



**How do servant leadership and self-esteem at work shape family performance in China? A resource-gain-development perspective**

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3 ABSTRACT:  
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5 Drawing on the resource-gain-development (RGD) perspective, this study is aimed to examine how  
6 servant leadership as an environmental resource and general self-esteem as a personal resource  
7 influence employees' family performance through work-to-family facilitation (WFF) and exploring  
8 the moderating effects of gender and Chinese traditionality on the relationship between servant  
9 leadership and WFF.  
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11 Two-wave data were collected from 369 employees in China. The structural equation model and  
12 path analysis were used to analyze the data.  
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14 The results confirmed that WFF mediates the effects of servant leadership and employees' general  
15 self-esteem on employees' family performance. Gender and Chinese traditionality moderate the  
16 relationship between servant leadership and WFF.  
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19 CUST\_RESEARCH\_LIMITATIONS/IMPLICATIONS\_\_(LIMIT\_100\_WORDS) :No data available.  
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21 CUST\_PRACTICAL\_IMPLICATIONS\_\_(LIMIT\_100\_WORDS) :No data available.  
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23 CUST\_SOCIAL\_IMPLICATIONS\_\_(LIMIT\_100\_WORDS) :No data available.  
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25 This study contributes to existing research by revealing how specific environmental resources  
26 (servant leadership) and personal resources (general self-esteem) impact employee family  
27 performance through WFF; it also identifies gender and Chinese traditionality as demand  
28 characteristics for moderating the effect of environmental resources on WFF.  
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# How do servant leadership and self-esteem at work shape family performance in China? A resource-gain-development perspective

## Introduction

Employees' family performance, which refers to "the attainment of family-related obligations and expectations" (Lazarova et al., 2010, p. 96), is important both for employees and organizations. Providing for one's family is a fundamental motivation for employees to work (Menges et al., 2017), and this motivation is also common among Chinese employees who strive to earn honor and bring prosperity to their families through working diligently (Zhang et al., 2020). A very important way for employees to provide for their family is through a positive work-family interface process (Carlson et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018). Organizations that play a crucial role in this process have obligations, and should take actions to help employees fulfill their family responsibilities (Hu et al., 2021), as this is not only important for employees but also relevant to organizational practice.

According to the resource-gain-development (RGD) perspective, the enablers of employees' optimal functioning and improvement in family and job performance are the resources available in their environmental and personal characteristics (Wayne et al., 2007). Resources refer to assets that can be used to help individuals cope with difficulties and achieve goals (Halbesleben et al., 2014). According to the RGD perspective, resources are critical for one's family performance (Wayne et al., 2007). However, existing research has also criticized resources in the RGD perspective for being too broad and ambiguous (Li et al., 2017), and has called for more specific exploration.

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4 To provide a whole test of the RGD model proposed by Wayne et al. (2007), this study  
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6 simultaneously examines one particular type of resource within each resource category, and  
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8 explores the mediating effect of work-family facilitation (WFF) on the relationship between  
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10 each resource category and family performance. Specifically, the first goal of this study is to  
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12 investigate whether supervisors' servant leadership as an environmental resource (Newman et  
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14 al., 2018) and employees' general self-esteem as a personal resource (Hobfoll, 2002; Wang et  
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16 al., 2019) facilitate employees' family performance through WFF. WFF is described as "the  
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18 extent to which individuals' participation in one life domain (e.g. family) is made easier by  
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20 the skills, experiences, and opportunities gained through their participation in another domain  
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22 (e.g., work)" (Grzywacz and Butler, 2005, p. 97). Compared with support from coworkers and  
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24 the working organization, servant leadership is a far more important environmental resource  
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26 that employees should gain and utilize more effectively (Wang et al., 2019). General self-  
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28 esteem is a critical personal resource proposed by the RGD perspective (Wayne et al., 2007).  
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30 Thus, this paper considers these two resources to have a whole test of the RGD perspective.  
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40 According to the RGD perspective, demand characteristics, which are defined as  
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42 "individual characteristics that operate in ways to 'demand' particular responses from the  
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44 environment" (Wayne et al., 2007, p. 66), can be contingent factors for the relationship  
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46 between environmental resources and WFF. Surprisingly, previous literature regarding how  
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48 work resources shape family attitude and family interaction mostly focuses on the underlying  
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50 mechanisms (Carlson et al., 2019; Hunter et al., 2010), while neglecting the contingencies of  
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52 demanding characteristics. Therefore, we have limited knowledge of when employees are  
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54 more likely to exploit environmental resources in order to achieve better WFF.  
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4 To shed further light on the role that demand characteristics play in the relationship  
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6 between environmental resources and WFF proposed by the RGD perspective, the second aim  
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8 of this study is to explore gender and Chinese traditionality as two demand characteristics that  
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10 moderate the positive relationship between servant leadership and WFF. Gender, reflecting  
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12 individuals' culture or elaboration of sex (Bem et al., 1987), "is based upon the social  
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14 characteristics of and relations between men and women, both being recipients and shapers of  
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16 gender relations" (Durbin, 2011, p. 95). Our study aims to provide further evidence for a view  
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18 of the RGD perspective that the extent to which servant leadership is beneficial to WFF is  
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20 contingent upon employees' demand characteristics (Wayne et al., 2007).  
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27 Moreover, we propose Chinese traditionality as another demand characteristic. Chinese  
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29 traditionality, as a culturally oriented personal characteristic, refers to the extent to which  
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31 individuals recognize and cling to Chinese traditional values (Farh et al., 2007). Given that  
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33 Chinese traditionality also influences individuals' ability to gain resources from the  
34  
35 environment and use resources in ways that promote considerable growth and development  
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37 (Hui et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2021), it can be considered as another demand characteristic  
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39 for the RGD perspective.  
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45 This study intends to contribute to the existing literature in the following two ways. First,  
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47 while previous literature based on the RGD perspective mostly focuses on how general  
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49 environmental resources affect work/family satisfaction and work engagement (Hakanen et al.,  
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51 2011; Hunter et al., 2010; Russo et al., 2018), the effects of specific environmental and  
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53 personal resources on family performance are largely overlooked. Enriching the RGD  
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55 perspective, this study conceptualizes servant leadership as a specific environmental resource  
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4 and general self-esteem as a specific personal resource, and further explores how both of them  
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6 influence employees' family performance through the mediating role of WFF. Second, by  
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8 examining how gender and Chinese traditionality moderate the positive relationship between  
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10 servant leadership and WFF, we attempt to shed light on the moderating role of demand  
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12 characteristics. Moreover, this study increases the generalizability of the RGD perspective in  
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14 the Chinese context, facilitating greater understanding of the RGD perspective in East Asian  
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16 countries that share Confucian culture, such as China, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan  
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22 (Kim, 2009).

