

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL BELONGING AMONG INSTRUCTORS IN SHANDONG YINGCAI UNIVERSITY, CHINA

Jing Yang^{1*}

Beibei Chen²

¹ Master Candidate in Educational Administration, Stamford International University of Thailand

² Stamford International University of Thailand

* **Corresponding Author, E-mail:** 2405210013@students.stamford.edu

Abstract: This study aims to understand the current level of the relationship between instructors' perceived service leadership and school belonging, and to explore the correlation between instructors' perceived service leadership and school belonging at Shandong Yingcai University. Quantitative research methods such as descriptive statistical analysis, independent samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and correlation analysis were employed in the study. The results show that: 1) instructors' perceived service leadership and school belonging are both at high levels; 2) There are significant differences in perceived service leadership among instructors with different highest educational qualifications and professional titles, while there are no significant differences among instructors of different genders, ages, years of teaching experience, or departments. 3) There are significant differences in school belonging among instructors of different genders and highest educational qualifications, and there are no significant differences in school belonging among instructors of different ages, years of teaching experience, professional titles, and departments; 4) The perceived service leadership of instructors at Shandong Yingcai University was significantly positively correlated with school belonging. Recommendations based on the findings: Optimize the implementation strategies of service-oriented leadership, pay attention to gender differences among instructors, and deepen the linkage mechanism between service-oriented leadership and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Service-Oriented Leadership, Service-Oriented Leadership, Shandong Yingcai University

Introduction

With the deep transformation of the global education landscape, educational organizations are increasingly emphasizing the improvement of teacher satisfaction, emotional belonging and organizational identity, and the key role of leadership style in educational management is becoming

increasingly prominent. Servant Leadership, a leadership style that emphasizes altruism, empowerment, support and trust, has gradually become an important perspective in educational leadership research since Greenleaf (1977) (Laub, 1999; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). In the field of education, where instructors' perceived differences in the service-oriented leadership behavior of principals or department heads can lead to very different outcomes, and leaders' self-perceived empowerment behavior is difficult to activate the expected positive psychological response if interpreted by instructors as shifting responsibility (Wahab et al., 2022).

School belonging, as an individual's psychological anchor to the school environment, is manifested as identification with the physical space of the organization and as deep integration into cultural values and interpersonal networks (Goodenow, 1993; Allen & Meyer, 2000). China's "Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era" explicitly states that it is necessary to improve the teacher evaluation system and strengthen the leading role of instructors in school governance. In this context, delving into the relationship between instructors' perceived service leadership and school belonging, and exploring the potential value of service leadership in enhancing instructors' sense of belonging and improving school cohesion, is of great practical significance for Shandong Yingcai University.

The academic community has conducted extensive and in-depth research on the relationship between instructors' perceived service-oriented leadership and their sense of belonging to the school. However, most of these studies were based on a general college context, with relatively few focusing on local undergraduate institutions. In addition, they mostly focused on the expansion analysis of one dimension or several dimensions, lacking systematic, comprehensive and in-depth empirical research on the relationship. In particular, there is a lack of research on the specific mechanisms of interaction between the elements of perceived service leadership and the dimensions of instructors' sense of school belonging within local undergraduate institutions.

Based on this, this study takes Shandong Yingcai University as the research object and delves deeply into the relationship between perceived service leadership and school belonging among its instructors, with the aim of providing useful references and lessons for the high-quality development of the college.

Research Objectives

(1) To understand the current state of perceived service leadership among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University.

(2) To understand the current state of school belonging among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University.

(3) To analyze whether there are significant differences in the perceived service-oriented leadership between instructors with different background variables (gender, age, teaching experience,

highest academic degree, professional and technical title, and department).

(4) To analyze whether there are significant differences in the sense of belonging to the school among instructors with different background variables (gender, age, years of teaching, highest educational attainment, professional title, department).

(5) To explore the relationship between perceived service leadership and school belonging among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University.

