulebohn et al, 2012).

5.2.3 Propensity to Trust

The present study did not find support for Hypothesis 5, that followers' propensity to trust would be positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour. This may potentially be explained by the majority of my sample having worked with their current managers for more than a year and thus having ample knowledge of their leader's past behaviour to determine whether they consider them to be trustworthy. Scholars have previously theorised that propensity to trust has the greatest impact when limited other information is available early on in relationships (McKnight et al., 1998), and researchers have demonstrated in practice that the influence of characteristics of the trustor declines over time (Alarcon et al., 2016; Jones & Shah, 2016). However, it may be that propensity to trust still plays a role in the formation of attributions of intent, though in a different way. Mayer and colleagues (1995) theorised that individuals with a higher propensity to trust will show more actual trust in others in the absence of other information.

However, they go on to outline how this tendency also influences an individual's reliance on the perceived trustworthiness of others, thereby moderating the relationship between factors of perceived trustworthiness (i.e., ability, benevolence and integrity) and the formation of actual trust. Although not specifically related to attributions of intent, researchers have found propensity to trust acting as a moderator in the context of employee/manager relationships, in that the likelihood of relationship conflicts between employees and managers increased as propensity to trust of managers decreased (Konuk et al., 2022). Within the context of my theoretical model, it could be that propensity to trust, as an underlying personal attribute, moderates the relationship between LMX as a relational antecedent and subsequent attributions of intent.

5.3 The Impact of Leader Intentionality on Follower Outcomes

Hypotheses 6 and 7 address the research question of to what extent the perceived intent of servant leadership behaviour moderates the effect of that behaviour on follower outcomes.

5.3.1 Trust in Leader

The positive relationship between servant leadership and subsequent trust in the leader is well established in the research literature (Eva et al., 2019) and again supported in my results. Hypothesis 6 sought to add a boundary condition to this relationship, where I argued that followers' attributions of sincere leader intent would moderate the relationship between the leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower trust in leader, strengthening the relationship when perceived sincere intentions are higher. However, my results did not provide support for this hypothesis. I offer two possible explanations for this.

First, Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) note "it is hard for followers to see the difference between authentic and non-authentic leaders as while the intentions of such leaders differ, the behaviors they display are highly similar" (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012, p. 40). Additionally, Machiavellian leaders are skilled at deceiving others and crafting a desirable representation of themselves to others (DePaulo & Rosenthal, 1979, as cited in Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). This difficulty is perhaps represented in mixed findings in the research literature. Some researchers have shown that followers can identify non-authentic leadership behaviour, such as Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) demonstrating the positive impact ethical leadership had on engagement was less strong for leaders high on Machiavellianism. Similarly, Barling and colleagues (2008) found more negative follower reactions to pseudo-transformational leadership (i.e., outwardly transformational leaders who are self-serving and lack a moral foundation; (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) than to authentic transformational leadership. In contrast, Kwak and Shim (2017) found that Machiavellian supervisors' ethical leadership behaviours were perceived to be genuine by their subordinates and in fact strengthened employee voice behaviours. Similarly, Xiu and colleagues (2024) demonstrated that high Machiavellian leaders adopting behaviour characteristic of servant leadership were viewed by their followers as more effective leaders than low Machiavellian leaders.

With these conflicting findings in mind, there could be two possible reasons why followers' attributions of sincere intent did not impact the trust in their leader in my study. Firstly, my study was a cross-sectional design. Since Machiavellianism is a secretive trait, researchers recommend including a longitudinal component as follower perceptions of leaders high in Machiavellianism will likely change over time (Jones & Mueller, 2022). Designing a study with a longitudinal component, giving followers the opportunity to readjust perceptions of their leaders as they may become more aware of their Machiavellian tendencies, may yield

different results. Additionally, scholars have recently demonstrated that engaging in servant leadership can increase leaders' emotional exhaustion through followers' dependence on the leader (Zheng et al., 2024); as such, showcasing the appearance of a servant leader may prove to be too demanding for Machiavellian leaders to maintain over time. Secondly, an emerging construct in the trust in leadership literature is emotional sincerity, that is, the alignment between a leader's experienced and expressed emotions and the attributions employees may make about their leaders based on their emotional expressions (Morgan, 2017). Gardner and colleagues (2009) proposed that a leader's emotional displays would influence followers' perceived authenticity of the leader, which in turn would influence follower trust in leader, and Caza and colleagues (2015) demonstrated such in both American and Chinese samples. It may be that investigating followers' attributions about their leader's emotional sincerity may be more informative than studying rational attributions of sincerity which may be informed by emotional sincerity.