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25 Figure 1 presents the research model of this study.

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27 Insert Figure 1 about here

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## 30 31 **Theory and hypotheses**

### 32 33 *RGD perspective*

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35 Wayne et al. (2007) have developed the RGD perspective, which deals with how and when  
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37 employees use environmental and personal resources to facilitate family and job development  
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39 and growth synergistically. To perform a role effectively, individuals are innately driven to  
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41 obtain resources for growth and development, and are capable of gaining knowledge, skills  
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43 and abilities. Gains acquired in one domain can be transferred to other domains through a  
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45 facilitation process, ultimately resulting in the optimal functioning of the individual and other  
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47 life systems. To enrich the RGD perspective, we propose that servant leadership (an  
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49 environmental resource) and employees' general self-esteem (a personal resource) increase  
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51 WFF which in turn improves family performance.

### 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 *Servant leadership as an environmental resource*

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4 Leadership serves as a critical environmental resource for employees' work-family interface  
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6 (Hobfoll, 2002; Lapierre et al., 2018). As one type of positive leadership, servant leadership  
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8 captures the functions of environmental resources (Wang et al., 2019). Servant leadership is  
9  
10 defined as "an other-oriented approach to leadership that emphasizes serving others, sharing  
11  
12 power, promoting teamwork and building a sense of community both within the work group  
13  
14 and outside the walls of the organization" (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018, p. 335). Servant  
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16 leadership is a supportive and follower-oriented leadership style (Liden et al., 2014),  
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18 delivering maximum benefits to followers (Stone et al., 2004).  
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25 This study argues that servant leadership can be regarded as an environmental resource  
26  
27 for improving family outcomes. Servant leadership supplies resources for followers to enrich  
28  
29 multiple domains of life including work, family, and community (Newman et al., 2018). In  
30  
31 the organizational context, servant leaders reinforce service beliefs to nurture a culture of  
32  
33 service, facilitating positive attitudes and behaviors among followers (Liden et al., 2014).  
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35 More relevantly, in the family or life context, servant leadership provides resources for work-  
36  
37 family enrichment (Zhang et al., 2012), work-to-family positive spillover (Tang et al., 2016),  
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39 spouses' family satisfaction and quality of family life (Yang et al., 2018), and life satisfaction  
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41 (Li et al., 2018).  
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#### 48 *General self-esteem as a personal resource*

