

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' CRAFTSMANSHIP: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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**ABSTRACT** – Servant leadership was acknowledged as one of the main variables in certifying the teachers' craftsmanship. The teacher's response to craftsmanship is subject to his or her assessment of leadership styles. The relationship between servant leadership to teachers' craftsmanship has been established in former literature. Nonetheless, servant leadership as an only construct in defending teachers' craftsmanship is rather plain, accordingly, this study would like to present psychological empowerment – meaning dimension as a mediator to bridge the gap.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 18th National Congress, the Party and the country have attached great importance to the promotion of Craftsmanship for the transformation of China's social and economic industries (Zhao Chen et al.,2020). In 2016, the first year of putting into effect Craftsmanship in China, Prime Minister Li Keqiang proposed "Cultivating Excelsior Craftsmanship" in the Government Work Report, marking the craftsmanship rising from the level of publicity to the national strategy.

In October 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised the need to cultivate knowledgeable, skilled, and innovative workers, promote the spirit of model workers and craftsmanship, and create a social ethos of labour glory. In 2019, at the World Skills Competition, General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed the importance of promoting craftsmanship throughout society. He also motivated the majority of young people to turn skills into talents and reward our country with their skills. Therefore, vigorously promote the cultivation of craftsmen and cultivate the high-quality skill-type talents needed by current economic development, which is also an important measure for making national strategic deployment.

The development of modern vocational education is inseparable from the accumulation of local craftsmanship. In 2019, The Implementation of High-level Vocational Schools with Chinese Characteristics and Professional Advice Construction Plan ([2019] faculty to No. 5), which is proposed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, re-emphasizes the significance of cultivating and inheriting craftsmanship, guiding students to develop the quality of rigorous focus, professional dedication, the spirit of excelsior and the pursuit of excellence, to build an institution of cultivating skilful elitists. In April of 2021, Xi Jinping made important instructions to emphasise vocational education, build several high-level professional and vocational schools, promote the integration of vocational schools and ordinary schools, enhance the adaptability of vocational education, speed up the construction of modern vocational education system to train more high-quality technical workers.

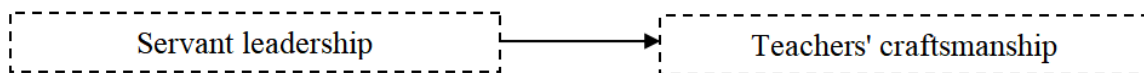
At present, the transformation and upgrading of the industrial model in our country have entered a crucial stage, which not only indicates that we must integrate craftsmanship into the process of personal training but also the inevitable way to achieve the refinement of vocational education development. Based on this, as the cradle of craftsmen, modern vocational schools undertake important historical missions and need further in-depth analysis of craftsmanship. They should lead vocational teachers to establish faith craftsmanship to meet the needs of social and economic development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Servant leadership, also known as public servant leadership or servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), this concept is the American management scientist Greenleaf 1970 in his "Leadership as a Servant" (The servant as leader) was first proposed in the article, based on the basic management concept of "service first", that leadership arises from service.

Among the factors influencing the craftsmanship of employees, leadership style is an important aspect. Ling Xi (2007) pointed out that leaders and their leadership styles have an important impact on employees' work performance. When leaders can meet the basic and special needs of employees, they can stimulate high-level employee engagement. Based on the style and characteristics of servant leadership, servant leadership emphasises putting the interests and needs of subordinates in the first place, aiming to promote the growth of subordinates.

As the professional spirit in the professional development of teachers in higher vocational colleges, the craftsmanship spirit contains five dimensions: personal growth, responsibility, excellence, cherishing reputation, and perseverance. Therefore, the comprehensive analysis shows that servant leadership will enhance teachers' craftsmanship. Therefore, based on the literature and the aforementioned reasons, the characteristics of the teachers' craftsmanship model are summarised in Figure 1, and research question one is proposed. (i.e., Does servant leadership have an impact on the teachers' craftsmanship?).