Research has shown that, at least in some cases, followers are able to see through Machiavellian leaders' intent, and this weakens the benefits of positive leader behaviours such as ethical and servant leadership. This suggests this avenue is an important area to continue investigating, despite the unsupported findings in this study.

5.3.2 Propensity to Morally Disengage

My findings support Hypothesis 7, which argued that a leader's servant leadership behaviour would be negatively related to follower propensity to morally disengage. That is, a leader role modelling ethical and other-centred behaviour lessens the likelihood of employees finding rational justifications to overlook ethical standards and "authorise" behaviour that may go against their moral standards. The role of the leader in spreading moral disengagement has

been posited in conceptual work, with Johnson and Buckley (2015) positioning moral disengagement as an interpersonal phenomenon likely to spread through a group through social contagion processes. Further, they argued that leaders are likely to have increased influence over moral disengagement given their position and hierarchical power in the organisation. Research findings support this view of the leader's influence; for example, Huang and Yan (2014) found groups with unethical leaders were more likely to morally disengage, with the effect stronger in high power-distance contexts.

Just as a leader's actions may increase employee propensity to morally disengage, my findings are in line with other researchers' observations of how positive leadership styles can buffer against negative employee dispositions and behaviour. For example, Moore and colleagues (2019) demonstrated that employees reported lower levels of propensity to morally disengage when exposed to ethical leadership, subsequently decreasing employees' unethical decisions and deviant behaviour. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) provides the mechanism to explain how: people learn new behaviours by observing and imitating role models, with leaders serving as highly influential role models. Moore and colleagues (2019) argued ethical leaders decrease their subordinates' propensity to morally disengage through their behaviour setting examples of ethics in practice, making it harder for employees to engage in the cognitive mechanisms of displacing or diffusing responsibility. In a similar manner, a servant leader creating positive norms and expectations for other-centred behaviour among their followers will likely decrease their followers' propensity to morally disengage through countering the cognitive mechanisms of displacement of responsibility, dehumanisation, and attribution of blame. It should be noted; the intention in including follower moral disengagement in this research was to demonstrate the damage that could occur in organisations should harmful leaders adopt positive leadership styles for their own

ends. Our understanding of the mechanisms could be enhanced through the inclusion of more substantial outcomes such as unethical or deviant behaviour or other harmful actions such as counterproductive work behaviours being included in future studies.

5.4 Contributions to Theory and Literature

First, my research contributes to Mohr's (2013) call to broaden the study of leadership to ways in which harmful leaders may subvert traditionally positive leadership behaviour to achieve their own ends. I identified the role that a strong serving culture may play in encouraging high Machiavellian leaders to adopt servant leadership behaviour, serving as a situational "trigger" to leaders with higher Machiavellian tendencies. Liden and colleagues (2014) introduced the concept of serving culture and demonstrated its positive influence on individual job performance as well as unit performance. Subsequently, serving culture has been found to promote service quality (Nowak, 2019), team service performance (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021), and to enhance the relationships between green human resource management practices and employee environmental commitment (Luu, 2018). Despite these positive benefits, however, my research is arguably, to my knowledge, the first to suggest a potential downside to promoting serving cultures in organisations. Encouraging otherwise harmful leaders to engage in inauthentic displays of servant leadership may have negative consequences; such displays would likely involve surface acting (i.e., modifying one's displays of emotion to conform to external expectations that the individual does not necessarily agree with or feel; (Grandey, 2000). In the context of leadership, Gardner and colleagues (2009) argue a leader engaging in surface acting is likely to lead to unfavourable follower impressions and outcomes as well as lower leader felt authenticity, in turn leading to the leader experiencing emotional exhaustion and burnout.