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50 General self-esteem is defined as one's dispositional perception of one's own worth  
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52 (Rosenberg, 1979). "Personal characteristics (resources) are those traits or skills that result  
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54 from one's orientation to the world such as self-esteem and optimism" (Wayne et al., 2007, p.  
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56 66). Therefore, general self-esteem is identified as a personal resource (Hobfoll, 2002), which  
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4 leads to employees' multifarious gains and self-advancement (Dust et al., 2018).  
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6         People of high general self-esteem perform well and cope successfully in a wide variety  
7  
8 of circumstances. They usually have high self-worth and feel confident about themselves  
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10 (Judge and Bono, 2001). Thus, they can buffer anxiety and core human fears (Pyszczynski et  
11  
12 al., 2004). General self-esteem also promotes positive affect and mental health, and  
13  
14 supportive feedbacks for coping efforts (Pierce and Gardner, 2004). It enables employees to  
15  
16 overcome difficulties, grasp opportunities in their organizations, and perform effectively in  
17  
18 family roles (Dodgson and Wood, 1998). General self-esteem is positively related to job  
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20 performance and job satisfaction (Judge and Bono, 2001), and negatively related to work-  
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22 family conflict (Deuling and Burns, 2017).  
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30 *The mediating effect of WFF on the relationship between servant leadership and family*  
31 *performance*  
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35 The RGD perspective suggests that environmental resources provide gains for employees  
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37 which can be transferred to other domains and systematically enhance functioning elsewhere.  
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39 By capturing "the positive side and the possibility of synergy between domains" (Wayne et al.,  
40  
41 2007, p. 65), WFF highlights the importance of within-domain resources for individuals'  
42  
43 involvement in other domains and plays a key role in linking environmental resources with  
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45 family-related outcomes. In this study, we propose WFF as the mediator transforming the  
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47 various gains that servant leadership brings into employees' family performance.  
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53         Servant leadership, which serves as a type of environmental resource, provides  
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55 developmental, affective, capital, and efficient gains to improve employees' WFF. Servant  
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57 leaders provide developmental gains to employees because they are sincerely interested in  
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4 their followers' development (Li et al., 2018). Servant leaders strive to equip their followers  
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6 with improved skills, knowledge, and perspectives, and develop their careers by providing  
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8 guidance and involving them in training programs (Liden et al., 2008). In addition, servant  
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10 leadership increases employees' affective gains by increasing their positive emotions (Li et al.,  
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12 2018), positive attitude (Liden et al., 2014), and confidence (Liden et al., 2008). Furthermore,  
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14 servant leadership shapes employees' capital gains by increasing economic gains (Choudhary  
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16 et al., 2013), social capital (Chiniara and Bentein, 2016), and health assets (Wang et al., 2019).  
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18 Finally, servant leadership shapes employees' efficiency gains by enhancing their skills in  
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20 fulfilling work-family role responsibilities (Tang et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2018; Zhang et al.,  
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22 2012). These gains provided by servant leadership could be utilized in a work-to-family  
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24 transition and increase employees' WFF.  
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32 WFF indicates that employees utilize these gains in the family domain and become more  
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34 resourceful to fulfill their family responsibilities. For example, with higher developmental  
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36 gains, employees can deal with family issues with greater wisdom when they participate in  
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38 family activities, complete family tasks, and care for family members (Liao et al., 2016). With  
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40 higher affective gains, employees interact with family members with pleasure and joy. With  
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42 capital gains, employees have more financial, social and psychological resources to provide  
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44 the fundamental basis for family members' survival and development. With efficiency gains,  
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46 employees can better deal with family role responsibilities. In summary, these gains from  
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48 servant leadership enhance employees' family functioning at a systematic level. Based on  
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50 these arguments, we hypothesize the following:  
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4 *H1. WFF fully mediates the effect of servant leadership on employees' family*  
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6 performance.

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9 *The mediating effect of WFF on the relationship between general self-esteem and family*  
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11 *performance*

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14 According to the RGD perspective, personal resources can promote outcomes in the family  
15 domain through WFF. This paper proposes that general self-esteem as a personal resource  
16 improves WFF by providing developmental, affective, capital and efficiency gains for  
17 employees, and then WFF transfers these gains to the family domain, helping employees  
18 achieve their desired family performance.

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27 General self-esteem enables employees to access developmental gains such as  
28 knowledge, perspectives, and skills (Dust et al., 2018). In terms of affective gains, people of  
29 higher general self-esteem usually exhibit a more positive mood and attitude (Rosenberg,  
30 1979). Moreover, general self-esteem enables employees to access more capital gains such as  
31 economic, social and psychological resources in the workplace (Usborne and Taylor, 2010) so  
32 that they have more resources to improve their family life quality (Yang et al., 2018). Finally,  
33 general self-esteem stimulates employees' efficiency resources, allowing them to feel  
34 confident that they can balance their work with family roles (Ben-Zur, 2002).

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48 As argued in H1, the developmental, affective, capital and efficiency gains from general  
49 self-esteem can be spilled over into the family domain and systematically promote family  
50 functioning. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

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56 *H2. WFF fully mediates the effect of general self-esteem on employees' family*  
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58 performance.

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4 *The moderating effect of gender on the relationship between servant leadership and WFF*  
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6 Given the increasing number of women entering the labor force and the changes in their work  
7 and family responsibilities, gender plays a key role in determining how employees manage  
8 their various life domains (ten Brummelhuis and Greenhaus, 2018). According to the RGD  
9 perspective, this paper posits that gender as a demand characteristic moderates the positive  
10 relationship between servant leadership and WFF.  
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19 Influenced by Confucian culture, women construct their salient social identity by placing  
20 the family at the center of their endeavors (Greenhaus et al., 2012). They value their family  
21 roles and are committed to those roles (Leung, 2003). Compared with men, women are more  
22 sensitive to the availability of environmental resources in the workplace that could facilitate  
23 their family roles (Carlson et al., 2010). The presence of servant leadership makes the  
24 resources needed for family functioning accessible to employees. Female employees are more  
25 likely to gain resources from servant leadership, transfer them to the family domain, and  
26 improve family functioning systematically. Especially in the situation that Chinese  
27 government announced a second-child policy in response to the country's fertility and aging  
28 problem (Peng, 2020), females need more resources in the working environment to deal with  
29 increasing family responsibilities. They are more likely to approach servant leaders and obtain  
30 developmental, affect, capital and efficiency gains from those leaders to benefit the family.  
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50 By contrast, males are more devoted to their work as a means of establishing their social  
51 identity (Greenhaus et al., 2012). They tend to invest more time and energy in their work to  
52 achieve work-related goals and promotions (Carlson et al., 2010). Males generally pay less  
53 attention to the family and are less motivated to transfer gains from servant leaders to their  
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4 family. Thus, we put forth:  
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6 *H3. Gender moderates the relationship between servant leadership and WFF such that*  
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9 this positive relationship is stronger when employees are women rather than men.  
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11 *The moderating effect of Chinese traditionality on the relationship between servant*  
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14 *leadership and WFF*  
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16 Chinese traditionality is a unique cultural value derived from Chinese Confucian ideology.