Literature Review

Service-oriented Leadership Theory

The theory of service-oriented leadership holds that leaders should prioritize the needs of their organizational members and facilitate their growth and development through behaviors such as selfless care, empowerment, vision building, maintaining humility, and fostering trust. It emphasizes that leaders need to actively listen to the demands of members, stimulate autonomy through decentralized decision-making, build consensus with common goals, and achieve the synergy of individual value and collective goals for members (Bier, 2021).

Perceived service-oriented leadership

Service-oriented leadership involves both cognitive and emotional value orientation. Palta (2019) pointed out that an individual's perception of service leadership and organizational commitment is closely related to leadership practices in their environment, suggesting that teacher-perceived service leadership can shape a specific organizational atmosphere, making members perceive the fun and value of work, and thereby fostering a sense of identity and belonging. In recent years, research on theories related to perceived service leadership in the field of education has attracted more attention from experts and scholars (Li and MAO, 2018), and scholars have explored theories related to perceived service leadership of instructors from different perspectives.

Measurement of perceived service leadership among college instructors

The importance of teacher-perceived service leadership in the field of education has been confirmed in several studies. Hermanto and Srimulyani (2022) pointed out that teacher-perceived service leadership has a significant effect on enhancing instructors' additional role behavior and job performance; Wahab (2022) also found that it has a positive impact on educational quality and the traits of millennial instructors. Many scholars have conducted research on the measurement of instructors' perceived service-oriented leadership based on different educational scenarios and from various perspectives. For instance, Zhao Qiang (2019) focused on the service leadership of primary school principals and explored how it affects instructors' knowledge-sharing behavior, suggesting that the relevant abilities promoting knowledge sharing could be considered in the measurement of the perceived service leadership strength of school leaders.

Sense of Belonging to Schools

School belonging is a psychological experience that an individual has in a school environment, which is more prominently reflected in studies related to the adolescent group. Zhang Cai et al. (2022) suggested that school belonging refers to the degree to which adolescents recognize and love their student identity, as well as the degree to which they are respected and feel valued at school, and is also reflected in the emotional satisfaction they can obtain at school, which subsequently leads to behavioral and psychological changes. For instructors, school belonging is also of great significance. Huang et al. (2021) found through a study of the current situation and countermeasures of school belonging among rural primary school instructors in Yunnan Province that school belonging refers to the high sense of identity, responsibility and attachment of instructors to their own school, when instructors feel recognized by the school and fully utilized in their work.

Measurement of College instructors' Sense of School Belonging

Measuring instructors' sense of belonging to school requires appropriate scales. Zhang et al. (2021) on the revision of the School Belonging Scale in Chinese, after implementing a series of standardized procedures such as item analysis and reliability and validity test for students using scientific methods, it was ensured that the scale could be used for psychological measurement of students in the Chinese context. Huang et al. (2021) summarized the problems existing in the current situation of instructors' sense of belonging to the school by organizing, summarizing and analyzing the survey data, and analyzed the reasons for their influence from aspects such as the school working environment and instructors' career development.

Research on the correlation between instructors' Perceived Service Leadership and School Belonging

Instructors' school affiliation is influenced by a variety of factors, including school culture, leadership style, and relationships with colleagues. Huang and Shen (2020) explored the relationship between multi-model leadership of primary and secondary school principals, school culture, teacher commitment and school effectiveness. Guo and Zhao (2019), while studying the impact of teacher support on school bullying, also pointed out that a positive school atmosphere and supportive environment are more likely to make people feel belonging to the collective or accepted

In the field of organizational behavior and public administration, the relationship between leadership and service motivation has received much attention. Wang and Shu (2019) conducted research on these roles of leadership and, by investigating the actual working conditions of relevant public departments and social organizations, concluded that leadership can enhance the intrinsic motivation of members and increase their identification with the organization to which they are affiliated.

Methodology

The subjects of this study are all full-time instructors of Shandong Yingcai University, a total of 1,200 people from 6 colleges. According to the criteria of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample size of 291 instructors would be considered reasonable. This study adopted the stratified sampling method.

The questionnaire of this study mainly adopted the contents of the Service Leadership Evaluation Scale developed by Dennis & Bocarnea (2005) and the School Belonging Scale developed by Goodenow et al. (1993), and added questions about the demographic background information of instructors.