Second, my research contributes to the very limited pool of literature examining servant leadership within the lens of attribution theory: to my knowledge, only Sun and colleagues (2019) have done so in their investigation of the influence employee relational attributions have on feelings of gratitude and prosocial behaviours. I explored attributions of intent employees make to determine the influence of perceived leader intent on follower outcomes, which had not been examined empirically in relation to servant leadership. Although my findings did not support my hypotheses in this regard, there remains evidence that followers sometimes see through manipulative leaders, which reduces the benefits of positive leadership (see Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). This, along with my finding of the surprisingly negative consequence of serving cultures, suggests more research is needed to understand how followers make attributions about the intent behind a leader's actions, particularly when the displayed behaviour may be inauthentic, and how those attributions impact outcomes.

Finally, my finding linking servant leadership to reduced likelihood of employee propensity to morally disengage relates to two contributions. First, it expands the nomological network of servant leadership by adding a state-like outcome (Moore, 2015) that likely leads to further follower behavioural outcomes as a benefit of servant leadership. Second, it contributes to the burgeoning research offering that servant leadership can not only promote positive outcomes for employees and organisations, but also buffer against negative outcomes (Paesen et al., 2019; Sendjaya et al., 2019; Yasir & Jan, 2023). In addition to servant leadership being linked to reduced organisational workplace deviant behaviour through employee engagement as a mediator (Sendjaya et al., 2019), recently researchers have linked it to reduced workplace deviance with organisational justice acting as a mediator (Yasir & Jan, 2023). Using social learning processes as a theoretical underpinning, including (low) moral

disengagement in servant leadership theory should open the door to linking servant leadership to reduced levels of negative follower behaviour such as unethical decision making, counterproductive work behaviours, social undermining, and workplace harassment (Newman et al., 2020).

5.5 Practical Contributions

My research has three key practical implications for organisational practice. First, a potential positive takeaway is that the widespread adoption of servant leadership as a Machiavellian manipulative strategy appears less likely than suspected from earlier work (Eva et al., 2017). However, as Xiu and colleagues (2024) note, Machiavellian leaders are unavoidable in the realities of organisational life, and they demonstrate that some Machiavellian leaders do in fact adopt the appearance of servant leadership behaviour. As such, leaders were still viewed as effective and this poses a practical problem, namely "to what extent [can organisations] manage Machiavellian leaders to avoid undesirable behaviors and attain the better outcomes" (Xiu et al., 2024, p. 302). While implementing servant leadership development programs can unlock the known benefits of the leadership approach for organisations, based on my findings organisations may need to be mindful about how they go about promoting a serving culture. The presence of an other-centred serving culture, emphasizing ethical behaviour and consideration of others (Liden et al., 2014), sends a strong signal to Machiavellian leaders in terms of acceptable and expected behaviour and may mitigate against such leaders engaging in toxic behaviours. However, as we see in my research, such a culture can be a double-edged sword in encouraging Machiavellian leaders to behave as pseudo servant leaders (Staats, 2015), the impact of which is still to be fully understood. With this in mind, organisations looking to promote a serving culture through servant leadership development programs are advised to pay careful attention to emphasizing the altruistic and other-centred beliefs

underpinning the leadership style, to encourage the authentic adoption of servant leadership behaviour.

Second, while not a focal point in my hypothesis testing, I believe my study is amongst the few to demonstrate the relationship observed between servant leadership and trust in leader within the South African context, alongside the findings of Dannhauser (2007). While some scholars argue leadership practices are universal, others view them to be specific to a cultural context, arguing for example that certain leadership styles are specific those from an African or a Western cultural background (Lerutla & Steyn, 2022). Given Africa's colonial history and the continued dominance of Western management and leadership theories (Nkomo, 2011), it is important to verify that Western leadership theories hold true within the African context. This supports the relevance and cultural appropriateness of methodologies and enhances the effectiveness of leadership practices on the continent, and in South Africa in particular. With many of the benefits of servant leadership having been demonstrated in a Western context, this finding provides further confidence to South African organisations that the benefits of servant leadership observed elsewhere in the world are likely to apply in the South African context. Specifically, the demonstration of servant leadership in South African organisations can promote the growth of trust in leaders; in the South African context, where community and collective well-being are highly valued, servant leadership can align with cultural values, making it a natural fit for fostering a positive and productive organisational environment. Moving beyond the organisational context, South Africa faces unique leadership challenges, including issues of corruption and lack of public accountability (Mlambo et al., 2023). Servant leadership, with its emphasis on serving others and ethical behaviour, may help address these challenges and foster a more transparent and accountable leadership style that could benefit the country as a whole (Kgatle, 2018).