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18 The core tenet of traditional Chinese values lies in submitting oneself to authority. Individuals  
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20 of high Chinese traditionality greatly endorse the hierarchical role relationship, commit to  
21  
22 norms and show respect for supervisors (Liu et al., 2010). Due to the contemporary economic  
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24 transformation and opening-up policy (Fu and Tsui, 2003), some individuals may usher in  
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26 modern world values and endorse traditional Chinese values to a lesser extent, whereas others  
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28 may still hold them strongly (Lu and Yang, 2006). This study considers differences in  
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30 Chinese traditionality among individuals (Farh et al., 1997). Chinese traditionality can be  
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32 regarded as another demand characteristic because it can determine the extent to which  
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34 employees obtain and utilize the environmental resources available (Hui et al., 2004; Zhang et  
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36 al., 2021). This study proposes Chinese traditionality as a moderator that can weaken the  
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38 positive effect of servant leadership on WFF.  
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48 Employees of high Chinese traditionality expect leaders to control and command  
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50 subordinates discretionarily (Zhang et al., 2021). Servant leadership, which emphasizes  
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52 interacting with followers in an egalitarian way, encourages employees to participate and  
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54 affords them autonomy in decision-making (Chiniara and Bentein, 2016), contradicting the  
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56 primary values of Chinese traditionality. When the values held by supervisors and employees  
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4 are at cross-purposes, employees are less likely to identify with supervisors, and the positive  
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6 effect of servant leadership on WFF is weakened.  
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9 Furthermore, employees of high Chinese traditionalism attach importance to compliance  
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11 with authority (Farh et al., 2007), causing supervisors to look supreme to these employees.  
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13 Followers of high Chinese traditionalism tend to keep a distance from leaders and avoid  
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15 interacting with them (Zhang et al., 2021). Thus, they are less likely to acquire possible  
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17 developmental, affect, capital and efficiency gains for family performance from servant  
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19 leaders. By contrast, employees of low Chinese traditionalism are more likely to identify with  
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21 servant leaders and accept their resources. Based on these arguments, we propose the  
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23 following hypothesis:  
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30 *H4. Chinese traditionalism moderates the relationship between servant leadership and*  
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32 *WFF such that this positive relationship is stronger when employees have lower Chinese*  
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34 *traditionalism.*  
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## 37 38 **Method**

### 39 40 *Sample and procedure*

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42 Two-wave data were collected from two large-scale enterprises in China, a pharmaceutical  
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44 company and a real estate company. With the help of senior human resources executives, we  
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46 obtained lists of employees who were willing to participate in the survey voluntarily.  
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50 Surveys were distributed to 550 subordinates at time 1. The subordinates were asked to  
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52 assess their supervisors' servant leadership and their general self-esteem, WFF, Chinese  
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54 traditionalism, gender and demographic information. A total of 506 surveys were returned  
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56 (response rate of 92%). One month later (time 2), the subordinates were asked to report their  
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4 family performance; 421 questionnaires were returned (response rate of 83%). After data  
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6 matching, 369 questionnaires were deemed valid (overall response of 75.63%).  
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9 Of the participants, 211 were male (57.18%); average age of the whole sample was 33.02  
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11 years ( $SD=5.70$ ); average employment tenure was 5.06 years ( $SD = 4.22$ ); average leader-  
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13 follower dyadic tenure was 3.05 years ( $SD = 2.53$ ); and average education was 16.02 years  
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15 ( $SD = 0.99$ ). The majority of the participants (266) were married (72.09%), and 234 already  
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17 had at least one child (63.41%).  
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### 21 22 *Measures*

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24 The scales used in this study were translated from English to Chinese. Two experts were  
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26 invited to translate the scales into Chinese and back-translate them into English (Brislin, 1980)  
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28 to ensure the accuracy of the Chinese versions. Responses were given using a five-point  
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30 Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).  
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36 *Servant leadership.* Servant leadership was assessed using a shortened version of the  
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38 scale developed by Liden et al. (2014), consisting of the seven highest loaded items from the  
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40 original servant leadership scale (Liden et al., 2008). A sample item was “My supervisor  
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42 gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.”  
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47 *General self-esteem.* General self-esteem was assessed using Rosenberg’s (1965) five-  
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49 item scale. A sample item was “I feel that I have a number of good qualities.”  
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52 *Gender.* Gender was dummy coded by 0 meaning male and 1 female.  
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55 *Chinese traditionality.* Chinese traditionality was measured with a five-item scale  
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57 developed by Farh et al. (1997). A sample item was “The best way to avoid mistakes is to  
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59 follow the instructions of senior persons.”  
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4 *WFF*. WFF was measured with a four-item scale developed by Wayne et al. (2004). A  
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6 sample item was “Having a good day on your job makes you a better companion when you  
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8 get home.”  
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11 *Family performance*. Five items from Frone et al. (1997) were used to measure self-  
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13 reported family performance, which have also been applied by Carlson et al. (2010) in work-  
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15 family research. A sample item was “I adequately complete the assigned duties in my family.”  
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19 *Control variables*. Previous research has shown that subordinates’ demographic  
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21 characteristics influence the work-family process (Liao et al., 2016). Therefore, we controlled  
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23 for the effects of various subordinate variables, such as age, education, tenure of employment,  
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25 supervisor-subordinate dyadic tenure, marital status, and parental status. Age and education  
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27 indicated how old the employee was and for how many years they had received education,  
28  
29 respectively. Employment tenure and supervisor-subordinate dyadic tenure were measured by  
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31 the years the employee had worked in the organization and with their supervisor, respectively.  
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33 Marital status was coded as married (1) or single (0). Parental status was coded as a  
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35 dichotomous variable (at least one child = 1; no children = 0).  
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43 Transformational leadership was added as a control variable, because it has been shown  
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45 to be positively related to the work-family interface (Hammond et al., 2015). Moreover, one  
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47 meta-analysis has doubted whether emerging leadership constructs such as servant, ethical  
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49 and authentic leadership have incremental validity relative to transformational leadership  
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51 (Hoch et al., 2018). Transformational leadership was measured by a six-item scale (Schippers  
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53 et al., 2008). A sample item was “My supervisor shows us how to look at problems from new  
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55 angles.”  
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## Results