**Figure 1:** Framework of Teachers' Craftsmanship

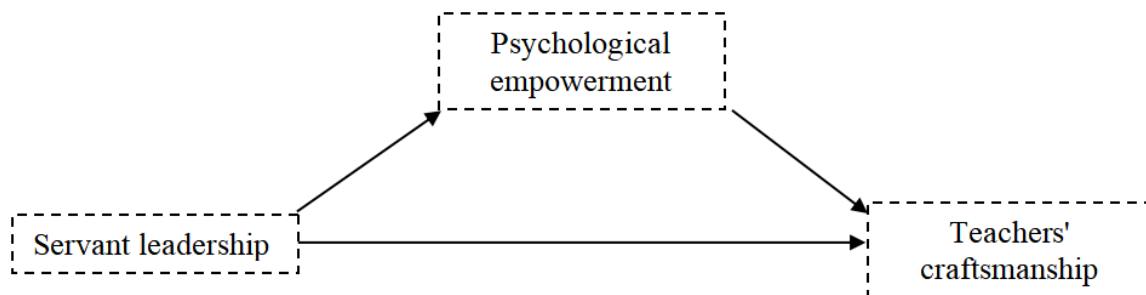
Earlier studies detected that the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' craftsmanship as a variable to estimate teachers' craftsmanship is seen to be rather stumpy and simple. Ye Long (2018) based on self-determination theory and found that inclusive leadership has a significant positive impact on the three dimensions of the craftsmanship of skilled talents. Deng Zhihua et al. (2020), based on the job requirement-resource model (JD-R), the empirical test found that self-sacrifice leadership does not have a significant positive impact on employees' craftsmanship. The relationship between these two constructs is able to answer the questions of whether and if, but it is not able to recognise the questions of how and why. Therefore, the study suggests that the fluctuating results could be due to the neglect of the psychological mechanisms that affect the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' craftsmanship. Thus, a mediator psychological empowerment construct is proposed to narrow the gap in the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' craftsmanship.

Psychological empowerment emphasises an individual's psychological perception of the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995). In 1990, Thomas proposed that psychological empowerment is the comprehensive experience of intrinsic motivation experienced by employees. Domestic and international researchers have shown that psychological empowerment has a significant impact on employees' work attitudes, behaviour, and performance. For example, the research results of Ronit et al. (2004) show that the self-efficacy and autonomy of psychological empowerment have a significant positive impact on organisational citizenship behaviour; Liden et al. (2000) found that psychological empowerment's job meaning, job impact, and self-efficacy had significant positive effects on job performance.

In terms of the mediating role of psychological empowerment, Xiao Qing (2021) found through empirical investigation that servant leadership can have a positive impact on employees' deviant innovative behaviour, and psychological empowerment plays a complete mediating role. [Zhu Xiaoyu](#) (2016) found that psychological empowerment played a partial mediating role in service leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour and played a fully mediating role in service leadership and task performance. [Tian Qitao](#) (2018) explored the influence mechanism of servant leadership on employees' job remodelling, and the results showed that servant leadership effectively promoted employees' job

remodelling behaviour; employees' psychological empowerment played a full mediating role. Based on the claim and related literature, the new features of teachers' craftsmanship are summarised in Figure 2, and research question two is proposed (i.e., Does the psychological empowerment of teachers play a mediating role between servant leadership and teachers' craftsmanship?).

**Figure 2.** New Framework of Teachers'



## **DISCUSSION**

This study found that servant leadership is related to the psychological empowerment of teachers. The psychological empowerment of teachers was related to craftsmanship. Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between servant leadership and craftsmanship.

This study has unique implications. It will propose a new research framework to explore the relationship between servant leadership and teachers' craftsmanship using psychological empowerment as a mediating variable, enrich the theoretical study of craftsmanship in higher education, and provide theoretical reference for the cultivation of teachers' craftsmanship at a later stage, which has the theoretical value of in-depth exploration. To provide reference and guidance for higher vocational institutions to improve education and teaching. To promote the self-improvement and professional maturity of teachers. Help leaders understand the actual connotation of craftsmanship and provide a reference for selecting quality teachers in higher education institutions.

The unique and important aspect of this study is its mediation model, which has not been previously tested with the same variables and has only been proposed in some previous studies. The focus of this study still needs to be modified and practised in research to apply it correctly to the context of the Chinese vocational education industry.

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