A third practical implication of this study is the potential for servant leadership to promote ethical behaviours and practices in organisations through reducing the likelihood of employee moral disengagement. Research has demonstrated associations between moral disengagement and undesirable work behaviours such as unethical decision-making and unethical behaviour, deviant, cheating and undermining behaviour, as well as reduced displays of positive behaviours such as organisational citizenship and ethical behaviour (Newman et al., 2020). As moral disengagement can be influenced by external factors and therefore may respond to training interventions (Moore et al., 2012), organisations may choose to train employees to be alert to cognitive thinking processes that can stem unethical behaviour. However, given the impact leaders have on factors such as organisational climate and employee morale, Johnson and Buckley (2015, p. 296) argue that "interventions to reduce leader influence on employee moral disengagement may have a higher cost-to-benefit ratio than implementing interventions at the follower level". Based on my finding that servant leadership is related to lower employee propensity to morally disengage, a training intervention promoting servant leadership focused on a smaller leader cohort is likely more cost effective than training all staff and may have a greater impact on reducing undesirable behaviour. This has implications for the design and implementation of learning and development interventions promoting servant leadership behaviours.

5.6 Limitations

No matter how well designed a study may be, there will always be limitations. The key limitation of this study is the sample size of 181 dyads, which is considered small. It is possible that some null findings may have been the result of the smaller sample size. Additionally, since the follower observations were nested within managers, the small sample of managers – 75 – presents further challenges in detecting relationships among variables.

Based on a simulation study investigating the impact of higher-level sample size on the accuracy of estimates in multilevel modelling, Maas and Hox (2005) advised using samples larger than 50 at the group level. While my sample of managers is greater than the minimum threshold of 50 highlighted, future studies examining these relationships with larger samples could increase the confidence in these findings. Finally, in relation to the sample, since my data came from different organisations, a limitation is that I did not account for organisational level factors. While a three-level multilevel analysis accounting for followers nested within managers within organisations would have been more ideal, doing so would have dropped the sample size at the highest group level below the recommended level of 50.

A second limitation is the cross-sectional design alongside the measurement of Machiavellianism as a secretive trait. Since cross-sectional studies cannot analyse how behaviour changes over time, this is particularly important given that, mindful of the emotional demands on leaders engaging in servant leadership (Zheng et al., 2024), it is possible that a Machiavellian leader engaging in the appearance of a servant leader may be unlikely to maintain the façade for an extended period of time. More recently, researchers have recommended including a longitudinal component as follower perceptions of leaders high in Machiavellianism will likely change over time (Jones & Mueller, 2022). As such, exploring this topic further using a cross-lagged or longitudinal design is one of my recommendations for future research.

A third limitation of the study is the mixed sample approach to data collection, where just over half the sample was collected from two organisational sites and the remainder of the sample was collected through snowball sampling. In the snowball sampling, since the students were recruiting managers through their personal networks, the sample may be biased

towards people with similar backgrounds (e.g., university qualified working professionals, human resource backgrounds). As managers and professionals, who only represent approximately 17 percent of South Africa's economically active population (Statista, 2024), my sample is likely of higher socio-economic status than the majority of South Africans. Additionally, with the exception of the government agency sample, the white population group in my sample was substantially higher than the 7.3 percent observed in the general South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Further studies could strive to collect data in a consistent manner that does not suggest the introduction of systematic differences between participants, as well as data more representative of the South African population.

A fourth limitation of the study is the limited support for acceptable scale properties observed for the Machiavellian Personality Scale, Political Skill Inventory, and attributions of manipulative intent, despite promising results observed during the pilot. On the leader side, this necessitated the use of the amoral manipulation and apparent sincerity dimensions as proxies for their respective broader constructs, limiting the construct domain for these variables and qualifying the degree to which I contributed to knowledge on their broader psychological constructs. On the follower side, dropping the attributions of manipulative intent scale required the reformulation of several hypotheses and prevented testing my hypothesis that leaders perceived to be enacting servant leadership behaviour for self-serving ends would have a negative impact on employee propensity to morally disengage. As such this remains an area for further investigation.

Another limitation may be that the scale used to measure moral disengagement was originally conceptualised the construct and tested its operationalisation as a dispositional trait (Moore et

al., 2012). However, Bandura's original conceptualisation of moral disengagement was as a state-like phenomenon influenced by actions of others and interventions, and subsequent studies have used the same scale to measure moral disengagement as a "state like variable" that's subject to contextual influences (Newman et al., 2020). It may be advisable to conduct subsequent investigations including pre- and post-intervention measures to quantify the impact on employee moral disengagement and whether its measurement is more trait-like or state-like in nature.

A final limitation is that the data were collected over a period spanning three years, between 2022, when the COVID-19 pandemic was still at its height, and 2024, when organisations were moving forward in a post-COVID world. It is possible that evolving organisational and macro factors during that time period impacted leadership and employee behaviours, potentially influencing the observations made in this study. However, as few significant differences were noted between the subsets of data collected in 2022 and 2024, the risk of the time periods introducing bias into participant responses is possibly limited.

5.7 Directions for Future Research

My key research question about the extent to which the perceived authenticity of servant leadership behaviour moderates follower outcomes was not supported in this study. However, literature remains highlighting that in some cases followers perceive Machiavellian leaders' true intentions (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012) while in others they do not (Kwak & Shim, 2017; Xiu et al., 2024). With these conflicting findings, and the potential that in some cases the positive effects of servant leadership may be less positive, I would recommend this as an area for further investigation. First, as I was unable to test Hypothesis 8 in my study, I would advise scholars to continue to investigate the degree to which followers viewing pseudo

servant leaders as engaging in such behaviour in an attempt to manipulate them may lead to negative follower outcomes such as increased levels of moral disengagement. This may necessitate revisiting how a leader's manipulative intent is measured given the poor performance of the Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2004) scale used in my study, although it has shown good measurement properties in other recent studies (Zou & Chen, 2022). Second, I would advise researchers to look at abusive supervision scholarship examining different attributions of intentionality to understand follower reactions and consider applications to servant leadership scholarship. Tepper (2007) suggested exploring whether followers differentiate – and respond differently to – abuse attributed to an intent to cause harm (i.e., "injury initiation") and abuse undertaken to accomplish goals (i.e., "performance promotion"). While followers may struggle to differentiate between sincere/authentic and manipulative/inauthentic displays of leadership behaviour (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002), they have been known to identify the self-serving or self-transcendent motives driving their leader's behaviour (Fu et al., 2010). Within the context of servant leadership scholarship, we may want to differentiate between a leader's intent to empower and grow the follower (i.e., a "growth attribution") vs a performance promotion attribution that would place the needs of the leader and/or organisation ahead of those of the follower and go against the principles of servant leadership.

Secondly, I would recommend researchers explore time-lagged studies to further unpack the interaction between leader Machiavellianism and serving culture, for two reasons. First, I would encourage researchers to explore whether the moderation effect observed here remains in play over time, especially as Machiavellian leaders may become more entrenched in the organisation. Leaders are viewed as key agents in the formation and management of organisational culture (Schein, 1990). As Machiavellians are not necessarily obvious in their

manipulative behaviour (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012), I believe it important to explore the extent to which a serving culture is resistant over time to the presence of a Machiavellian leader, particularly if they have a position of seniority. Second, conducting longitudinal studies could explore whether the initial positive effects of leader Machiavellianism – as reported by Xiu and colleagues (2024) – weaken over time as followers have more opportunity to see they are being manipulated. This aligns with the methodological recommendation highlighted by Jones and Mueller (2022, p. 541), where they argue that "the perceptions of individuals high in Machiavellianism that are derived from their peers will change over time."

Thirdly, to advance the application of attribution theory to servant leadership research, I would recommend researchers explore the influence of relational attributions further. Harvey and colleagues (2014) noted that the most frequently examined attributional dimension in organisational sciences is locus of causality, namely internal attributions (attributing the cause of an outcome to something about one's self) and external attributions (attributing the cause of an outcome to another person or the situation involved). However, Eberly and colleagues (2011) argued that these may not be sufficient to elucidate the interpersonal interactions between leaders and followers, introducing the concept of relational attributions instead. This view, that employees may attribute the cause of the leader's behaviour to being a function of the relationship between the leader and employee is echoed by Sun and colleagues (2019), who call out Graen's (1976) observation that leadership is largely a dyadic process. In particular, Sun and colleagues (2019) argue that it is relational attributions that determine employees' reactions to servant leadership, based on the social exchange process underpinning the leader-follower relationship: If an employee believes their leader's favourable behaviour towards them is due to their relationship, they are likely to be less

appreciative. As such, if employees view a servant leader's behaviour towards them as arising from the relationship, rather than a genuine desire to help them, their reactions and subsequent follower outcomes could be less favourable. Studies contrasting relational attributions (Eberly et al., 2011) against intentionality attributions (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002) could expand our understanding of the relative contributions these avenues make in driving employee reactions to servant leadership.

Finally, I would recommend researchers continue to explore the placement of moral disengagement in the nomological network of servant leadership. My research established a negative relationship between a leader's demonstrated servant leadership behaviour and followers' propensity to morally disengage, which has the potential to link the benefits of servant leadership to reducing negative follower and organisational outcomes (Newman et al., 2020). Future investigations could explore the extent to which the negative relationship shown acts as a mediator, leading to reduced negative behavioural and performance follower outcomes as a consequence of servant leadership. Exploring behaviours or performance outcomes, particularly when measured with a time-lagged design and reported by another source, could provide a more objective and comprehensive assessment than relying purely on subjective evaluations of moral disengagement. When behaviours or performance are observed and reported by an independent source, it can reduce personal biases that individuals might have when self-reporting their actions and would allow researchers to track changes and outcomes over time. Additionally, measuring behaviours and performance in addition to cognitive processes provides richer context and deeper insights into how and why certain actions lead to specific outcomes. Alternatively, understanding whether a reduced propensity to morally disengage amongst followers is a direct effect of servant leadership or an indirect effect via for example trust, identification with or commitment to the leader, or

even the presence of a serving culture, would advance our understanding of the different ways in which servant leadership can be beneficial for individuals and organisations.

5.8 Conclusion

In this study, I explored the extent to which the perceived authenticity of servant leadership behaviour moderates follower outcomes. While some of my hypotheses were not supported by the data, I encourage scholars to continue this avenue of investigation to gain a better understanding of when servant leadership leads to beneficial outcomes for employees, leaders and organisations. This is particularly important in light of my finding that high Machiavellian leaders are more likely to adopt apparent servant leadership behaviours in organisations promoting a strong serving culture, indicating that some dark leaders will adopt an otherwise positive leadership style to advance their own objectives.

I also found that servant leadership was linked to employee propensity to morally disengage, such that employees following servant leaders were less likely to engage in such cognitive restructuring processes. This contributes to a relatively new avenue of research for servant leadership scholarship, exploring how this leadership style not only promotes positive outcomes but also may protect against negative follower outcomes. My findings align with limited research findings that servant leadership can effectively reduce workplace deviance (Paesen et al., 2019; Sendjaya et al., 2019; Yasir & Jan, 2023) and I offered further suggestions to explore this. I hope that my research encourages organisational practitioners to promote servant leadership and foster a serving culture that encourages authentic displays of prioritising others in their organisations, to further facilitate individual and organisational effectiveness in psychologically fulfilling and safe workplaces. In this, practitioners should take care that the organisation's serving culture does not place undue pressure on employees

and leaders to adopt behaviours that are inauthentic and have unintended consequences for themselves and others.

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APPENDIX A: SCALES

A.1 Follower Survey

Demographics[4]

Age: 18-29 years old 30-39 years old 40-49 years old 50-64 years old 65 years and over	Sex: Female Male Non-binary	Race: Black African Coloured Indian White Other
Highest qualification: Grade 10 Grade 12 Post-matric certificate National diploma Bachelor's degree Postgraduate Other	Overall work experience: Less than 1 year 1 to 2 years 3 to 5 years More than 5 years	Length of time working with current leader: Less than 6 months 6 months to less than 1 year 1 to 2 years 3 to 5 years More than 5 years

[4] All demographic information will be optional or include a "I prefer not to respond" option, providing additional privacy protection for respondents.

Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SL-7)

(Liden et al., 2015) Think about your manager. For each statement, select the option that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
My manager can tell if something work-related is going wrong							
My manager makes my career development a priority							
I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem							
My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community							
My manager puts my best interests ahead of his/her own							
My manager gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best							
My manager would NOT compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success							

Intentionality Attributions Scale

(Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2004) In the previous question, you rated the extent to which your manager: • Offers you support • Thinks beyond him/herself • Focuses on your growth and development • Upholds ethical standards Why do you think your manager behaves the way they do in these areas? Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Manipulative intent					
Your manager tends to manipulate you					
Your manager acts in a self-serving manner					
Your manager behaves on the basis of beliefs about potential rewards [s]he may gain					
Sincere intent					
Your manager behaves on the basis of moral conviction					
Your manager behaves on the basis of his/her true beliefs					
Your manager acts sincerely					
Your manager behaves on the basis of ethical considerations					
Your manager acts in ways to genuinely benefit you					

Propensity to trust

(Mayer & Davis, 1999) Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
One should be very cautious with strangers *					
Most experts tell the truth about the limits of their knowledge					
Most people can be counted on to do what they say they will do					
These days, you must be alert, or someone is likely to take advantage of you *					
Most salespeople are honest in describing their products					
Most repair people do not overcharge people who are ignorant of their speciality					
Most people answer public opinion polls honestly					
Most adults are competent at their jobs					

* *Reverse-scored item*

Trust in leader

(Yang & Mossholder, 2010) Think about your manager. For each statement, select the option that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Cognitive trust in leader					
I can depend on my manager to meet his/her responsibilities					
I can rely on my manager to do what is best at work					
My manager follows through with commitments s(he) makes					
Given my manager's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence					
I'm confident in my manager because (s)he approaches work with professionalism					
Affective trust in leader					
I'm confident that my manager will always care about my personal needs at work					
If I shared my problems with my manager, I know (s)he would respond with care					
I'm confident that I could share my work difficulties with my manager					
I'm sure I could openly communicate my feelings to my manager					
I feel secure with my manager because of his/her sincerity					

Propensity to morally disengage scale

(Moore et al., 2012) Select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
It is ok to spread rumours to defend those you care about							
Taking something without the owner's permission is okay as long as you're just borrowing it							
Considering the ways people grossly misrepresent themselves, it's hardly a sin to inflate your own credentials a bit							
People shouldn't be held accountable for doing questionable things when they were just doing what an authority figure told them to do							
People can't be blamed for doing things that are technically wrong when all their friends are doing it too							
Taking personal credit for ideas that were not your own is no big deal							
Some people have to be treated roughly because they lack feelings that can be hurt							
People who get mistreated have usually done something to bring it on themselves							

LMX-MDM

(Liden & Maslyn, 1998) In the following set of questions, think of your immediate manager and select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Affect							
I like my manager very much as a person							
My manager is the kind of person one would like to have as a friend							
My manager is a lot of fun to work with							
Loyalty							
My manager defends (would defend) my work actions to a superior, even without complete knowledge of the issue in question							
My manager would come to my defence if I were "attacked" by others							
My manager would defend me to others in the organisation if I made an honest mistake							
Contribution							
I do work for my manager that goes beyond what is expected of me in my job							
I am willing to apply extra efforts, beyond those normally required, to meet my manager's work goals							
I do not mind working my hardest for my manager							

(Liden & Maslyn, 1998) In the following set of questions, think of your immediate manager and select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Professional respect							
I am impressed with my manager's knowledge of his/her job							
I respect my manager's knowledge of and competence on the job							
I admire my manager's professional skills							

Leadership effectiveness[5]

(Douglas & Ammeter, 2004) Select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Work unit performance					
Our work unit meets or exceeds expectations					
Our work unit does excellent work					
Major problems occur in our work unit*					
Our work unit's performance is improving					
Leader performance					
Our manager is effective in representing the work unit to upper management					
Our manager is effective in meeting the job-related needs of work unit members					
Our manager is effective in meeting the needs of the organisation					

** Reverse-scored item*

[5] Leadership effectiveness is not included in my proposed model but will be included in the follower survey to enable a future study concerning gender bias and servant leadership.

Potential impact of COVID-19 pandemic[6]

	Very negative changes to the	Negative changes to the	Slightly negative changes to	No changes (4)	Slightly positive changes to	Positive changes to the	Very positive changes to the
Has your relationship with your manager changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?							

[6] This item is included in the follower survey to allow an examination of whether the working challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially a move to remote working, has potentially influenced how leaders are engaging and managing their subordinates in this time.

A.2 Leader Survey

Demographics[7]

Age: 18-29 years old 30-39 years old 40-49 years old 50-64 years old 65 years and over	Sex: Female Male Non-binary	Race: Black African Coloured Indian White Other
Highest qualification: Grade 10 Grade 12 Post-matric certificate National diploma Bachelor's degree Postgraduate Other	Overall work experience: Less than 1 year 1 to 2 years 3 to 5 years More than 5 years	Length of experience in leadership role: Less than 6 months 6 months to less than 1 year 1 to 2 years 3 to 5 years More than 5 years

[7] All demographic information will be optional or include a "I prefer not to respond" option, providing additional privacy protection for respondents.

Prosocial motivation[8]

(Grant, 2008) Why are you motivated to do your work?	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Because I care about benefiting others through my work							
Because I want to help others through my work							
Because I want to have a positive impact on others							
Because it is important to me to do good for others through my work							

[8] Prosocial motivation is not included in my proposed model but will be included in the leader survey to enable the exploration of an alternative hypothesis.

Serving culture

(Liden et al., 2014) Select the option that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Managers and employees at our company can tell if something work-related is going wrong							
Managers and employees at our company make employee career development a priority							
Managers and employees at our company would seek help from others if they had a personal problem							
Managers and employees at our company emphasize the importance of giving back to the community							
Managers and employees at our company put others' best interests ahead of their own							
Managers and employees at our company give others the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that they feel is best							
Managers and employees at our company would NOT compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success							

Leader political skill

(Ferris et al., 2005) Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about yourself:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Social astuteness							
I understand people very well							
I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others							
I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others							
I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others							
I pay close attention to people's facial expressions							
Interpersonal influence							
I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me							
I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others							
It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people							
I am good at getting people to like me							

(Ferris et al., 2005) Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about yourself:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Networking ability							
I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others							
I am good at building relationships with influential people at work							
I have developed a large network of colleagues and associates at work whom I can call on for support when I really need to get things done							
At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected							
I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others							
I am good at using my connections and network to make things happen at work							
Apparent sincerity							
When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do							
It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do							
I try to show a genuine interest in other people							

Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS)

(Dahling et al., 2009) Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Amoral Manipulation					
I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over others					
The only good reason to talk to others is to get information that I can use to my benefit					
I am willing to be unethical if I believe it will help me succeed					
I am willing to sabotage the efforts of other people if they threaten my own goals					
I would cheat if there was a low chance of getting caught					
Desire for Control					
I like to give the orders in interpersonal situations					
I enjoy having control over other people					
I enjoy being able to control the situation					
Desire for Status					
Status is a good sign of success in life					
Accumulating wealth is an important goal for me					
I want to be rich and powerful someday					

(Dahling et al., 2009) Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Distrust of Others					
People are only motivated by personal gain					
I dislike committing to groups because I don't trust others					
Team members backstab each other all the time to get ahead					
If I show any weakness at work, other people will take advantage of it					
Other people are always planning ways to take advantage of the situation at my expenses					

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS

B.1 Follower Informed Consent Form

Dear Respondent,

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Kim Dowdeswell, a doctoral candidate from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of the study is to understand how followers' perceptions of their managers' beliefs and behaviours may impact their own attitudes and behaviours.

Please take note the following:

- Participation in this study involves completing an online survey.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any consequences.
- All responses you give will be treated confidentially.
- Once we have collected our data, it will be processed without your name and any other direct or indirect identifiers.
- For the purposes of the study, it is necessary to link your responses to those of your manager. I will do so by assigning a code number to match your responses with your manager's responses. The code numbers and corresponding names will be maintained by me alone and will not be disclosed to anyone else.
- The questionnaire should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof. J. Hoobler (012 420 4664, jenny.hoobler@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Clicking "Next" indicates your agreement that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

B.2 Leader Informed Consent Form

Dear Respondent,

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Kim Dowdeswell, a doctoral candidate from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of the study is to understand how followers' perceptions of their managers' beliefs and behaviours may impact their own attitudes and behaviours.

Please take note the following:

- Participation in this study involves completing an online survey.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any consequences.
- All responses you give will be treated confidentially.
- Once we have collected our data, it will be processed without your name and any other direct or indirect identifiers.
- For the purposes of the study, it is necessary to link your responses to those of your employee. I will do so by assigning a code number to match your responses with your employee's responses. The code numbers and corresponding names will be maintained by me alone and not disclosed to anyone else.
- The questionnaire should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof. J. Hoobler (012 420 4664, jenny.hoobler@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Clicking "Next" indicates your agreement that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
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