### *Measurement model*

We carried out a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to examine the discriminant validity of the variables. First, we examined a baseline model consisting of five variables. Due to the sample-to-parameter ratio, we adopted an item-parceling technique to parcel servant leadership and Chinese traditionality according to Landis et al.'s (2000) recommendations. The results in Table 1 revealed that the five-factor model showed adequate fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 447.14$ ,  $df = 160$ , CFI = .92, TLI = .90, RMR = .04, RMSEA = .07). Next, we compared the fit of this five-factor model with the fit of alternative models; the results showed that the models were unacceptable when the variables were combined.

Furthermore, we adopted CFA to examine the common-method variance (CMV). Using the method of "controlling for the effects of an unmeasured latent methods factor" (Podsakoff et al., 2003), we constructed a six-factor model, in which the sixth factor was "CMV" loading all the indicators of the five theoretical variables. The results in Table 1 denoted that the six-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 315.99$ ,  $df = 140$ , CFI = .95, TLI = .93, RMR = .02, RMSEA = .06) slightly improved the fitness of the five-factor structure mentioned above ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 131.15$ ,  $\Delta df = 20$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The average variance extracted (AVE) by CMV was .23, below the cutoff (.50) for identifying a latent variable (Hair et al., 2009). Thus, CMV should not be considered a latent variable.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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### *Hypothesis testing*

The means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and correlations of variables were



presented in Table 2.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The results of Model 2 in Table 3 showed that servant leadership was positively related to WFF ( $a_1 = .51, p < .001$ ), and the results of Model 6 showed that WFF was positively related to family performance ( $b = .13, p < .05$ ). The indirect effect ( $a_1b$ ) that servant leadership influenced family performance via WFF was .061 (95% CI [0.008, 0.113]). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

The results of Model 2 in Table 3 showed that general self-esteem was positively related to WFF ( $a_2 = .36, p < .001$ ), and WFF was positively related to self-reported family performance ( $b = .13, p < .05$ ). The indirect effect ( $a_2b$ ) that general self-esteem impacted family performance via WFF was .043 (95% CI [0.001, 0.084]). Hypothesis 2 was thus supported.

According to Model 6 in Table 3, the direct effect of general self-esteem on family performance was not significant ( $\beta = .10, p = .176$ ), while the direct effect of servant leadership on family performance was significant ( $\beta = .13, p < .05$ ). According to Shrout and Bolger (2002) who elaborated on distal and proximal mediation, the mediation that servant leadership influenced employees' family performance through WFF was proximal mediation, and the mediation that general self-esteem influenced employees' family performance through WFF was distal mediation.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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The results of Model 3 in Table 3 showed that the interaction term "servant leadership  $\times$  gender" was positively related to WFF ( $\beta = .24, p < .05$ ), and thus hypothesis 3 was supported.

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4 Figure 2 presented this moderating effect of gender. When employees were female, the  
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6 relationship between servant leadership and WFF was strengthened ( $b = .768, p < .001$ ),  
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8 whereas this relationship became weaker when employees were male ( $b = .296, p < .05$ ). The  
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10 difference between the two slopes was  $.472 (p < .05)$ .  
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14 The results of Model 4 in Table 3 revealed that the interaction term “servant leadership  $\times$   
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16 Chinese traditionality” was negatively related to WFF ( $\beta = -0.18, p < .05$ ). Thus, hypothesis 4  
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18 was supported. Figure 3 presented the moderating role of Chinese traditionality. When  
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20 Chinese traditionality was high, the influence of servant leadership on WFF was weakened ( $b$   
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22  $= .338, p < 0.01$ ), whereas this effect was strengthened ( $b = .691, p < .001$ ) when Chinese  
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24 traditionality was low. The difference between the two slopes was  $-.352 (p < .05)$ .  
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30 Insert Figure 2 and Figure 3 about here  
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### 33 Discussion

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35 Consistent with the RGD perspective, all hypotheses were supported by the findings. As WFF  
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37 is positioned as the mediator in the RGD perspective, this study demonstrated that WFF fully  
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39 mediated the effects of servant leadership and general self-esteem on employees' family  
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41 performance. Besides, in line with the RGD perspective's proposition about boundary  
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43 conditions, gender and Chinese traditionality were identified as demand characteristics which  
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45 moderated the relationship between servant leadership and WFF. Our results make several  
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47 important contributions to the existing literature.  
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#### 52 *Theoretical implications*

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54 First, we have undertaken a whole test of the RGD model by exploring how servant  
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56 leadership as a specific environmental resource and general self-esteem as a specific personal  
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4 resource simultaneously shape employees' family performance through WFF. Even though  
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6 previous studies have applied the RGD perspective (e.g., Hakanen et al., 2011; Hunter et al.,  
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8 2010; Russo et al., 2018) to explain the effect of environmental resources on family  
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10 performance, a whole test of the theoretical framework has remained under-investigated. To  
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12 enrich the existing RGD perspective, this paper is the first to have a whole test of the RGD  
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14 perspective by identifying servant leadership as an environmental resource and general self-  
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16 esteem as a personal resource, and by exploring how they influence employees' family  
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18 performance through WFF. Our operationalization of resources in specific ways is an effort to  
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20 learn from the criticism that resources in the RGD perspective are too broad and ambiguous  
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22 (Li et al., 2017).  
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30 Empirically, we have found that WFF fully mediates the relationship between servant  
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32 leadership/general self-esteem and family performance. This result is consistent with previous  
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34 research regarding the positive effect of servant leadership on work-family interface (Tang et  
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36 al., 2016), and adds to our understanding that general self-esteem helps shape WFF. On the  
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38 contrary, Hunter et al. (2010) failed to obtain support for their hypothesis regarding the  
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40 mediating role of work-family enrichment in the relationship between team resources and  
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42 family satisfaction. This inconsistency highlights the necessity of theory testing. We suspect  
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44 that this inconsistency may result from the different definitions of resources in teams and in  
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46 the workplace between the two studies.  
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53 Second, we support the notion that gender and Chinese traditionality as demand  
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55 characteristics moderate the relationship between environmental resources and WFF.  
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57 Although previous literature has explored the effects of various resources on WFF, the  
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4 boundary conditions for these effects are mostly lacking (Carlson et al., 2019). Even though  
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6 Wayne et al. (2007) have highlighted the importance of demand characteristics as moderators  
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8 for the relationship between environmental resources and WFF, almost no subsequent  
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10 empirical studies have examined their roles from the RGD perspective (Hakanen, et al., 2011;  
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12 Tang et al., 2014). In order to respond to Russo et al.'s (2018) call to further explore the  
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14 individual differences that affect resources' transition between different domains, we have  
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16 found that the positive relationship between servant leadership and WFF is more pronounced  
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18 for females than males because females pay more attention to family roles and are adept at  
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20 acquiring resources from servant leadership to enhance family performance. Previous studies  
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22 have suggested that gender differences are deeply engrained and essentially critical in the  
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24 work-family interface (e.g., ten Brummelhuis and Greenhaus, 2018). This study adds further  
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26 evidence for gender differences in the workplace in the Chinese culture, where gender  
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28 egalitarianism in the work-family interface is quite low (Leung, 2003).  
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38 In addition, responding to the call for research to examine whether specific cultural  
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40 dimensions influence the effect of leader behavior on employee work-family outcomes (Li et  
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42 al., 2017), this study demonstrates that Chinese traditionality as a demand characteristic  
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44 weakens the positive influence of servant leadership on WFF. In this vein, this study enriches  
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46 the literature about how specific cultural dimensions will influence the role of leadership in  
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48 the work-family interface. Chinese traditionality roots in traditional Confucian ideology, but  
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50 even in contemporary China, individuals are still more or less embedded in the traditional  
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52 value system (Lu and Yang, 2006; Wu et al., 2019). Traditionalists adhere to conventional  
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54 values and authority. We have found that employees of high Chinese traditionality are less  
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4 likely to utilize the resources made available by servant leaders, leading to the erosion of the  
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6 effectiveness of servant leadership on WFF.  
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10 *Practical implications*

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12 The practical implications of our results are as follows. First, we have provided empirical  
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14 evidence that servant leadership—an environmental resource in organizations—is an  
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16 important determinant of employees' WFF and family performance. Organizational policies  
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18 and practice should aim to help leaders adapt to the servant leadership style as a strategy to  
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20 increase employees' family performance.  
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25 Second, employees' high general self-esteem is more likely to shape WFF and lead to  
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27 better performance in their family roles. This finding implies that HR departments should  
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29 seek to recruit and select people of high general self-esteem, or use interventions such as  
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31 encouraging employees and affirming their dedication and worth. The development of  
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33 training programs to enhance general self-esteem should also be encouraged.  
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38 Third, given that the influence of servant leadership on WFF is contingent upon  
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40 employees' gender, supervisors should take gender into account when they exhibit their  
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42 servant leadership behavior. Especially influenced by the second-child policy, achieving a  
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44 work-family balance is even harder for females. As our results have revealed, for female  
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46 employees, servant leadership is more beneficial to achieve WFF. Leaders are recommended  
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48 to adopt a servant leadership style for employees (especially female employees) and thus help  
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50 them better combine their work and family responsibilities.  
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56 Lastly, Chinese traditionality also shapes the impact of servant leadership on WFF.  
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58 Leaders should be aware of employees' Chinese traditionality, which mitigates the positive  
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4 effect of servant leadership on WFF. For low traditionalists, leaders can adopt stronger  
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6 servant leadership styles to show concern and care for their subordinates. For high  
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8 traditionalists, servant leaders could explore other behaviors and policies to improve  
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10 performance in both the organizational and family domains.  
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### 13 14 *Limitations and directions for future research*

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16 Some limitations need to be illustrated. First, although a two-phase data collection procedure  
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18 was adopted, all the variables were reported by employees, giving concerns that CMV may be  
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20 a potential problem. Future research should utilize a more rigorous design to explore these  
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22 relationships. In particular, family performance could be rated by spouses or other core family  
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24 members.  
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30 Second, this study's generalizability needs to be examined. Chinese traditionality is a  
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32 cultural variable specific to Chinese philosophy. Future studies are recommended to  
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34 generalize this study's findings in other contexts sharing the Confucian culture, such as South  
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36 Korea, Japan, and Singapore.  
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41 Third, this study paid attention to the focal employees' family performance, but  
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43 according to the RGD perspective, the family system incorporates various subsystems such as  
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45 parent-child dyads and the marital dyad. Future studies should focus on the functioning of  
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47 familial subsystems such as marital quality, family well-being, parent-child interactions, and  
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49 spouse's marital satisfaction, and combine these subsystems with work subsystems such as  
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51 group effectiveness, relationship quality, and cooperation, in order to develop a more  
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53 comprehensive understanding of how environmental and personal resources enhance the  
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55 performance of multiple subsystems.  
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4 We also recommend that future research consider other contextual factors which may  
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6 influence how effectively individuals use resources to enhance WFF. In this study we  
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8 examined gender and Chinese traditionality, but there are other demand characteristics that  
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10 may influence the strength of the environmental resources-WFF relationship (Wayne et al.,  
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12 2007).  
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**Table 1.** The results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Models	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	CFI	TLI	RMR	RMSEA
Six-factor model SL, GSE, WFF, CT, FP, CMV	315.99	140	.95	.93	.02	.06
Five-factor model SL, GSE, CT, WFF, FP	447.14	160	.92	.90	.04	.07
Four-factor model SL+WFF, GSE, CT, WFF, FP	720.00	164	.84	.81	.05	.10
Four-factor model GSE+WFF, SL, CT, FP	860.12	164	.80	.77	.05	.11
Three-factor model SL+GSE+WFF, CT, FP	1138.43	167	.72	.68	.06	.13
Two-factor model SL+GSE+WFF+CT, FP	1313.45	169	.67	.63	.06	.14
One-factor model SL+GSE+WFF+CT+FP	2067.95	190	.45	.38	.08	.17

*N*=369.

*SL* servant leadership

*GSE* general self-esteem, *CT* Chinese traditionality, *FP* family performance



**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	33.02	5.70													
2. Tenure of employment	5.06	4.22	.51***												
3. Dyadic tenure between SS	3.05	2.53	.49***	.59***											
4. Education	16.02	.99	.07	-.05	-.06										
5. Marital status	.72	.45	.53***	.24***	.22***	.11*									
6. Parental status	.63	.48	.55***	.27***	.22***	.06	.81***								
7. Transformational leadership	4.17	.59	-.07	.09	.08	-.08	-.11*	-.15**	(.92)						
8. Servant leadership	4.16	.60	-.06	-.01	.12*	-.01	.03	-.02	.58***	(.84)					
9. General self-esteem	4.07	.50	-.01	.04	.02	-.01	-.01	-.05	.40***	.20***	(.81)				
10. Gender	.43	.50	-.31***	-.04	-.10	-.10	-.21***	-.17***	.10*	.02	-.01				
11. Chinese traditionality	3.05	.66	.02	.09	.06	-.12*	-.04	-.03	-.28***	.08	.20***	-.00	(.80)		
12. WFF	3.78	.73	.04	.08	.12*	-.05	.07	-.01	.45***	.53***	.38***	-.04	.25***	(.90)	
13. Family performance	4.04	.58	.09	.05	.14**	-.03	.09	.07	.17***	.20***	.14***	-.07	.24***	.20***	(.86)

*N*=369.

SS supervisors and subordinates.

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

The Cronbach's alpha reported on the diagonal in the brackets.

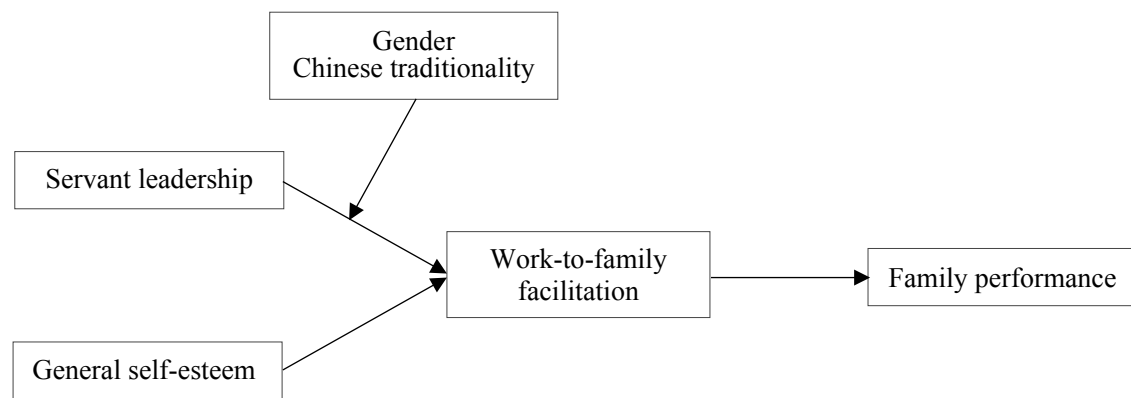
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**Table 3.** Regression analysis results of mediating and moderating hypothesis.

Variables	WFF				Family performance		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Constant	1.63*	.01	.03	2.29***	3.36***	2.92***	2.92***
Age	.00	.01	.01	.01	.00	.01	.01
Tenure of employment	-.01	.01	.01	.01	-.01	-.01	-.01
Dyad tenure between SS	.02	-.01	-.00	-.00	.03*	.03	.03
Education	-.02	-.04	-.04	-.03	-.02	-.02	-.02
Marital status	.31*	.21*	.19	.19	.07	.05	.02
Parental status	-.15	-.15	-.17	-.16	.03	.03	.05
Transformational leadership	.55***	.12	.11	.07	.17**	.06	.04
<i>Independent variables</i>							
Servant leadership		.51***	.53***	.52***		.13*	.07
General self-esteem		.36***	.36***	.36***		.10	.06
<i>Moderator</i>							
Gender			-.05				
CT				.16***			
<i>Interactions</i>							
Servant leadership×gender			.24*				
Servant leadership×CT				-.18*			
<i>Mediator</i>							
WFF							.12*
R <sup>2</sup>	.22***	.37***	.38***	.40***	.05*	.07*	.09*

N=369, \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001 (2-tailed).

SS supervisors and subordinate, CT Chinese traditionality.



**Figure 1.** Hypothesized research model.

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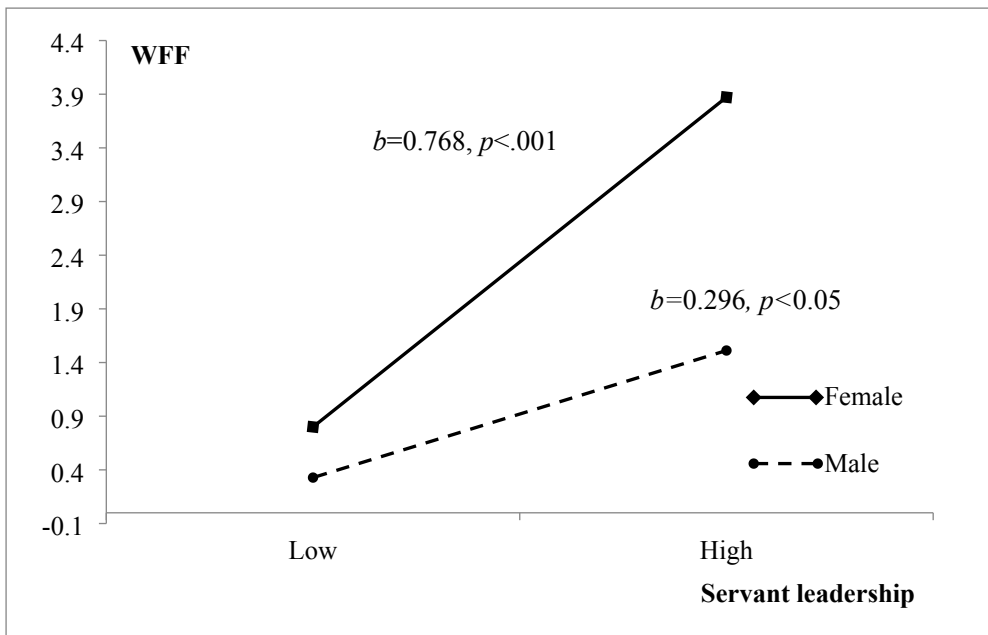
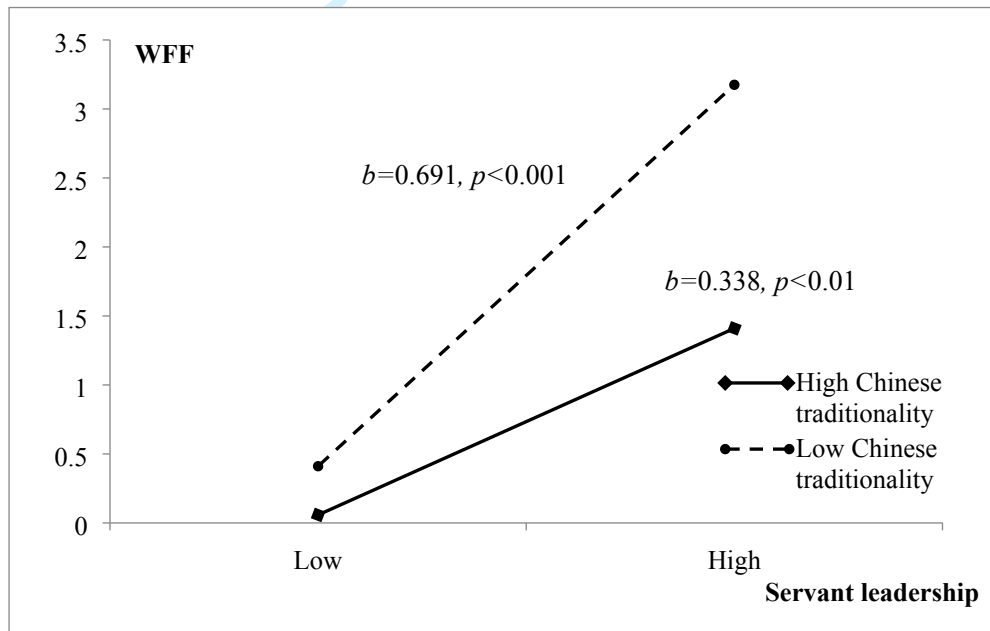


Figure 2. Moderating effect of gender on the relationship between servant leadership and WFF.



**Figure 3.** Moderating effect of Chinese traditionality on the relationship between servant leadership and WFF.