An online questionnaire was adopted. It is expected that the questionnaire will be administered in July or August 2025. The questionnaire will be distributed to the respondents in the form of a QR code through the school's WeChat working group.

Results

Basic Information

The questionnaire used in this study was named "Questionnaire on Perceived Service Leadership and School Belonging of instructors at Shandong Yingcai University". The questionnaire was divided into three parts: personal basic information of instructors, the service leadership questionnaire, and the school belonging questionnaire. A total of 291 valid samples data were collected for data analysis.

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the collected data on instructors' gender, age, years of service, educational background, title, and department. The results are as follows: There were 167 male instructors, accounting for 57.4%, and 124 female instructors, accounting for 42.6%. In terms of age composition, there were 43 young instructors aged 30 and under, accounting for 14.8%; There are 120 instructors aged 31 to 40, accounting for 41.2%; There are 92 middle-aged instructors aged 41 to 50, accounting for 12.7%; The group of senior instructors aged 46 and above consists of 10, or 3.4%. In terms of the distribution of teaching experience, 195 new instructors have three years or less of teaching experience, accounting for 67.0%; There are 42 instructors with 4 to 10 years of teaching experience, accounting for 14.4%; There are 33 instructors with 11-15 years of teaching experience, accounting for 11.3%; There are 12 instructors with 16-20 years of teaching experience, or 4.1%; There are 9 instructors with 21 years or more of rich teaching experience, accounting for 3.1%. As for educational attainment, 21 instructors have an associate degree, accounting for 7.2%; There are 87 instructors with a bachelor's degree, or 29.9 percent; There are 23 instructors with master's degrees, or 7.9 percent, and 160 instructors with doctoral degrees, or 55 percent. In terms of title, there were 179 instructors with the title of teaching assistant, or 61.5%; There are 70 instructors with intermediate titles, accounting for 24.1%; There are 27 instructors with the title of associate

professor, accounting for 9.3%; There are 15 professors, or 5.1%. The business school has the largest number of instructors in terms of their colleges, with 53, or 18.2%; There are 52 instructors in the medical school, or 17.9 percent; There are 48 instructors in the School of Preschool Education and 48 in the School of Design, each accounting for 16.5 percent. There are 39 instructors in the College of Engineering, accounting for 13.4 percent.

Current Level of Service-oriented Leadership Perceived by instructors

According to research question One: What is the current situation of service-oriented leadership perceived by instructors at Shandong Yingcai University in Jinan City, Shandong Province ? The study used descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to analyze the current level of perceived service leadership among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University in Jinan City, Shandong Province. According to Table 1, the overall mean of service-oriented leadership is 3.69, indicating that service-oriented leadership is at a high level. The average of each dimension is in the range of 3.51 to 4.50, all of which are at a high level. Among them, the average scores of the empowerment and trust dimensions were both 3.71, the highest. Selfless care has the lowest score of 3.66.

Table 1: Status of Service-oriented Leadership1

Variables	N	M	SD	Analysis
Selfless care	291	3.66	1.048	high
Authorization	291	3.71	0.935	high
Building the Vision	291	3.70	0.939	high
Humility	291	3.68	0.989	high
Trust	291	3.71	0.991	high
Service-oriented leadership	291	3.69	0.943	high

Current Level of School Belonging

According to Question 2 of the study: What is the current situation of instructors' sense of school belonging at Shandong Yingcai University in Jinan, Shandong Province? The study used descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to analyze the current level of school belonging among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University in Jinan City, Shandong Province. According to Table 4.3, the overall mean of school belonging was 3.75, indicating a high level of school belonging. The average values of each dimension are high, ranging from 3.51 to 4.50. Among them, the cognitive level score is 3.81, which is the highest, indicating that instructors have the highest level of cognitive level. The average score of instructors' identifications was 3.66, the lowest, indicating a relatively low level of identification.

