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知覺信任與部屬結果之探討：知覺信任雙向度的差異效果

How Trust is Felt: The Dual-Mechanism Model of Felt Trust  
and Subordinate Behaviors

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## 誌謝



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## 摘要



本研究探討部屬知覺主管對他們的信任（部屬知覺信任）的兩個面向「知覺依賴」與「知覺揭露」對部屬結果的差異效果，並進一步釐清兩個向度各自的心理歷程。本研究提出知覺依賴與知覺揭露分別與兩個知覺信任心理歷程「人際路徑－社會交換機制」及「個人內在－自我評估路徑」有關。這兩種歷程啟動不同的機制，社會交換路徑引發部屬知覺 LMX，而自我評估路徑引發部屬的工作中自我效能感，並進而導致不同的結果，部屬知覺 LMX 促進部屬對主管的情感承諾，而部屬工作中自我效能感促進部屬的工作敬業。本研究採用自陳問卷調查法，針對來自台灣企業的 123 位員工進行兩階段的資料蒐集。經由路徑分析與拔靴法（bootstrapping）檢驗結果顯示，知覺依賴同時與人際與個人內在兩條心理路徑有關：一方面，知覺依賴透過提升部屬知覺 LMX 促進部屬對主管的情感承諾；另一方面，知覺依賴透過增強工作中自我效能提升工作敬業。相較之下，感知揭露僅與人際路徑相關，能透過提升部屬知覺 LMX 來強化對主管的情感承諾，但對工作敬業並無顯著影響。本研究強調區辨知覺信任兩個面向的重要性，並指出其如何透過不同的心理歷程影響部屬的態度與行為，有助於對感知信任形成更汐止且全面的理解，並突顯其在當代主管部屬關係中的重要性。

**關鍵字：**知覺揭露、知覺依賴、對主管的情感承諾、工作敬業

# How Trust is Felt: The Dual-Mechanism Model of Felt Trust and Subordinate Behaviors



Felicia Chu

## Abstract

This study investigates the differential effects of two dimensions of subordinate felt trust from the supervisor – felt reliance and felt disclosure – by examining the underlying mechanisms through which they influence subordinate outcomes. Drawing on social exchange theory and self-evaluative theory, this study proposes that felt reliance and felt disclosure are differentially related to two psychological processes of subordinates (i.e., the interpersonal path and the intrapersonal path); these two processes involve different mechanisms, which are subordinate-perceived leader–member exchange (LMX) and occupational self-efficacy, and subsequently leads to divergent outcomes (i.e., affective commitment to supervisors and work engagement), respectively. Data were collected from 123 employees in Taiwanese organizations using a two-wave self-report questionnaire. The results of path analyses and bootstrapping method show that felt reliance is related to both the interpersonal and intrapersonal paths. Specifically, felt reliance increases subordinates’ affective commitment to their supervisors through enhanced subordinate-perceived LMX and also boosts work engagement via occupational self-efficacy. In contrast, felt disclosure is related only to the interpersonal path, increasing affective commitment to supervisors through enhanced subordinate-perceived LMX, but not occupational self-efficacy. These findings underscore the importance of distinguishing between the dimensions of felt trust and demonstrate how they operate through distinct psychological processes to shape subordinate attitudes and behaviors. The study contributes to a more nuanced and integrated

understanding of felt trust and highlights its relevance in contemporary supervisor–subordinate relationships.

*Keywords:* felt reliance, felt disclosure, affective commitment, work engagement

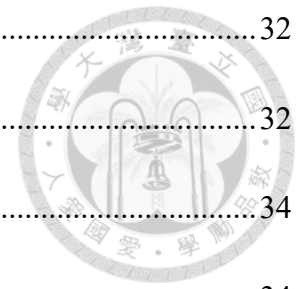


# Table of Contents



論文口試委員審定書.....	i
誌謝.....	ii
摘要.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents .....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	viii
1. How Trust is Felt: The Dual-Mechanism Model of Felt Trust and Subordinate Behavior... 1	
2. Literature Review.....	8
2.1. Trust in the Workplace: Definition and the Significance of Trust in the Workplace . 8	
2.2. The Role Trust Plays in Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships .....	9
2.3. The Effects of Being Trusted by Supervisors: Is it Actual Trust or Felt Trust.....	10
2.4. Felt Trust: A Literature Review.....	12
2.5. Felt Trust Dimensions: Felt Disclosure and Felt Reliance, and Their Differential Effects	15
2.6. The Relationship Between Felt Trust Mechanisms (Social Exchange Theory and Self-Evaluative Perspective) and Felt Trust Dimensions (Felt Disclosure and Felt Reliance) .....	17

3. Method .....	32
3.1. Participants.....	32
3.2. Procedure .....	34
3.3. Measurements .....	34
3.4. Analysis Plan .....	38
4. Results.....	41
4.1. Preliminary Analysis.....	41
4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis.....	43
4.3. Hypothesis Testing.....	43
5. Discussion .....	49
5.1. Theoretical Contribution.....	50
5.2. Practical Implication .....	53
5.3. Limitation.....	55
5.4. Further Direction.....	57
5.5. Conclusion .....	61
6. Reference.....	62
Appendix.....	81
Appendix 1. Survey Instructions.....	81
Appendix 2. Demographic Information Collection .....	82
Appendix 3. Questionnaire Items.....	84



## List of Tables

Table 3.1 Participant Demographic Information .....	33
Table 4.1 Mean, Standard Deviation of All Variables, Correlation Between Variables, and Scale Internal Consistency Reliability.....	42
Table 4.2 Model Comparison: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Felt Trust Dimensions.....	44
Table 4.3 Model Comparison: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for The Proposed Model and Alternative Models .....	45
Table 4.4 Path Analysis Results .....	47
Table 4.5 Mediation Test Results.....	48

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The Present Study's Proposed Model .....	32
Figure 4.1 Path Analysis Results Diagram .....	48

# 1. How Trust is Felt: The Dual-Mechanism Model of Felt Trust and Subordinate Behavior

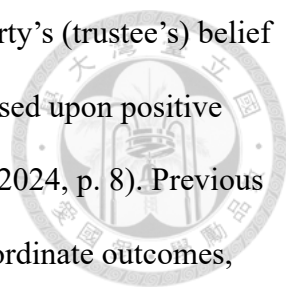


Trust is commonly defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the expectation that they will act as anticipated, despite the inability to control their behavior (Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). In today’s work environment, trust is more crucial than ever due to the increasing complexity, collaboration, and interdependence of tasks, as well as the embeddedness of individual roles within broader organizational systems (Kozlowski, 2020; Rico et al., 2020). This is particularly critical in supervisor–subordinate relationships, where a power imbalance exists. Supervisors, as formal appraisers, control access to resources, information, and career opportunities – giving rise to potential subordinate vigilance and suspicion (Brower et al., 2009; Lau et al., 2014). This tension may negatively affect subordinate performance and well-being, particularly when subordinates worry about being exploited (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Trust serves as a “lubricant” in supervisor–subordinate relationships by alleviating these concerns and allowing subordinates to redirect their cognitive and emotional energy toward productive work. Empirical studies support this, linking supervisor-subordinate trust with increased job performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions (Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks & de Jong, 2022; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Thus, understanding how supervisor-subordinate trust affects subordinates’ behaviors and attitudes is still, if not more, relevant in today’s work climate.


Past studies on supervisor-subordinate trust have focused primarily on the trusting perspective – how subordinates’ trust in their supervisors shapes subordinates’ behaviors and attitudes (Colquitt et al, 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Another perspective of trust, namely being trusted – how supervisors’ trust in subordinates shapes subordinates’ behaviors and

attitudes, has received less attention (Brower et al., 2009). However, Lester and Brower (2003) found that the "trusting" perspective and the "being trusted" perspective have different connotations for subordinates, therefore inducing different subordinate outcomes, highlighting that "trusting" and "being trusted" uniquely yet simultaneously affect subordinate outcomes. Furthermore, they found that "being trusted" was a more significant predictor of subordinate outcomes than "trusting". The dyadic nature of trust means that trust being given by supervisors is equally important. Subordinates' perception of being trusted introduces an underexplored angle that adds depth to theoretical models of workplace trust (Brower et al., 2000; Lester & Brower, 2003). Therefore, researchers turned their interest to understanding what "being trusted" is to subordinates and how it influences subordinate outcomes.

Regarding the dimensionality of "being trusted", Brower et al. (2000) posited that two dimensions need to be considered: supervisors' actual trust in their subordinates (i.e., supervisors' actual trust), and subordinates' perception of trust from their supervisors (i.e., subordinates' felt trust). They further suggest that it is subordinates' felt trust that ultimately influences subordinate outcomes due to the intangible nature of trust: what is perceived from trust-indicating behaviors by the trustee is a manifestation of trust, not the trustors' actual level of trust (Brower et al., 2000). Therefore, subordinates' felt trust is a more proximal predictor of subordinates' outcomes than supervisors' actual trust in subordinates (Brower et al., 2000). In addition, from a practical standpoint, knowing that employees feel trusted by their supervisors is essential for cultivating positive outcomes such as motivation, engagement, and commitment (Dirks & de Jong, 2022; Tan et al., 2021). If employees don't feel trusted – even if they are – leaders' efforts may fall flat. To address this, the present study has chosen to focus on understanding how subordinates' felt trust affects subordinates' outcomes.

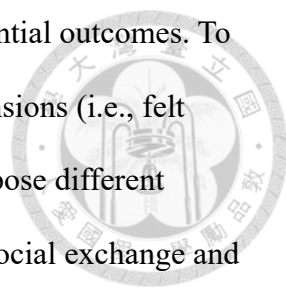


Felt trust is defined as “a meta-perception comprising a focal party’s (trustee’s) belief about another party’s (trustor’s) willingness to be vulnerable to them based upon positive expectations of the focal party’s intentions or behavior” (de Jong et al., 2024, p. 8). Previous studies have established felt trust’s influence on numerous positive subordinate outcomes, such as work performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), turnover intention, voice behavior, etc (e.g., Hao et al., 2021; Lester & Brower, 2003; Salamon & Robinson, 2008; Zheng et al., 2019). Researchers have also attempted to explain the mechanisms of felt trust on subordinate outcomes through various theories and perspectives (e.g., Gill et al., 2019; Lau et al., 2014; Skiba & Wildman, 2018). With the accelerating speed the felt trust literature is growing, de Jong et al. (2024, p. 11) have warned on the nomological network of felt trust being “highly fragmented and non-parsimonious” and call for the integration of mechanisms to gain better clarity on the relationship between felt trust and outcomes. To address this issue of fragmentation and non-parsimony, the first aim of the present study is to integrate two relatively more established and empirically supported perspectives of felt trust: the most widely used theory in explaining trust mechanisms – social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) – and a perspective unique to felt trust – the self-evaluative perspective (Lau et al., 2014). The social exchange pathway of felt trust captures the interpersonal nature of felt trust, which emphasizes that subordinates, hoping to maintain this beneficial relationship, engage in positive work outcomes as a reciprocation to their supervisors’ trust in them (Blau, 1964; Skiba & Wildman, 2018). On the other hand, the self-evaluative pathway of felt trust captures the intrapersonal nature of felt trust, which emphasizes that subordinates’ positive outcomes are products of enhanced work self-concept that is elicited by felt trust (Lau et al., 2014). By integrating these two perspectives of felt trust, the present study depicts a more comprehensive process of workplace trust which involves the intrapsychic and interpersonal dynamics of interpersonal trust.



Another issue the felt trust literature is met with is the differential effects of the felt trust dimensions. Felt trust comprises two dimensions: felt reliance and felt disclosure (Gillespie, 2003; Lau et al., 2014). Felt reliance refers to subordinates' perception that their supervisor is willing to depend on their abilities, knowledge, and judgment. Felt disclosure refers to the perception that the supervisor is willing to share sensitive or personal information. While most studies examine felt trust as a single construct, many have found that felt reliance and felt disclosure yield differential outcomes – only felt reliance, and not felt disclosure, poses effects on subordinate outcomes, such as job performance and OCB (Lau et al., 2014; Wang & Huang, 2019; Zheng et al., 2019). Failing to distinguish between these two dimensions risks obscuring the underlying mechanisms and may lead to theoretical or empirical misinterpretations. However, previous studies have yet to address why only felt reliance had effects on subordinate outcomes and not felt disclosure. To our knowledge, only Hao et al. (2021) have addressed this issue by directly examining the differential effects of felt trust dimensions. Zheng et al. (2019) have called for the examination of the differential effects that felt trust dimensions have on subordinate performance. With Hao et al.'s (2021) study being the only research to date that examines the issue, it shows that there are fundamental differences between the dimensions, and there is more room for uncovering the distinct mechanisms of the felt trust dimensions. To add to the understanding of the differential effects of the felt trust dimensions (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure, the second aim of the present study is to establish the differential effects of the felt trust dimension (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure) through unraveling their unique relationships with the respective mechanisms (i.e., social exchange mechanism and self-evaluative mechanism of felt trust).

Hao et al.'s (2021) study poses another issue for understanding the differential effects of felt trust, in which they focused solely on a singular outcome. Hao et al.'s (2021) research



is still unable to justify whether and why the two felt trust led to differential outcomes. To further examine the fundamental difference between the felt trust dimensions (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure), the third aim of the present study is to propose different outcomes that account for characteristics of the two mechanisms (i.e., social exchange and self-evaluative mechanisms), namely subordinates' affective commitment to their supervisors and work engagement. The present study diverges from Hao et al. (2021) in proposing promotive voice behaviors as an outcome of felt trust, as promotive voice behaviors simultaneously underlie interpersonal (i.e., felt obligation) and intrapersonal (i.e., organizational-based self-esteem) mechanisms (Liang et al., 2012), therefore is unable to disentangle the interpersonal and intrapersonal mechanisms of felt trust. The present study, therefore, proposes outcomes that respectively align with the essence of the interpersonal pathway (i.e., social exchange mechanism) and intrapersonal pathway (i.e., self-evaluative mechanism) of felt trust. Specifically, affective commitment to supervisors is proposed as the outcome of the interpersonal pathway of felt trust to account for the relational-oriented and target-specific characteristics of the social exchange mechanism (Blau, 1964; Hao et al., 2021; Skiba & Wildman, 2018). On the other hand, subordinates' work engagement is proposed as the outcome of the intrapersonal pathway of felt trust to account for the work-oriented and task-specific nature of the self-evaluative mechanism (Zheng et al., 2019).

Overall, the present study aims to address two issues in the felt trust literature: (1) the lack of integration of felt trust mechanisms (social exchange theory and self-evaluative perspective), (2) the lack of understanding of the differential effects of the felt trust dimensions (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure), and (3) further understanding the fundamental differences between the felt trust dimensions. Taken together, the present study examines the differential effects of felt reliance and felt disclosure through their respective relationships with the social exchange and self-evaluative pathways of felt trust. It is

proposed that felt reliance and felt disclosure provide different social information to subordinates, therefore activating different felt trust pathways and initiating different subordinate outcomes. The present study posits that felt reliance will activate both the social exchange and self-evaluative pathway, increasing subordinates' affective commitment to supervisors and work engagement; whilst felt disclosure will only activate the social exchange pathway of felt trust, increasing subordinates' affective commitment to supervisors.

The present study contributes to the felt trust literature in several ways. First, it addresses the calls to integrate the highly fragmented and non-parsimonious nomological network of felt trust (de Jong et al., 2024). The present study integrates the social exchange mechanisms (i.e., interpersonal pathway) and the self-evaluative mechanisms (i.e., intrapersonal pathway) of felt trust. While past studies tend to treat these mechanisms as mutually exclusive (e.g., Gill et al., 2019), the present study proposes that they may be complementary and co-activated, especially in the context of felt trust. By integrating these two perspectives, a more comprehensive picture can be drawn regarding the mechanisms of felt trust – gaining further clarity on the unique effects felt trust has on subordinate outcomes.

Second, the present study addresses the calls for examination on the differential effects of the felt trust dimensions on subordinate outcomes (Zheng et al., 2019). Previous studies have found that it was felt reliance, and not felt disclosure, that affects subordinate outcomes (Lau et al., 2014; Wang & Huang, 2019; Zheng et al., 2019). However, these studies have yet to explain why this differential effect exists. Unlike prior work that treats felt reliance and felt disclosure as subordinate elements of a broader construct, the present study focuses on how each dimension operates uniquely by identifying the unique relationships the two dimensions (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure) have with the two felt trust pathways (i.e., the social exchange and self-evaluative pathway).

Finally, the present study proposes outcomes that align more precisely with the theoretical mechanisms. Rather than focusing on broad outcomes like performance, OCB, or turnover (e.g., Gill et al., 2019; Lau et al., 2014; Skiba & Wildman, 2018; Zheng et al., 2019), the present study examines subordinates' affective commitment to supervisor – which is more aligned to the relational-oriented social exchange pathway – and work engagement – which is more aligned to the task-oriented self-evaluative pathway – as mechanism-specific outcomes that more accurately capture the processes through which felt trust shapes subordinate behavior.

## 2. Literature Review



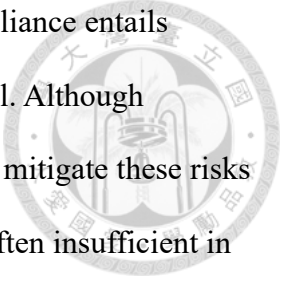
The present study begins by defining trust in the workplace and highlighting its importance in shaping interpersonal dynamics and collaborative relationships, particularly how trust in the supervisor-subordinate relationship influences subordinate attitudes and behaviors. The discussion then shifts to the multi-foci nature of trust, highlighting the importance of discussing (1) actual trust vs felt trust, and (2) the focal point of trust (i.e., subordinate vs supervisor perspective) due to the intangible nature of trust. Then, the present study emphasizes the importance of examining the subordinates' perception of trust (i.e., felt trust) to fully understand how trust impacts subordinate behavior.

Following this, the present study introduces the concept of felt trust and the key theoretical frameworks that underpin the felt trust literature, namely the social exchange perspective and the self-evaluative perspective. Then, the present study defines the two dimensions of felt trust – felt disclosure and felt reliance – and how these two dimensions of felt trust align with distinct theoretical mechanisms.

### 2.1. Trust in the Workplace: Definition and the Significance of Trust in the Workplace

Trust is defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to another party while expecting them to act in a beneficial or expected manner, despite the inability to monitor or control their behavior and intentions (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). In other words, when trusting someone, the trustors (i.e., the one trusting the other party) put themselves in a disadvantaged position where they surrender control to the trustee (i.e., the one being trusted by the trustor), expecting the trustee to present behaviors and attitudes that either conforms to or benefits the trustor's agenda.

According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is critical in workplace relationships. Specifically, the collaboration in the workplace often involves interdependence – individuals



must rely on others to achieve personal and organizational goals. This reliance entails inherent risk, as others' actions and performance lie outside one's control. Although organizations implement mechanisms such as contracts and sanctions to mitigate these risks (i.e., self-serving behaviors and potential litigation), these controls are often insufficient in mitigating these risks (Mayer et al., 1995). To supplement this insufficiency, trust serves as a social lubricant, reducing uncertainty and suspicion in ways that formal controls cannot (Gambetta, 1988; Mayer et al., 1995). As Dirks and de Jong (2022, p. 248) note, "Trust is essential for initiating, maintaining, repairing, and elevating social relationships at work." Moreover, the influence of trust extends beyond interpersonal relationships – it is a key driver of important workplace outcomes, including job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions (Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Rousseau et al., 1998). When trust is lacking, individuals may divert energy toward self-protection and vigilance rather than productive work, negatively impacting performance (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Thus, it remains crucial to understand how trust influences employees' behaviors and attitudes to leverage its benefits.

## **2.2. The Role Trust Plays in Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships**

The role of trust is especially critical in supervisor–subordinate relationships. Both trust from subordinates towards supervisors and trust from supervisors towards subordinates are worthy of attention (Brower et al., 2003). Regarding trust from subordinates towards supervisors, supervisors serve as formal evaluators of employee performance, and their assessments significantly influence subordinates' compensation, career progression, and job security (Lau et al., 2014). This power asymmetry places subordinates in a more vulnerable position, heightening their sense of dependence and lack of control (Lapidot et al., 2007). When subordinates trust their supervisors, they hold positive expectations that their supervisors, despite possessing greater power, will act fairly and even supportively. This

sense of psychological safety enables subordinates to redirect their energy toward their tasks and, in some cases, exceed performance expectations. Empirical studies have shown that trust in supervisors is associated with beneficial outcomes, including increased job satisfaction, stronger organizational citizenship behaviors, lower turnover intentions, and improved job performance (Brower et al., 2009; Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer & Gavin, 2005).

Moreover, regarding trust from supervisors towards subordinates, supervisors are more likely to take interpersonal risks, such as delegating important responsibilities and offering developmental opportunities to subordinates they trust than subordinates they do not trust (Bauer & Green, 1996; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Mayer et al., 1995). This trust signals to subordinates that they are viewed as competent and reliable, which in turn empowers them and enhances their self-perception, as well as foster a sense of reciprocal obligation – leading to desirable behavioral outcomes, such as higher engagement, better performance, more citizenship behavior, and reduced turnover intentions (Brower et al, 2009; Gill et al., 2019; Lau et al., 2014; Skiba & Wildman, 2018; Zheng et al., 2019).

### **2.3. The Effects of Being Trusted by Supervisors: Is it Actual Trust or Felt Trust**

As mentioned, past studies have focused on understanding the effects that trust from subordinates to supervisors (i.e., the “trusting” perspective - subordinates trusting their supervisors) has on subordinates’ behaviors and attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Less attention is put on understanding the effects that trust from supervisors to subordinates (i.e., the “being trusted” perspective, subordinates being trusted by their supervisors) has on subordinates’ behaviors and attitudes (Brower et al., 2009). Lester and Brower (2003) have found that both subordinates trusting their supervisors and subordinates being trusted by their supervisor have significant effects on subordinates’ behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, Lester and Brower (2003) found that subordinates being trusted by their

supervisors is a more significant predictor of subordinates' behaviors and attitudes than subordinates' trust in their supervisors. Researchers turned their interest to understanding the effects of subordinates being trusted by supervisors (check de Jong et al., 2024 for a review).

Regarding subordinates being trusted by supervisors, Brower et al. (2000) proposed two dimensions of being trusted: supervisors' actual trust in their subordinates (i.e., supervisors' actual trust) and subordinates' perception of trust from their supervisors (i.e., subordinates' felt trust). According to Brower et al. (2000), it is important to examine the effects of subordinates being trusted by their supervisors on subordinates' behaviors and attitudes from the subordinates' perception of supervisors' trust in them. Due to the intangible nature of trust, trust is a subjective perception rather than an objective reality (Mayer et al., 1995; Zheng et al., 2019). In other words, trust can only be interpreted by trustees through trustors' trust-indicating behaviors. However, the trustors' behaviors are only a manifestation of trust and not trust itself (Brower et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 1995). This gives a divergence between trust given by trustors and trust felt by trustees: the trust given by trustors may not translate adequately through their behaviors to trustees; hence, trustees may misinterpret trustors' trust behavior, and subsequently misinterpret the level of trust trustors hold (or do not hold) for them. In other words, there might be a chance that (a) the trustor trusts the trustee, but the trustee does not perceive the trustor's trust, or (b) the trustor does not trust the trustee, but the trustee perceives that the trustor trusts them. Hence, under the narrative of trust affecting behavior, it is ultimately the trustees' perception of the trustors' trust in them, rather than the trustors' actual trust in the trustees, that influences the trustees' behaviors and attitudes (Brower et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 1995).

Under the supervisor-subordinate relationship, the supervisors' trust may not translate adequately through their behaviors; hence, subordinates may misinterpret their supervisors' trust behavior, and subsequently misinterpret the level of trust their supervisors hold for them.

Ultimately, it is the subordinates' perception of their supervisor's trust in them, rather than the supervisor's actual trust in the subordinate, that affects their behavior (Brower et al., 2000). In other words, subordinates' felt trust is a more proximal predictor of subordinates' (i.e., trustees') behavior than that of supervisors' (i.e., trustors') actual trust (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Lewin, 1943). Hence, under the supervisor-subordinate relationship, it is more appropriate to use subordinates' felt trust as the representation of trust, rather than supervisors' actual trust, when examining the effects of supervisors' trust on subordinates' outcomes.

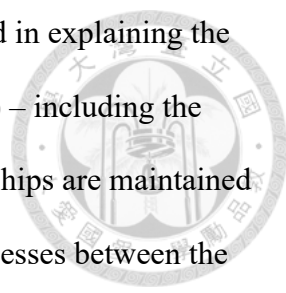
#### **2.4. Felt Trust: A Literature Review**

Felt trust is defined as “a meta-perception comprising a focal party's (the trustee's) belief about another party's (the trustor's) willingness to be vulnerable to them based upon positive expectations of the focal party's intentions or behavior” (de Jong et al., 2024, p. 8). Under the present study's context involving the supervisor-subordinate relationship, felt trust refers to the subordinates' (i.e., the trustee's) perception that their supervisor (i.e., the trustor) is willing to be vulnerable to them because they hold positive expectations regarding the subordinate's behavior or intentions.

The scholarly interest in felt trust began to grow in the early 2000s, notably with Brower et al.'s (2000) conceptual paper that laid out four foundational propositions: (1) felt trust and actual trust are conceptually distinct; (2) trustees may inaccurately perceive the trust trustors hold toward them; (3) it is the trustee's felt trust – not the trustor's actual trust – that most directly influences the trustee's behavior and attitudes; and (4) the trustee's felt trust is shaped by the trustor's risk-taking behaviors toward them, while the trustee's responses to these behaviors, in turn, influence the trustor's future trust. This reciprocal dynamic emphasized the interpersonal and cyclical nature of trust, which had been largely overlooked in earlier research focused solely on actual trust (Dirks & de Jong, 2022).

Following these conceptual foundations, empirical studies emerged to validate Brower et al.'s (2000) propositions. Early studies by Lester and Brower (2003) and Lau and Lam (2008) explored what felt trust impacts by linking it to key organizational outcomes, such as job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Crucially, these studies also demonstrated that the effects of felt trust are distinct from those of actual trust. For instance, Lester and Brower (2003) found that felt trust was a stronger predictor of employee outcomes than actual trust. Similarly, Lau and Lam (2008) showed that felt trust and subordinates' trust in supervisors predicted different patterns of OCB, offering early empirical support for the conceptual separation between felt and actual trust.

Subsequent research shifted focus to explore why felt trust influences organizational outcomes by uncovering its underlying psychological mechanisms. One of the earliest such efforts was by Salamon and Robinson (2008), who found that employees' felt trust enhanced sales and customer service performance through the activation of a responsibility norm. Drawing on the appropriateness framework (Messick, 1999; Weber et al., 2004), they argued that individuals behave in ways they perceive to be suitable for a given context. When employees feel trusted, they interpret this as an indication that their employer has positive expectations of them, thereby triggering a sense of responsibility to meet those expectations – ultimately resulting in improved performance. This line of inquiry inspired further exploration into alternative theoretical explanations for the effects of felt trust. Scholars have since applied a range of frameworks, including conservation of resources theory (Baer et al., 2015), psychological empowerment (Gill et al., 2019), self-determination theory (Skiba & Wildman, 2018), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and self-evaluative perspective (Lau et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2019), to explain how and why felt trust contributes to various individual and organizational outcomes.



The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is the most widely used in explaining the mechanisms of trust and subordinate outcomes (Dirks & de Jong, 2022) – including the mechanism of felt trust. The social exchange theory posits that relationships are maintained and deepened through a series of positive and beneficial reciprocal processes between the involved parties (Blau, 1964). Under the context of felt trust, when subordinates perceive the trust placed upon them, the trust they feel (i.e., subordinates' felt trust) will induce the need for them to reciprocate this trust to maintain and develop this relationship. Subordinates will reciprocate by presenting positive work behaviors and attitudes (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Wayne et al., 1997). The social exchange mechanism of felt trust captures the interpersonal aspect of trust, in which subordinates' positive work behaviors and attitudes serve as reciprocation towards their supervisor's trust in them and therefore an investment in maintaining and developing the relationship.

However, Lau et al. (2014) believe the felt trust–outcome process to be more proactive and self-driven. Lau et al. (2014) proposed the self-evaluative perspective of felt trust, which is a mechanism that is unique to felt trust due to its intrapsychic nature. The perspective posited that when subordinates perceive the trust placed upon them, it will enhance their positive work self-concept – subsequently driving them to present positive work behaviors and attitudes. This self-evaluative perspective of felt trust captures the intrapersonal aspect of trust, in which subordinates' positive work behaviors and attitudes are a product of enhanced positive work self-concept.

The present study believes that both perspectives hold their ground in terms of explaining the underlying mechanisms of the felt trust–subordinate outcome process. Firstly, both the social exchange and self-evaluative perspectives of felt trust are relatively more established and empirically supported (Gill et al., 2019; Kong et al., 2025; Lau et al., 2014; Skiba & Wildman, 2018; Zheng et al., 2019), which gives more support when examining

their relationship. In addition, due to the intangible nature of trust, the process of interpersonal trust is both interpersonal and intrapersonal. An individual's behaviors and attitudes are shaped by their internal cognitive beliefs (an intrapersonal process), which in turn are constructed based on external information they receive (an interpersonal process) (Bandura, 1989). Moreover, individuals' behaviors and attitudes can influence the beliefs of others (interpersonal), thereby shaping the other person's subsequent behaviors and attitudes (intrapersonal) (Brower et al., 2000). The social exchange mechanism captures the interpersonal aspect of trust relationships, while the self-evaluative mechanism captures the intrapersonal aspect. By integrating the social exchange theory and the self-evaluative perspective, both dimensions of the trust dynamic can be addressed – allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how interpersonal trust unfolds.

## **2.5. Felt Trust Dimensions: Felt Disclosure and Felt Reliance, and Their Differential Effects**

Felt trust consists of two distinct dimensions: felt reliance and felt disclosure, as proposed by Gillespie's (2003) Behavioral Trust Inventory (BTI).

Gillespie (2003) developed the BTI by operationalizing trust as "one's willingness to perform trust behaviors" and referred to Zand's (1972) Model of Trust in identifying the two core dimensions of trust behaviors. Zand (1972) categorized the behavioral manifestations of trust into three domains: influence, information sharing, and control. According to Zand (1972), a trusting individual (the trustor) is more open to being influenced by the trusted party (the trustee) (influence), more willing to share accurate, relevant, and complete information (information), and less likely to engage in control or monitoring behaviors (control). Thus, Gillespie (2003) focused on the dimensions of influence and information in constructing the BTI. Drawing on this framework, Gillespie (2003) interviewed 32 triads (one project leader and two members) in a research and development organization. These

triads were asked to identify trusting behaviors without being given prompts or examples. Findings from the interview suggest that the trust behaviors mentioned by the interviewees overlapped with the domains proposed by Zand (i.e., accepting influence and sharing information; 1972). Gillespie (2003) identified the two BTI dimensions – reliance and disclosure – based on the qualitative findings of accepting influence and sharing information being the core dimensions of trusting behaviors. Reliance reflects the trustor’s willingness to delegate responsibilities and accept the trustee’s influence and expertise, while disclosure reflects the trustor’s willingness to share sensitive or personal information.

With the BTI’s operationalization of trust being more aligned to the definition of felt trust (i.e., “the perception that another party is voluntarily willing to assume risk along with an individual”; Lau et al., 2014, p. 117), Lau et al. (2014) adapted the BTI by reframing its items from a trustor’s perspective to a trustee’s perspective to capture felt trust. Rather than asking about the trustor’s willingness to engage in trusting behavior, the adapted version assesses the trustee’s perception of the trustor’s willingness to do so (e.g., “How willing is your supervisor to rely on your work judgment?”). This modification allows researchers to measure felt trust as a meta-perception—how much an individual feels trusted by another. In this adapted framework, felt reliance refers to the trustee’s perception that the trustor is willing to depend on their skills, knowledge, and judgment, granting them autonomy and delegating responsibilities. Felt disclosure refers to the perception that the trustor is willing to share sensitive work-related or personal information. This two-dimensional conceptualization of felt trust has been widely adopted in recent research (de Jong et al., 2024) to better capture the trustee’s perspective on the trust relationship.

Although felt reliance and felt disclosure fall under the overarching construct of felt trust, they carry distinct information. Recent studies have demonstrated that these two dimensions are not merely additive; rather, they exert differential effects on employee

outcomes (Lau et al., 2014; Wang & Huang, 2019; Zheng et al., 2019). An aggregate score of felt reliance and felt disclosure may offer a general indication of how much trust the trustee perceives from the trustor. However, this approach may obscure the unique informational content and psychological signals conveyed by each dimension.



Felt reliance occurs when trustees perceive that trustors are willing to depend on their skills, knowledge, and judgment. This form of trust signals recognition of the trustee's competence, involving the trustees' work-related capabilities, conveying expectations related to task performance and autonomy. In contrast, felt disclosure refers to the perception that trustors are willing to share sensitive work-related or personal information. This conveys a message about the trustee's character, involving the trustee's integrity – that they are viewed as trustworthy, respectful, and unlikely to misuse confidential information.

As Zheng et al. (2019) argue, the distinct information carried by the two dimensions of felt trust may trigger different responses from trustees. As these dimensions communicate different types of information– one about competence and the other about character – they should activate different psychological mechanisms and lead to distinct behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. Understanding these nuances is crucial for unpacking the complex dynamics of trust in supervisor-subordinate relationships and for accurately modeling the effects of felt trust in organizational settings.

## **2.6. The Relationship Between Felt Trust Mechanisms (Social Exchange Theory and Self-Evaluative Perspective) and Felt Trust Dimensions (Felt Disclosure and Felt Reliance)**

In the next section, the present study will explain the social exchange and self-evaluative pathway of felt trust and their respective relationships with the felt trust dimensions (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure). The section includes two parts that explain the social exchange mechanism and self-evaluative mechanism of felt trust, respectively.

The present study will explain the social exchange mechanism of felt trust, introducing subordinate-perceived leader-member exchange (LMX) quality as the mechanism and subordinate's affective commitment to their supervisors as the outcome of the social exchange pathway. Then, the present study will introduce the self-evaluative perspective of felt trust, introducing subordinates' occupational self-efficacy as the mechanism and subordinate's work engagement as the outcome of the self-evaluative pathway.

### ***2.6.1. The Interpersonal Pathway of Felt Trust: Social Exchange Theory***

**2.6.1.1. Social Exchange Theory and Its Implications for Trust.** One prominent mechanism underlying the effects of felt trust is the social exchange mechanism. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) remains the most influential framework for explaining how trust develops and operates within relationships (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). As previously mentioned, the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) posited that relationships are maintained and deepened through a series of positive and beneficial reciprocations between the involved parties. The characteristics of social exchange are: (1) unlike economic exchanges, the value of social exchanges is often symbolic and determined by the receiving party, who assesses its significance based on personal and contextual factors (e.g., expressions of support, respect, or care), and (2) exchanges are target-specific, meaning that benefits are typically reciprocated directly to the individual who provided the original benefit (Brower et al., 2000; Korsgaard et al., 2015); and key assumptions needed for social exchange to maintain relationships are: (1) both parties must perceive some form of benefit from the relationship, and (2) the exchange must involve benefits of comparable value.

Under the context of trust, the social exchange theory posits that trust is built and maintained through a series of reciprocal, mutually-beneficial social exchanges between parties. One party would have initiated the relationship by providing valuable resources to the other, expecting the other party to reciprocate. When the other party returns the favor through

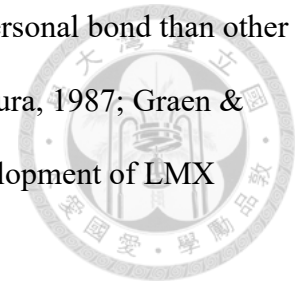
either valuable resources or presenting desired behavior and attitude, the trust relationship is established through the reciprocation (Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995). This reciprocation process inherits trust due to the exchanges characterized as discretionary and is intrinsically motivated by the desire to maintain the relationship. The trust relationship will continue to deepen as more exchanges are made (Blau, 1964; Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995) and more valuable resources are exchanged (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kramer, 1999).

Based on social exchange theory, in the context of a supervisor-subordinate relationship, when subordinates feel that their supervisors trust them, they perceive that their supervisors hold a positive impression of them. These subordinates should have also perceived and benefited from the positive outcomes of their supervisors trusting them, such as empowering them, taking interpersonal risks on their behalf, and delegating important responsibilities (Brower et al., 2009; Eden & Shani, 1982; Kierein & Gold, 2000; Mayer et al., 1995; Spreitzer, 1996). At the same time, subordinates who feel that they are trusted by their supervisors would also understand that the benefits they are provided by their supervisor's trust entail that their supervisors hold positive expectations of them – such as anticipating high performance or constructive attitudes.

Motivated by a desire to maintain the relationship, subordinates may experience an intrinsic need to comply with these expectations. In turn, they are likely to exhibit positive outcomes – such as enhanced work performance, extra-role behaviors, and supervisor-directed actions – as a form of reciprocation (Hao et al., 2021; Skiba & Wildman, 2018).

**2.6.1.2. Leader-Member Exchange: The Mechanism of the Social Exchange Pathway.** Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is often used to operationalize the quality of exchange-based relationships. Rooted in social exchange theory, LMX theory posits that supervisor-subordinate relationships evolve over time and differ in quality depending on the level of mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Liden et al., 1997).

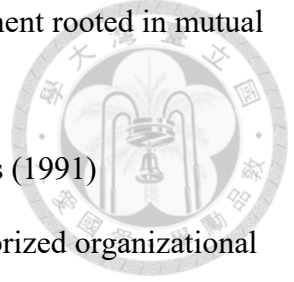
Molm (2001, 2003) has found that reciprocity fosters a stronger interpersonal bond than other exchange processes (i.e., negotiation). LMX literature (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995) has also made similar arguments, stating that the development of LMX stems from the reciprocity process between leaders and subordinates.



In line with this theoretical framework, the present study identifies LMX to represent the mechanism of the social exchange pathway activated by felt trust. High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by the frequent exchange of both tangible resources (e.g., access to materials, task support) and intangible assets (e.g., emotional support, information), reflecting strong relational bonds and shared commitment (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987). Frequent reciprocation happens when the expectations of both parties are met with every exchange (Blau, 1964). In other words, the willingness to continue reciprocating is because one believes that the other will provide them with benefits they expect. Past studies have identified high trust as an important determinant of a high-quality LMX relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995). When subordinates feel that their supervisors trust them, it signals to them that they have achieved their supervisors' expectations. Subordinates would therefore perceive that they hold a high LMX relationship with their supervisors due to achieving expectations signifying a successful reciprocity attempt.

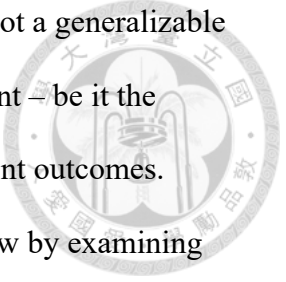
**2.6.1.3. Affective Commitment to Supervisors: The Outcome of Social Exchange Pathway.** When subordinates perceive that their supervisor trusts them – that is, when they experience felt trust – they interpret this as a meaningful benefit within the relationship. In line with social exchange theory, this perceived benefit initiates subordinates' development of a personal connection to their supervisor and activates a motivation to reciprocate in kind. Subordinates will therefore display positive behaviors and attitudes, such as enhanced job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and a positive work orientation (*Hao et al, 2021; Skiba & Wildman, 2018*). One key outcome of this reciprocal dynamic is increased

affective commitment to the supervisor, reflecting an emotional attachment rooted in mutual trust and respect.



Affective commitment is a component within Meyer and Allen's (1991) comprehensive model of organizational commitment. The model categorized organizational commitment into three distinct facets based on employees' psychological mindsets: (1) affective commitment – an emotional attachment and identification with the organization; (2) continuance commitment – a commitment based on the perceived costs of leaving and the lack of viable alternatives; and (3) normative commitment – a sense of obligation to remain with the organization, often shaped by social norms, cultural values, and organizational context. Past studies have posited that affective commitment represents the essence of organizational commitment the most, as its key characteristics (e.g., attitudinal, affective, emotional involvement and attachment, and personal connection and identification) align with the notion of commitment the most (Mercurio, 2015). In addition, among the three organizational commitment facets, affective commitment is the most strongly and widely associated with favorable organizational outcomes, such as lower turnover intentions, higher job satisfaction, and improved job performance (Mercurio, 2015; Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008). The powerful effects of affective commitment are attributed to its intrinsic nature – employees internalize and identify with the values of the target, in contrast to other forms of commitment which are driven by external factors (Mercurio, 2015; Meyer et al., 2004). Given this intrinsic nature, affective commitment is often in line with a high-quality social exchange-based work relationship with the targets, which is the key mechanism of social exchange pathway (Colquitt et al., 2007; Vandenberghe et al., 2004; Wayne et al., 1997).

Beyond the facets of organizational commitment, researchers have also recognized the significance of the target specificity of commitment. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001)



expanded upon the original model by emphasizing that commitment is not a generalizable construct but must be understood in terms of the focus of the commitment – be it the organization, supervisor, or work group – as different foci lead to different outcomes. Vandenberghe et al. (2004) empirically supported this focus-specific view by examining affective commitment to various foci and identifying distinct patterns in both their antecedents and outcomes. They found that: (1) affective commitment to the organization was most strongly predicted by perceived organizational support; (2) affective commitment to the supervisor was associated with two dimensions of LMX – affect and professional respect; and (3) affective commitment to the work group was linked to perceived group cohesiveness. These findings align with the target-specific reciprocity principle of social exchange theory, which suggests that individuals reciprocate benefits toward the specific source from which they receive them (Cropanzano et al., 2005; Korsgaard et al., 2015; Masterson et al., 2000). Therefore, under a supervisor-subordinate relationship, when subordinates receive benefits from their supervisors, subordinates should develop affective commitment specifically to their supervisors as a form of reciprocity towards their supervisors, rather than any other stakeholders (Vandenberghe et al., 2004).

In line with this theoretical framework, the present study identifies subordinates' affective commitment to their supervisors as the most appropriate outcome for the social exchange pathway activated by felt trust. High-quality leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships, in particular, foster stronger affective bonds between supervisors and subordinates (Ferris et al., 2009; Gerstner & Day, 1997). When subordinates feel trusted by their supervisors, they interpret this as a meaningful relational benefit and subsequently feel affectively attached to their supervisors. Subordinates who feel affectively attached to their supervisors are more likely to internalize and identify with the supervisor's values – an essential psychological foundation for developing affective commitment (Marique &

Stinglhamber, 2011; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009; Vandenberghe et al., 2004; Wayne et al., 1997). Subordinates will therefore reciprocate their supervisors' trust through heightened affective commitment specifically toward their supervisor (Colquitt et al., 2007).

**2.6.1.4. The Felt Trust Dimensions under the Social Exchange Perspective.** The present study proposes that both felt reliance and felt disclosure positively influence subordinates' perceptions of leader–member exchange (LMX), which in turn enhances their affective commitment to their supervisor. Although these two dimensions of felt trust convey different types of information about a supervisor's trust in their subordinate, both are interpreted as signals of positive regard and investment in the relationship. As such, they serve as relational “benefits” (Brower et al., 2009) that strengthen the quality of the supervisor–subordinate relationship and activate a social exchange process, leading subordinates to reciprocate through increased affective commitment.

While both dimensions serve as signals of trust, they differ in the nature of the benefits they convey. Felt reliance reflects the subordinate's perception that their supervisor trusts their competence, judgment, and ability to carry out work-related tasks. Chester et al. (1998) have stated that supervisors are more willing to outsource responsibility (i.e., delegate) when they have confidence in the subordinates' ability to complete the task. Furthermore, supervisors who outsource responsibilities should be more willing to provide necessary resources, information, and authority for subordinates to complete the task, as well as mentoring the subordinate in the process (Graen, 1989; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Schriesheim et al., 1998). When subordinates feel relied by their supervisors, they should think that (a) their work ability has received implicit endorsement by their supervisors, and (b) they have received the necessary resources and support from their supervisors to complete tasks. This perception of being entrusted with responsibility and being provided with adequate resources should strengthen their perception of LMX, as these are the indications of

a good supervisor-subordinate social exchange relationship (Byun et al., 2017; Chester et al., 1998; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Skiba & Wildman, 2018). In response, subordinates are motivated to maintain and reciprocate this high-quality relationship by demonstrating greater affective commitment toward their supervisor (Vandenberghe et al., 2004; Wasti & Can, 2008). Past research has also found that reliance-based trust behaviors, such as delegation and job control, trigger the social exchange mechanism (i.e., perceived insider status, psychological contract fulfillment), leading to positive organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment (Birtch et al, 2016; Chen & Aryee, 2007). Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

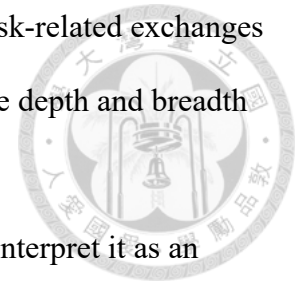
H1a: Felt reliance is positively associated with subordinate-perceived LMX.

H1b: Subordinate-perceived LMX mediates the positive relationship between felt reliance and affective commitment to the supervisors

In contrast to reliance-based trust, disclosure-based trust reflects the supervisor's willingness to share sensitive or personal information with the subordinate. Such self-disclosure is perceived by subordinates as a relational benefit, signaling the supervisor's intention to strengthen and maintain the relationship (Collins & Miller, 1994; Liu et al., 2016). This process is well explained by social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), an extension of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that relationships develop from superficial to deeper levels of intimacy through a gradual process of mutual self-disclosure.

According to social penetration theory, two key dimensions shape relational closeness: depth, referring to the intimacy of the information disclosed, and breadth, referring to the range of topics discussed. Deeper and broader disclosures foster stronger relational bonds. The concept of felt disclosure aligns with these dimensions, as it captures the subordinate's perception that the supervisor is willing to disclose sensitive, personal, or

potentially vulnerable information. These disclosures extend beyond task-related exchanges and may touch on broader aspects of work or personal life, fulfilling the depth and breadth criteria necessary for relational development.



When subordinates perceive such disclosure, they are likely to interpret it as an indication of trust and relational closeness (Collins & Miller, 1994; Cozby, 1973; Masaviru, 2016). Since sensitive information is typically shared selectively, its disclosure signals that the supervisor values the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Collins & Miller, 1994). This perception enhances subordinate-perceived LMX, reflecting a deeper and more meaningful relationship (Michael, 2014; Michael et al., 2005; Saavedra & Van Dyne, 1999). In turn, under the principles of social exchange, subordinates are motivated to reciprocate by demonstrating greater affective commitment to their supervisor as a means of reinforcing and maintaining the relationship (Vandenberghe et al., 2004; Wasti & Can, 2008). Past research has found that disclosure-based trust actions, such as supportive supervisor communication (that is characterized by openness, trust, empathy, and supervisory attention; Michael, 2014), trigger the social exchange mechanism (i.e., LMX) and lead to positive outcomes such as job dedication (Michael, 2014; Michael et al., 2005). Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: Felt disclosure is positively associated with subordinate-perceived LMX.

H2b: Subordinate-perceived LMX mediates the positive relationship between felt disclosure and affective commitment to the supervisors

### ***2.6.2. The Intrapersonal Pathway of Felt Trust: Self-Evaluative Perspective***

**2.6.2.1. Self-evaluative Perspective and Its Implications for Trust.** Another key mechanism that explains the effects of felt trust is the self-evaluative mechanism. This perspective was first proposed by Lau et al. (2014), who posited that felt trust leads to positive subordinate outcomes by enhancing individuals' positive self-concept.

Lau et al. (2014) proposed a self-evaluative perspective, suggesting that subordinates who feel trusted experience a boost in self-worth, which in turn motivates them to perform better and maintain a positive work attitude. As mentioned, this perspective views the trust–outcome process to be more proactive, self-driven, and intrapersonal (Lau et al., 2014). This perspective is also unique to felt trust due to the intrapsychic nature of felt trust (Zheng et al., 2019).

Under the self-evaluative perspective, felt trust serves as salient social information that reshapes an individual’s self-concept. Lau et al. (2014) drew from the self-evaluation literature, which stated that external feedback can reshape one’s internal self-evaluation under two key conditions: (1) when the source of the information plays a significant role in the individual’s life; and (2) when the feedback represents a positive assessment (Gecas, 1982; Turner, 1978). Supervisors fulfill both conditions: they are central figures in subordinates’ work lives (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), and being trusted by them signals a strong, positive evaluation (Lau et al., 2014). When subordinates feel trusted, they perceive that their supervisor sees them as competent, dependable, and aligned with organizational values – thus strengthening their positive self-concept.

When subordinates feel trusted by their supervisors, their positive self-concept should be enhanced, as being trusted by their supervisors signifies that their supervisors hold positive expectations of them – which is a positive evaluation towards one’s work abilities and character. This enhanced self-concept will drive them to behave in ways that are consistent with that elevated self-view (Lau et al., 2014). Several studies have found positive effects of supervisor expectations on subordinates’ behaviors (Kiernan & Gold, 2000; McNatt, 2000).

**2.6.2.2. Occupational Self-Efficacy: The Mechanism of the Self-Evaluative Pathway.** Building on this foundation, Zheng et al. (2019) added perspectives from the social

cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989) into the self-evaluative mechanism of felt trust and proposed self-efficacy, a facet of the self-concept, as the key mechanism of the self-evaluative pathway of felt trust.



According to the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989, 2001), humans are agentic individuals, meaning that they are capable of acting independently, making choices, and asserting control over their own actions and environment. This view emphasizes human behavior as self-motivated and self-regulated (Bandura, 2001). Therefore, cognitive beliefs – which are the mental representations of how individuals view themselves, their capabilities, and their environment – play a huge role in shaping human behaviors (Bandura, 1989, 2001). These cognitive beliefs are shaped by the social information provided by an individual’s environment (Bandura, 2001). Among the cognitive beliefs, none is more central and pervasive than self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989).

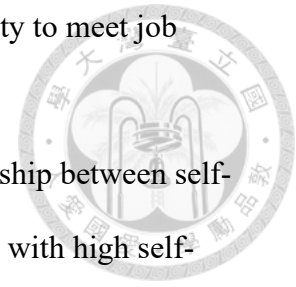
Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one’s capability to control or influence events that affect one’s life (Bandura, 1989, 2001). Self-efficacy functions as both a motivator and a regulator of behavior, operating through four mechanisms: intentionality (choosing to influence future outcomes), forethought (planning and goal setting), self-reactiveness (regulating behavior in line with personal standards), and self-reflectiveness (evaluating one’s thoughts and actions in context). Bandura (2001) emphasized that individuals are more likely to initiate and sustain goal-directed behavior when they believe their actions can produce desirable outcomes. Zheng et al. (2019) specified the self-efficacy focal point to the workplace and proposed occupational self-efficacy (OSE) representing the self-evaluative mechanism of felt trust. OSE is defined as the belief in one’s ability to perform work-related tasks effectively (Çetin & Aşkun, 2018; Schyns & von Collani, 2002) as the self-evaluative mechanism of felt trust. Zheng et al. (2019) posited that, in contrast to general self-efficacy and task-specific self-efficacy, occupational self-efficacy has a medium level of generality

that is most relevant to the effects of felt trust from supervisors. In addition, occupational self-efficacy is contextually tailored to the workplace and thus is most adequate in capturing the self-efficacy dynamics in a supervisor-subordinate relationship. Therefore, the present study deems that occupational self-efficacy is appropriate in representing the mechanism of the self-evaluative pathway due to its intrinsic, motivational, and work-oriented nature.

When supervisors demonstrate trust in subordinates, it may signal that they have observed a consistent pattern of competent work behavior (Schriesheim et al., 1998). In other words, when subordinates feel that they are trusted by their supervisors, they should perceive that their supervisors hold positive regard for their work ability. In turn, subordinates' perception of their supervisors trusting their work ability should reinforce their own belief in their work abilities, as supervisors are a salient source of social information in subordinates' work life (Lau et al., 2014). In other words, the positive social information regarding subordinates' work ability provided by supervisors should reshape subordinates' internal evaluation regarding their work abilities (Lau et al., 2014), they will deem themselves more capable of handling situations and tasks at work, thus enhancing their OSE (Bandura, 1997, 2001; Zheng et al., 2019). Therefore, the present study deems occupational self-efficacy appropriate to represent the mechanism of the self-evaluative pathway.

**2.6.2.3. Subordinates' Work Engagement: The Outcome of the Self-Evaluative Pathway.** High levels of occupational self-efficacy are often reflected in greater work engagement. Work engagement is defined as a relatively enduring, positive psychological state in which individuals invest personal energy into their work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Christian et al., 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; dedication involves a strong involvement in one's work accompanied by feelings of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge; and absorption reflects deep concentration and immersion in work tasks. Engaged

employees are typically energetic, effective, and confident in their ability to meet job demands (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

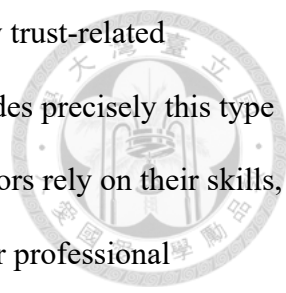


Previous studies have found substantial evidence of the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement. Past studies have found that employees with high self-efficacy are motivated to achieve their goals, which leads to work engagement (Tian et al, 2019; Xanthopoulou et al, 2009; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Alessandri et al. (2015) identified self-efficacy as a key motivational resource that sustains continued effort and goal commitment over time, which are key characteristics of work engagement.

In line with this theoretical framework, the present study deems work engagement to be an appropriate outcome for the self-evaluative pathway of felt trust. According to Bandura (1989, 2001), individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs – confidence in their ability to control life events – demonstrate greater commitment to personal goals, are less influenced by external distractions, invest more sustained effort, and persist longer in facing challenges. These attributes closely align with the core components of work engagement. When subordinates feel trusted by their supervisors, they will have a heightened sense of OSE due to supervisors signaling an endorsement of their work ability. Subordinates' enhanced OSE will motivate them to perform better at work – which leads to increased work engagement (; Tian et al., 2019; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). In line with the above argument, Gill et al. (2019) have found that felt trust increases subordinates' work engagement through a sense of competence.

**2.6.2.4. Felt Trust Dimensions under the Self-Evaluative Perspective.** The present study proposes that felt reliance enhances subordinates' occupational self-efficacy, which in turn promotes greater work engagement.

As discussed earlier, the interpretation of felt trust is nuanced; different types of trusting behavior convey different messages to subordinates. Because occupational self-



efficacy is a work-oriented construct, it is more likely to be activated by trust-related behaviors that are task-focused (Zheng et al., 2019). Felt reliance provides precisely this type of work-relevant signal. When subordinates perceive that their supervisors rely on their skills, judgment, and capabilities, they interpret this as an endorsement of their professional competence (Graen, 1989; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Schriesheim et al., 1998), thereby enhancing their occupational self-efficacy (Gill et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2019). Moreover, reliance-based trust offers clear task-related expectations. When subordinates feel relied upon, they typically understand the work objectives they are expected to meet. This clarity facilitates greater intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-regulation – key components of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). As a result, subordinates experience a stronger sense of control over their work, reinforcing their belief in their ability to succeed (Bandura, 1989, 2001). Gill et al. (2019) found initial support for this proposal; when subordinates feel trusted by their supervisors, their work engagement increased via empowerment, which included a facet similar to occupational self-efficacy (i.e., competence).

Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses (The whole proposed model is demonstrated in Figure 2.1):

H3a: Felt reliance is positively associated with occupational self-efficacy.

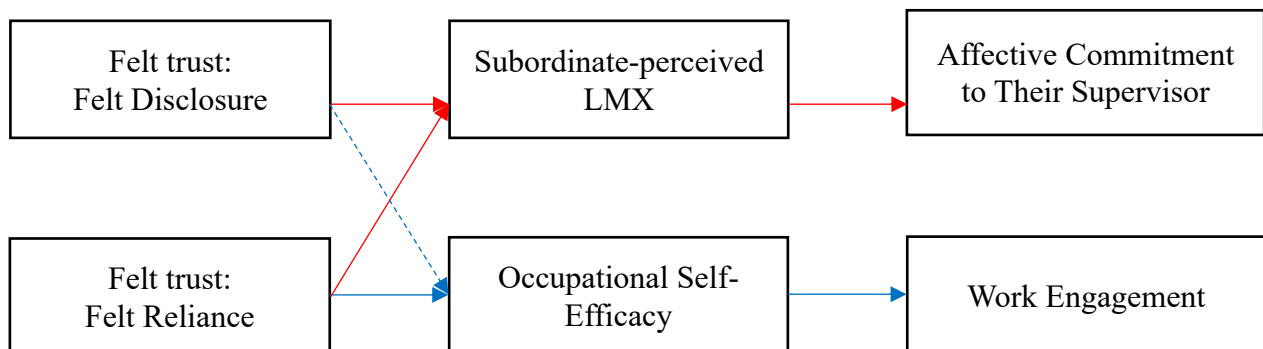
H3b: Occupational self-efficacy mediates the positive relationship between felt reliance and work engagement.

On the other hand, the message conveyed by felt disclosure may vary based on the information being disclosed. Subordinates may interpret disclosed information in highly variable ways, especially when the content is unrelated to work (Gibson, 2018; Zheng et al., 2019). Previous studies have found self-disclosure to be more related to relational processes (Collins & Miller, 1994; Cozby, 1973; Masaviru, 2016) as they signal subordinates as trustworthy, ethical, and personally reliable – traits related more to interpersonal regard than

to work performance (Collins & Miller, 1994; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). However, other studies have also shown that disclosure can enhance self-efficacy when information disclosed is work-related, as work-related information disclosure increases clarity towards the task and job, as well as empowers subordinates (Chen & Bliese, 2002; Zhang & Bartol, 2010) – which is a key determinant of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). Therefore, the present study has chosen to approach this relationship in an exploratory manner as there is yet a consensus to be reached in regards to the relationship between felt disclosure and the self-evaluative pathway.

**Figure 2.1**

*The Present Study's Proposed Model*



*Note.* Red arrows indicate the social exchange mechanism of felt trust. Blue arrows indicate the self-evaluative mechanism of felt trust.

### 3. Method



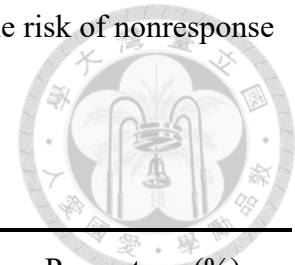
#### 3.1. Participants

The present study collected data from Taiwanese employees who had been in the workforce for at least three months. Participants were drawn from a variety of industries to increase sample diversity and enhance the generalizability of findings related to workplace trust. A two-wave self-report questionnaire design was employed. In the first wave, 223 responses were collected, followed by 140 responses in the second wave. After matching responses from both waves and excluding invalid cases (e.g., incomplete responses or those showing clear patterns of careless answering), the final sample comprised 123 participants.

Of the final sample, 56 participants were male (45.5%) and 67 were female (54.5%). The average age of participants was 39.4 years ( $SD = 11.0$ ), with an average total work tenure of 13.7 years ( $SD = 9.9$ ). Participants were primarily employed in the manufacturing sector (27.4%) and logistics industry (13.7%), holding roles in management (33.1%) and sales and marketing (24.2%). On average, participants had worked with their current supervisors for 4.1 years ( $SD = 5.0$ ) (check Table 3.1 for full details).

Due to the low response rate (62.8%), nonresponse bias tests were done to confirm whether there were significant differences between the respondent and nonrespondent group. The present study filtered out invalid responses from both groups and compared respondents ( $N = 123$ ) and non-respondents ( $N = 180$ ) on available demographic data. No significant differences were found in subordinates' gender ( $p = 1.00$ ), industry ( $\chi^2(9, N = 180) = 6.10, p = .73$ ), job position ( $\chi^2(5, N = 180) = 1.13, p = .95$ ), nor tenure with current supervisor ( $t(178) = 0.80, p = .43$ ), indicating minimal risk of nonresponse bias based on these demographic groups. However, significant differences were found in subordinates' age ( $t(178) = -2.06, p$

= .04) and working tenure ( $t(178) = -2.79, p = .01$ ), indicating a possible risk of nonresponse bias based on subordinates' age and working tenure.



**Table 3.1**  
*Participant Demographic Information (N = 123)*

Category	Type	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	45.5
	Female	67	54.5
Age	(Mean / SD)	39.4 / 11 (years)	(Max/Min): 67 / 17
Working Tenure (year)	(Mean / SD)	13.7 / 9.9 (years)	(Max/Min): 40 / .25
Industry	IT & Communication	4	3
	Finance & Insurance	4	3
	Real Estate	4	3
	Service	16	12.9
	Logistics	17	13.7
	Manufacturing	34	27.4
	Others	44	35.8
	Production	5	4
	Sales & Marketing	30	24.2
	Engineering (inc R&D and QC)	8	6
Job Position	Management (inc HR, IT, and Finance)	41	33.1
	Logistics (inc Supply Chain, Purchasing, Customer Service, and Delivery)	8	6
	Others	31	25
Tenure with Current Supervisor (year)	(Mean / SD)	4.1 / 5 (years)	(Max / Min): 35.4 / .08

### 3.2. Procedure

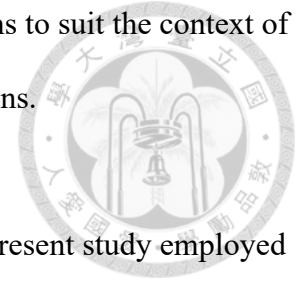
Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered via the survey platform Qualtrics. The survey was distributed using a combination of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) and personal professional networks to reach a diverse sample of Taiwanese employees currently active in the workforce.

To account for the sequential nature of the research model and to mitigate common method variance (CMV), data collection was conducted in two waves, spaced one week apart, to create temporal separation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In the first wave, the questionnaire assessed independent variables, mediating variables, and control variables: the two dimensions of felt trust (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure), subordinates' trust in their supervisor, perceived leader–member exchange (LMX), occupational self-efficacy, participants' demographic information (including gender, age, total work tenure, industry sector, job function, and tenure with their current supervisor). In the second wave, dependent variables were collected: subordinates' affective commitment to supervisor and work engagement, and participants' demographic information. Identifying details (participants' addresses, and the final character of their names) were additionally collected to accurately match responses across the two waves. Rewards were provided to participants who completed both waves of questionnaires.

### 3.3. Measurements

All measurement items were self-reported and rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), indicating the degree to which respondents agreed with each statement. All questionnaires were translated into Mandarin Chinese using the back-translation method recommended by Brislin (1980), ensuring conceptual and linguistic equivalence with the original English versions.

Where necessary, minor adjustments were made to specific items to suit the context of the present study. These adaptations are detailed in the following sections.



### **3.3.1. Independent Variable**

**Felt Trust Dimensions – Felt Disclosure and Felt Reliance.** The present study employed the felt trust scale developed by Lau et al. (2014) to assess felt disclosure and felt reliance, which is adapted from Gillespie’s (2003) Behavioral Trust Inventory (BTI). The felt reliance scale consists of 5 items, with sample items: “When I am at work, [trustor] is willing to rely on my task-related skills or work abilities.” The felt disclosure scale consists of 5 items, with sample items: “When I am at work, [trustor] is willing to share their personal feelings with me.” Both scales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .87$  for felt reliance and  $\alpha = .85$  for felt disclosure.

### **3.3.2. Mediating variable**

**Subordinate-Perceived LMX.** The present study used the 7-item Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) scale developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) to assess subordinates’ perceptions of LMX quality. The original scale includes items with varying response formats; however, scholars have emphasized the importance of using a uniform response format within a scale to ensure it reliably measures a single underlying construct and to enhance the clarity and accuracy of respondents’ answers (DeVellis, 2017; Saris & Gallhofer, 2014). Thus, to maintain consistency across all study measures, the present study adapted the LMX items to align with a standard 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Items were reworded where necessary to reflect this format. For example, the original item “Generally, are you clear whether your supervisor is satisfied with your job performance?” (originally rated from “very clear” to “not clear at all”) was revised to: “Generally, I am clear whether my supervisor is satisfied with my job performance.” The adapted scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .80.

**Occupational Self-Efficacy.** The present study employed the Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schyns and von Collani (2002) to assess subordinates' self-perceived efficacy within the workplace. It is an 8-item scale that includes items such as: "When I am confronted with a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions." The scale demonstrated high internal consistency in the present study, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .89.

### 3.3.3. *Outcome Variables*

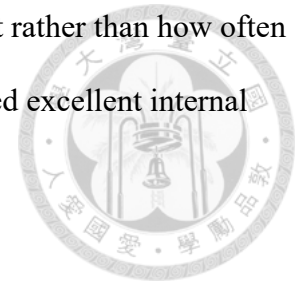
**Affective Commitment to Supervisor.** The present study utilized the affective commitment to supervisor subscale from Vandenberghe et al.'s (2004) affective commitment to multiple workplace foci scale, which assesses commitment directed toward the organization, supervisor, and workgroup. The affective commitment to supervisor subscale is a 6-item subscale that measures subordinates' self-reported emotional attachment to their supervisor. A sample item includes: "I feel proud to work with my supervisor."

To improve clarity, Item 5 ("I am not really attached to my supervisor") was rephrased to a positively worded statement: "I am attached to my supervisor," to avoid potential ambiguity associated with the phrase "not really." The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in the current study, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .87.

**Work Engagement.** The present study employed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) to assess subordinates' level of engagement with their current job. This 9-item scale captures three core dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. A sample item for the vigor dimension includes: "At my work, I feel bursting with energy." A sample item for the dedication dimension includes: "My job inspires me." A sample item for the absorption dimension includes: "I am immersed in my work."

To ensure consistency across all study measures, the original frequency-based response format was modified to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to

“strongly agree,” assessing participants’ agreement with each statement rather than how often they experienced the described feelings. The adapted scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .95.



#### **3.3.4. Control Variables**

The present study included subordinates’ gender as a control variable, given that prior research has demonstrated gender differences in trust-related beliefs and behaviors (Buchan et al., 2008; Haselhuhn et al., 2015).

The study also controlled for subordinates’ age and working tenure, as the nonresponse bias tests showed that subordinates’ age ( $t(178) = -2.06, p = .04$ ) and working tenure ( $t(178) = -2.79, p = .01$ ) of the two groups (respondent vs nonrespondent) were significantly different. In addition, trust is generally formed through repeated interpersonal interactions over time (Korsgaard et al., 2015; Mayer et al., 1995). The development of felt trust may differ depending on the amount of experience regarding interpersonal trust (both in general and in the workplace) one has accumulated (Li & Fung, 2013; Poulin & Haas, 2015). Controlling for subordinate work tenure and age helps account for variability due to differing opportunities to interpret and internalize trust behaviors.

Additionally, the study controlled for subordinates’ trust in their supervisor. As previous research has shown, trusting and being trusted can have distinct yet simultaneous effects on an individual’s attitudes and behaviors (Brower et al., 2009; Skiba & Wildman, 2018). Moreover, these constructs are often interrelated. Therefore, including subordinate trust as a control variable was necessary to isolate the unique effects of felt trust, ensuring that any observed outcomes are not confounded by the influence of subordinates’ trust in their supervisor.

### 3.4. Analysis Plan

This section outlines the analytical procedures employed in the present study. The analysis consisted of three main stages: preliminary analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and hypothesis testing.



#### 3.4.1. Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary analyses were conducted using SPSS version 29.0.1 to examine descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), bivariate correlations among study variables, and the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) of each scale.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for both demographic variables and key study constructs to provide an overview of the sample. Following this, Pearson product-moment correlation analyses were conducted to obtain a preliminary understanding of the relationships among the study variables. Finally, internal consistency reliability was assessed to evaluate the extent to which each scale reliably measured its intended construct.

#### 3.4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA was performed using JASP version 19.1 to assess the construct validity of the measurement model and to evaluate model fit indices. Given the relatively small sample size ( $N = 123$ ) and the study's focus on relationships between latent constructs, it was appropriate to implement an item parceling procedure prior to hypothesis testing in order to reduce the number of estimated parameters (Little et al., 2002; Rioux et al., 2020). The present study employed the item parceling method recommended by Landis et al. (2000), in which items are paired based on their factor loadings—specifically, the item with the highest loading is paired with the item with the lowest loading, the second highest with the second lowest, and so on. This technique was applied to the scales with over 5 items, including subordinate-perceived LMX (originally 7 items, parceled into 2 items), occupational self-efficacy (originally 8 items, parceled into 2 items), and affective commitment to supervisor (originally

6 items, parceled to 3 items). Work engagement, which consists of 3 3-item dimensions, was parceled into 3 items, with one dimension (originally 3 items) parceled as 1 item.

Following parceling, CFAs were conducted to verify the construct validity of each measurement. First, we evaluated the dimensionality of felt trust to determine whether its two components – felt reliance and felt disclosure – should be modeled as distinct constructs. Additionally, model comparison testing was performed to assess whether the proposed measurement structure offered the best fit for the data. The present study tested the hypothesized 6-factor model with alternative models that aggregate similar constructs, allowing for comparison of model fit. The proposed model and alternative models are as follows:

1. Six-factor model (the proposed model), which includes felt reliance, felt disclosure, subordinate-perceived LMX, occupational self-efficacy, affective commitment to supervisor, and work engagement.
2. Five-factor model A: Felt reliance and felt disclosure combined into a single factor.
3. Five-factor model B: Subordinate-perceived LMX and affective commitment to supervisor combined.
4. Four-factor model: Felt disclosure, felt reliance, and subordinate-perceived LMX combined into one factor.
5. Three-factor model: (a) Felt disclosure and felt reliance, (b) subordinate-perceived LMX and affective commitment to supervisor, and (c) occupational self-efficacy and work engagement.
6. Two-factor model: (a) Felt disclosure, LMX, and affective commitment to supervisor, and (b) felt reliance, occupational self-efficacy, and work engagement.
7. One-factor model: All six constructs combined into a single latent factor.

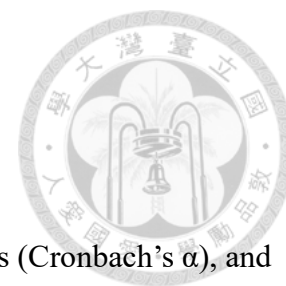
Model fit was evaluated using several goodness-of-fit indices, including the chi-square difference test ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI; values  $> .90$  indicating acceptable fit), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI; values  $> .90$  indicating acceptable fit), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; values  $< .08$  indicating good fit), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; values  $< .05$  indicating good fit, and  $< .08$  indicating acceptable fit), in accordance with guidelines proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999) and McDonald and Ho (2002).

### ***3.4.3. Hypothesis Testing***

Mplus was used to conduct path analyses, with maximum likelihood estimation, to test the hypothesized relationships within the proposed model. Following the procedure recommended by Kenny et al. (1998), the present study first examined the effects of the independent variables on the mediators – specifically, the effect of felt disclosure on subordinate-perceived LMX, felt reliance on subordinate-perceived LMX, and felt reliance on occupational self-efficacy. Next, the present study tested the effects of the mediators on the outcome variables while controlling for the effects of the independent variables. These included the effects of subordinate-perceived LMX on affective commitment to supervisor after controlling felt disclosure and felt reliance's effects on subordinate-perceived LMX, and occupational self-efficacy on work engagement after controlling felt reliance's effect on occupational self-efficacy.

The present study employed the bootstrapping approach recommended by Edwards and Lambert (2007) to test for indirect effects. A bias-corrected bootstrap analysis with 5,000 random sampling was conducted to examine whether the 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for each indirect effect excluded zero – indicating statistical significance.

## 4. