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**Table 10**

<i>Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Base Scales)</i>								
	<b>Proposed Model</b>				<b>Alternative Model</b>			
<b>Description</b>	$\chi^2$ (df)	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\chi^2$ (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**

<i>Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Individual Leader Scales)</i>				
	<b>Proposed Model</b>			
<b>Description</b>	$\chi^2$ (df)	<b>CFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
<u>Machiavellianism</u>				
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
<u>Serving Culture</u>				
One factor	28.09 (14)*	.922	.116	.061
<u>Political Skill</u>				
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**

<i>Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Selected Leader Dimensions)</i>				
	<b>Proposed Model</b>			
<b>Description</b>	$\chi^2$ (df)	<b>CFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
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**

<i>Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Individual Servant Leadership and Attributions of Intentionality Scales)</i>				
	<b>Proposed Model</b>			
<b>Description</b>	$\chi^2$ (df)	<b>CFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
<u>Servant Leadership</u>				
One factor	25.176 (14)*	.979	.066	.037
<u>Attributions of Manipulative Intent</u>				
One factor	0 (0)***	1.000	.000	.000
<u>Attributions of Sincere Intent</u>				
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**

<i>Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Adjusted Attributions of Intentionality)</i>				
	<b>Proposed Model</b>			
<b>Description</b>	$\chi^2$ (df)	<b>CFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
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 <sup>a</sup>	1.40	0.99																	
2 Sex <sup>b</sup>	0.50	0.50	-.22**																
3 Race <sup>c</sup>	0.57	0.50	-.12	.07															
4 Work Experience <sup>d</sup>	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**

<sup>a</sup> Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.

<sup>b</sup> Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.

<sup>c</sup> Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.

<sup>d</sup> 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**

<i>Differences Between Data Collection Method on Follower Survey Variables</i>							
	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		<i>t</i> (179)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	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

<i>Differences Between Data Collection Method on Follower Survey Variables</i>							
	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		<i>t</i> (179)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	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 <sup>a</sup>	2.04	0.86															
2. Sex <sup>b</sup>	0.35	0.50	.00														
3. Race <sup>c</sup>	0.38	0.49	-.18	-.01													
4. Work Experience <sup>d</sup>	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)			

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*Descriptive Statistics: Leader Survey*


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	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)

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<sup>a</sup> Age: 0 = 18-29 years, 1 = 30-39 years, 2 = 40-49 years, 3 = 50-64 years, 4 = 65 years or over.

<sup>b</sup> Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female.

<sup>c</sup> Race: 0 = white, 1 = other.

<sup>d</sup> 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**

<i>Differences Between Data Collection Method on Leader Survey Variables</i>							
	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		<i>t</i> (73)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
Political Skill:	5.87	0.84			1.030	.306	-.24
Social Astuteness							
Political Skill:	5.89	0.77	5.76	0.73	0.727	.469	-0.17
Interpersonal Influence							
Political Skill:	6.36	0.58	6.31	0.64	0.510	.612	-0.12
Apparent Sincerity							
Political Skill:	5.68	0.83	5.50	1.06	0.813	.419	-0.19
Networking Ability							
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

<i>Differences Between Data Collection Method on Leader Survey Variables</i>							
	Organisation Sites		Student-Recruited		<i>t</i> (73)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	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

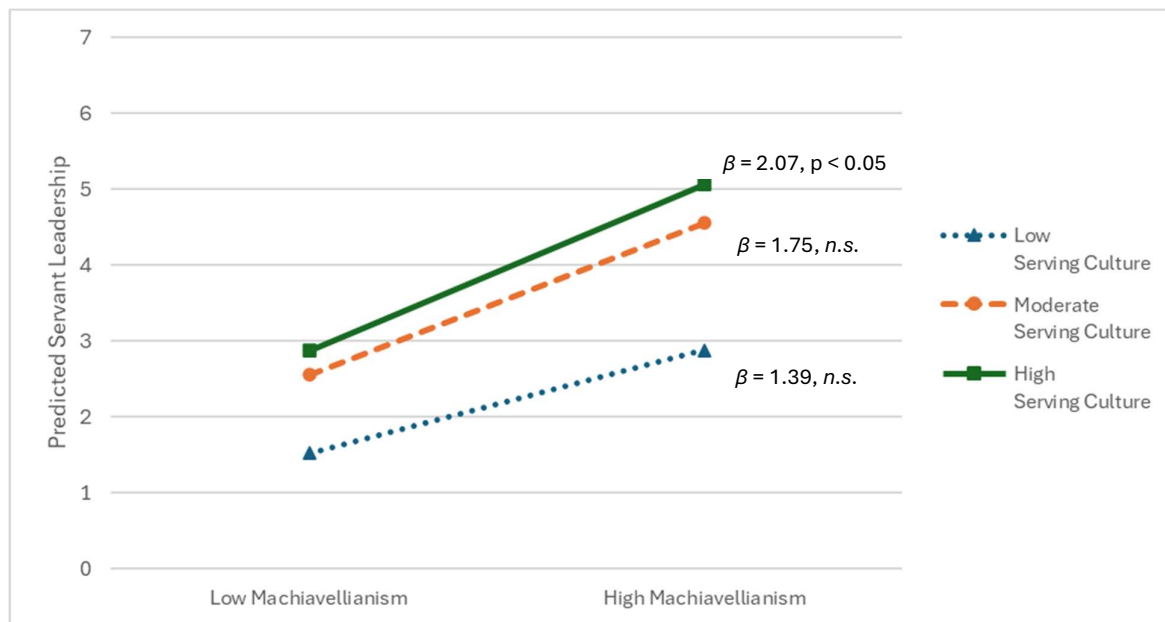
al., 2015). Results are presented first when utilising overall Machiavellianism in the analysis, as per my hypotheses (see Table 19) and then when using amoral manipulation as a standalone measure (see Table 20).

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  $Y = b_0 + b_1X + b_2W + b_3X*W$  (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 16<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> 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**

<i>The Moderating Effect of Serving Culture on Machiavellianism and Servant Leadership</i>				
	$\beta$	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.



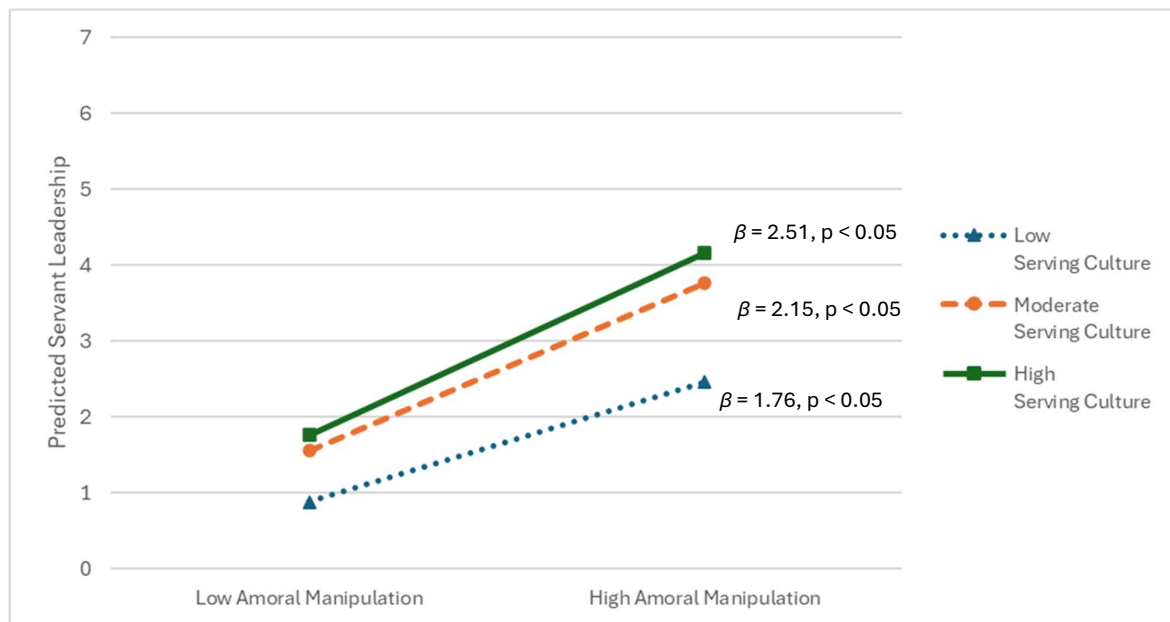
**Figure 3: Moderating effect of serving culture on the relationship between Machiavellianism and servant leadership**

When considering amoral manipulation alone, no significant relationship was observed with employee perceptions of servant leadership behaviour ( $\beta = .104, p = .638$ ). 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**

<i>The Moderating Effect of Serving Culture on Amoral Manipulation and Servant Leadership</i>				
	$\beta$	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**

<i>Antecedents of Attributions of Sincere Intent</i>				
	$\beta$	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 ( $\beta = -.008, p = .910$ ), 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 ( $\beta = -.023, p = .721$ ). Hypothesis 4, that LMX quality would be positively related to attributions of sincere intent was supported ( $\beta = .440, p = .000$ ). However, the results did not support Hypothesis 5 ( $\beta = .191, p = .189$ ), 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 ( $\beta = .331, p = .000$ ), and attributions of sincere intent had a significant, positive relationship with trust in leader ( $\beta$

= .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*

	$\beta$	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 ( $\beta = -.283$ ,  $p = .024$ ). 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**

<i>The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Propensity to Morally Disengage</i>				
	$\beta$	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**

<i>The Relationship between LMX and Servant Leadership</i>				
	$\beta$	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**

<i>The Moderating Effect of LMX on Servant Leadership and Trust in Leader</i>				
	$\beta$	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

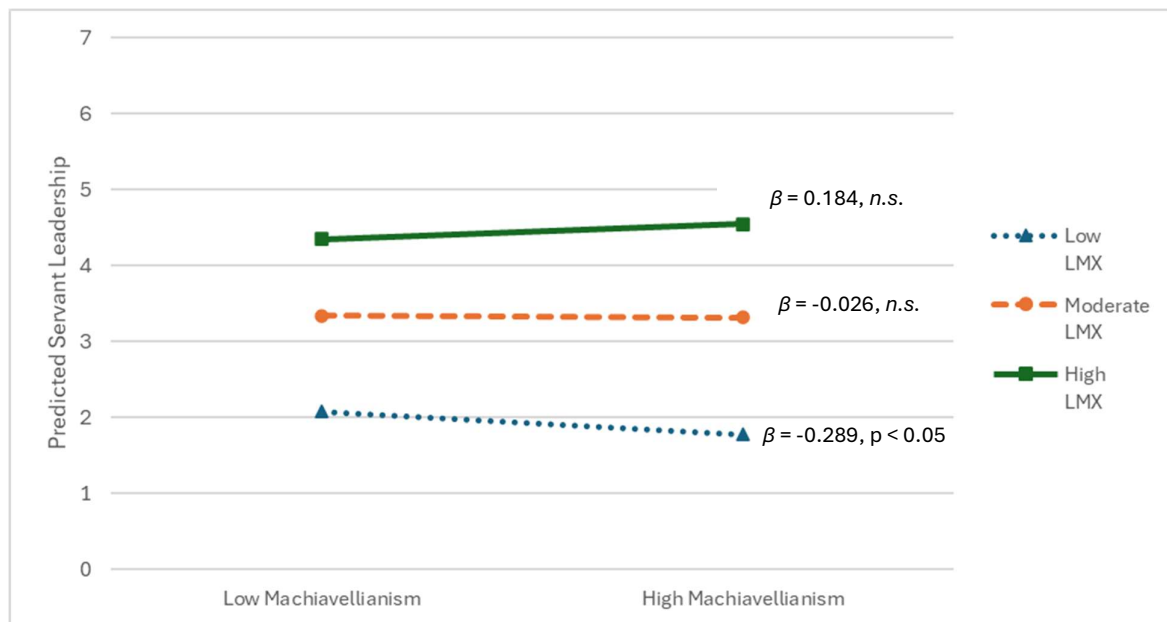
An anonymous examiner suggesting giving some attention to potential reversal causality, given my data is cross-sectional. Specifically, they advised considering the possibility that LMX is triggered by Machiavellian leaders and that a possible reason why Hypothesis 1 was not supported could be that followers 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**

<i>The Moderating Effect of LMX on Machiavellianism and Servant Leadership</i>				
	$\beta$	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 ( $\beta = -1.932, p = .020$ ). Further, the Machiavellianism x LMX interaction term was significant ( $\beta = .318, p = .033$ ). 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 16<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> 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**

<i>The Moderating Effect of LMX on Amoral Manipulation and Servant Leadership</i>				
	$\beta$	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**

<i>The Moderating Effect of Attributions of Intent on Servant Leadership and Follower Outcomes</i>				
	$\beta$	SE	Est. SE	p
<b>Outcome: Trust in Leader</b>				
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
<b>Outcome: Moral Disengagement</b>				
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**


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

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	$\beta$	SE	Est. SE	p
<b>Predictor: Machiavellianism</b>				
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
<b>Predictor: Amoral Manipulation</b>				
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

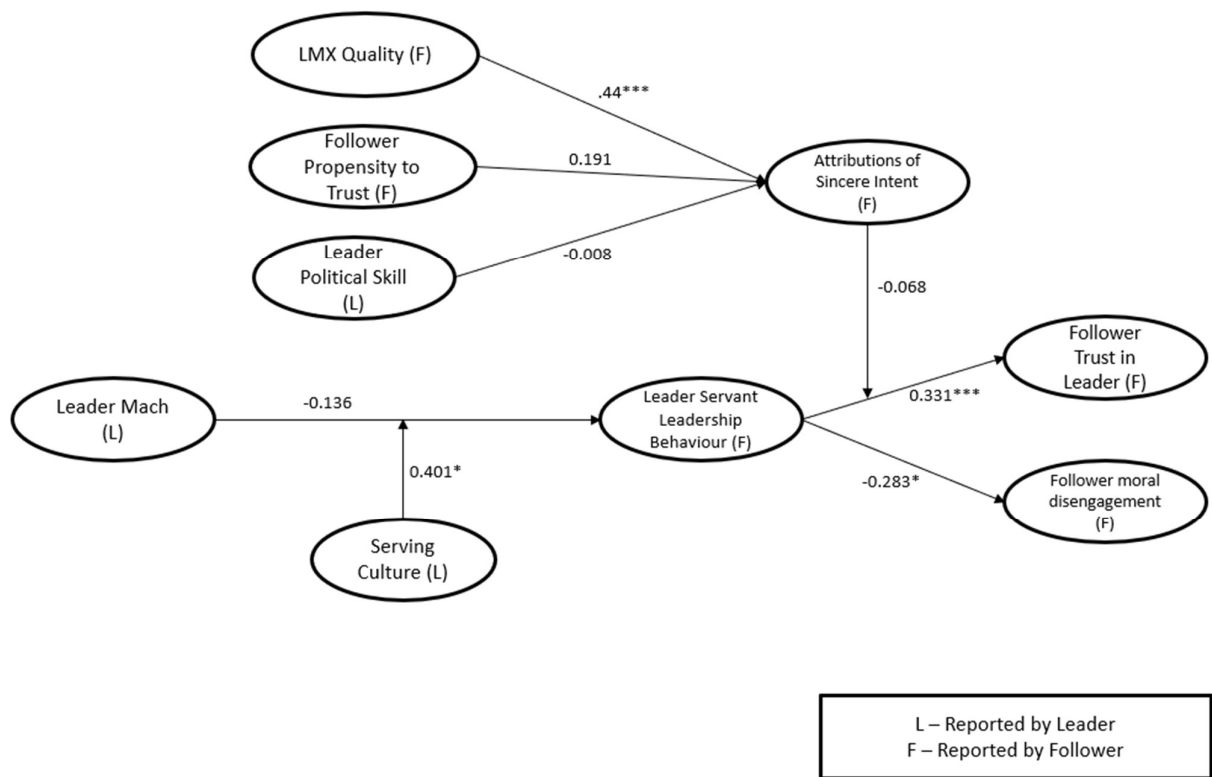
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*N = 181. Standardised regression coefficients are reported.*

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**

<i>Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing</i>			
		<i>Base Scales</i>	<i>Revised Scales</i>
H <sub>1</sub>	Leader Machiavellianism, as self-reported by leaders, is positively related to observed servant leadership behaviour as rated by followers.	No	No
H <sub>2</sub>	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 <sub>3</sub>	Leader political skill is positively related to followers' tendency to make attributions of sincere intent for their leader's behaviour.	No	No
H <sub>4</sub>	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 <sub>5</sub>	Followers' propensity to trust is positively related to their tendency to make sincere intent attributions regarding their leader's behaviour.	No	N/A
H <sub>6</sub>	Followers' attributions of sincere leader intent moderate the positive relationship between the leader's servant leadership behaviour and follower	No	N/A

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*Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing*

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		<i>Base Scales</i>	<i>Revised Scales</i>
	trust in leader, such that the relationship will be stronger when sincere intentions are higher.		
H <sub>7</sub>	Servant leadership behaviour is negatively related to follower moral disengagement.	Supported	N/A
H <sub>8</sub>	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	

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## 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<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>4</sup> 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)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Think about your manager. For each statement, select the option that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement:							
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers you support</li> <li>• Thinks beyond him/herself</li> <li>• Focuses on your growth and development</li> <li>• Upholds ethical standards</li> </ul> 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)
<b>Manipulative intent</b>					
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					
<b>Sincere intent</b>					
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)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Think about your manager. For each statement, select the option that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement:					
<b>Cognitive trust in leader</b>					
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					
<b>Affective trust in leader</b>					
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)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement:							
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)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
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:							
<b>Affect</b>							
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							
<b>Loyalty</b>							
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							
<b>Contribution</b>							
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)
<b>Professional respect</b>							
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<sup>5</sup>

(Douglas & Ammeter, 2004)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Select the option that best describes how much you agree with each statement:					
<b>Work unit performance</b>					
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					
<b>Leader performance</b>					
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*

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<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup>

	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?							

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<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>7</sup>

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

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

## Prosocial motivation<sup>8</sup>

(Grant, 2008)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Why are you motivated to do your work?							
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							

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<sup>8</sup> 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)
<b>Social astuteness</b>							
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							
<b>Interpersonal influence</b>							
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)
<b>Networking ability</b>							
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							
<b>Apparent sincerity</b>							
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)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:					
<b>Amoral Manipulation</b>					
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					
<b>Desire for Control</b>					
I like to give the orders in interpersonal situations					
I enjoy having control over other people					
I enjoy being able to control the situation					
<b>Desire for Status</b>					
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)
<b>Distrust of Others</b>					
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](mailto: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](mailto: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.