Table 2: Status of School Belonging

Variables	N	M	SD	Analysis
Degree of cognition	291	3.81	0.544	high
Degree of identification	291	3.66	0.989	high
Degree of concern	291	3.71	1.012	high
Acceptance level	291	3.67	0.994	high
School belonging	291	3.75	0.837	high

Statistical analysis of quantitative Questionnaire Data

For the purpose of this study, the authors uniformly conducted SPSS statistical analysis of the information collected from 291 valid questionnaires in order to better conduct hypothesis tests through differential statistical analysis to understand the differences in perceived service leadership and instructors' sense of belonging to the school among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University in Jinan, Shandong Province, China in terms of different demographic variables. Therefore, independent samples t-tests and univariate ANOVA analysis were used to analyze the differences in instructors' gender, age, years of service, educational background, title, and department to validate hypothesis H1 of this study: there are significant differences in perceived service leadership among instructors of Shandong Yingcai University under different background variables.

There were no significant gender, age and departments differences in perceived service leadership among instructors. There were significant differences in perceived service leadership among instructors with different educational qualifications and titles. In terms of differences in school belonging among instructors, there were significant gender, educational qualifications, title differences. There were no significant differences in teaching effectiveness among instructors with different ages, teaching ages and departments.

Correlation Statistical Analysis

The study used Pearson correlation analysis to examine the correlation between service-oriented leadership and instructors' sense of belonging to the school, in order to verify that H3 of this study. According to the results of the correlation analysis in Table 3, the six dimensions of service leadership were significantly positively correlated with the degree of cognition, identification, concern, acceptance and school belonging of instructors and students.

Overall, dimensions such as selfless care and service leadership stand out in multiple indicators, indicating that they play a core role in building a positive campus atmosphere. The correlation coefficients of perceived service leadership by instructors at Shandong Yingcai University and instructors' sense of belonging to the school were all greater than 0.5, and reached a significant level at 0.01, indicating a significant positive correlation between perceived service leadership by instructors at Shandong Yingcai University and instructors' sense of belonging to the school.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis 2of Perceived Service Leadership and School Belonging of instructors At Shandong Yingcai University

	Selfless care	Authorization	Building Vision	Humility	Trust	Service-oriented leadership
Degree of cognition	712 **	672 **	655 **	650 **	641 **	631 **
Degree of identification	769 **	736 **	719 **	762 **	691 **	772 **
Degree of concern	776 **	727 **	718 **	752 **	672 **	746 **
Degree of acceptance	788 **	767 **	780 **	780 **	745 **	781 **
School sense of belonging	795 **	785 **	762 **	673 **	593 **	779 **

Note: At the 0.01 level (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.

Figure 1 presents the research framework of this study, which is mainly based on the organizational support theory (Eisenberger, 2001) and developed through a review and analysis of the literature on instructors' perceived servant leadership and school belonging.

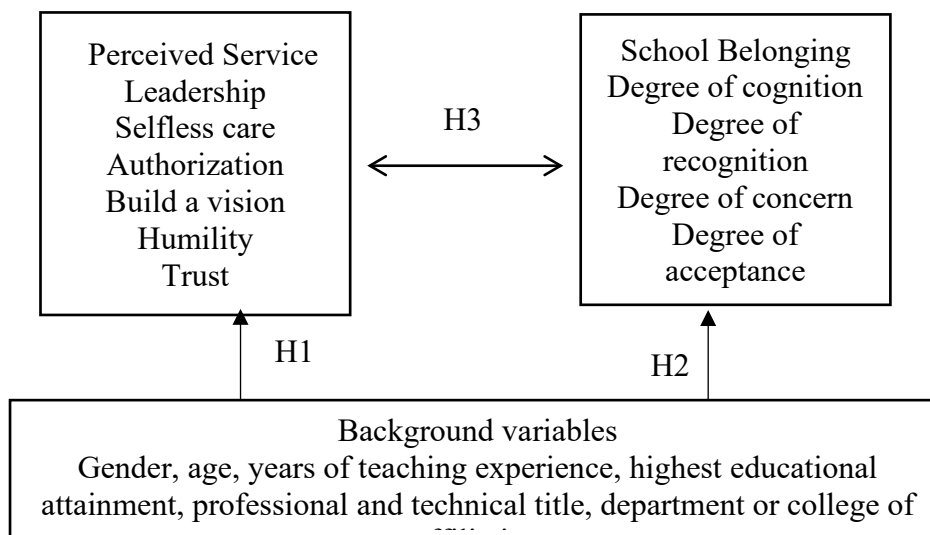


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

Source: Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Goodenow et al., 1993

Discussion

Analysis of Current Situation of Perceived Service Leadership and School Belonging among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University

The findings show that the perceived service leadership of instructors at Shandong Yingcai University is generally at a high level, reflecting the university's emphasis on teacher-centered value orientation in management practice, the establishment of a solid trust foundation between the school management and instructors, and the high scores in dimensions such as empowerment and vision building reflect the positive results of the university in empowering instructors and jointly building the development vision.

Analysis of Differences in Teacher Perceived service leadership and teacher sense of school belonging among different demographic background variables

In terms of gender differences, there were no significant differences in instructors' perception of the dimensions of service leadership, indicating that there was no gender bias in schools. School leaders treated male and female instructors equally with the same mindset and did not allocate resources based on gender in areas such as selfless care and empowerment. However, in terms of sense of belonging to the school, male instructors have significantly higher awareness, recognition, concern, and acceptance than female instructors.

In terms of differences in professional titles, there were differences in the scores of various dimensions of service leadership among instructors with different professional titles. Professors' perceived service leadership scored the highest in dimensions such as selfless care, humility, and trust, while junior title instructors had the lowest average scores in each dimension.

In terms of the difference in the highest educational attainment, doctoral students have the strongest perception of service leadership in different dimensions, while junior college students have the lowest. The reason may be that people with higher educational attainment are more sensitive and expectative of leadership behavior and pay more attention to service leadership.

In terms of age, teaching experience, and departmental differences, the above research results did not show significant differences, indicating that the school has formed roughly the same service-oriented leadership style in management work, and the campus cultural atmosphere is relatively open and inclusive.

Analysis of Relationship between Perceived Service Leadership by instructors at Shandong Yingcai University and instructors' sense of belonging to the School

Correlation analysis confirmed that there is a significant positive correlation between service leadership and instructors' sense of belonging to the school, indicating that the service leadership of school management has a direct and positive impact on instructors' organizational emotional connection, under the premise that management has devoted great efforts to selfless care, empowerment and vision building. Service-oriented leadership enables instructors to develop a sense

of organizational identity and a greater sense of identification with the school's development goals. Empowering and building a vision not only gives instructors more room for self-development and career advancement, but also increases their concern and acceptance of the school. This creates a mutually reinforcing effect, enabling service-oriented leadership to establish a stable emotional contract by meeting instructors' psychological needs and career expectations, and providing an institutional basis for the construction of instructors' sense of belonging to the school; At the same time, it can also make up for the lack of cohesion of the teacher team and the limitations of the school's sustainable development, providing a good example and reference for schools on how to rationally use the service-oriented leadership approach to cultivate instructors' sense of belonging to the school.

Conclusion

This study reached the following conclusions:

(1) From the perspective of the current situation of perceived service leadership and instructors' school belonging among instructors at Shandong Yingcai University: Both perceived service leadership and instructors' school belonging are at a high level.

(2) Looking at the differences in perceived service leadership and school belonging among instructors of Shandong Yingcai University under different demographic background information:

In terms of perceived service leadership by instructors, in the comparison of the mean values of each dimension, instructors with a doctoral degree had the highest mean values of selfless care, empowerment, humility, vision building, and trust, while instructors with an associate degree had the poorest mean values.

In terms of instructors' sense of belonging to the school, there are significant differences in school belonging between different genders.

(3) From the perspective of perceived service leadership by instructors of Shandong Yingcai University and instructors' sense of belonging to the school, the correlation coefficients of perceived service leadership by instructors of Shandong Yingcai University and instructors' sense of belonging to the school reached a significant level at 0.01.

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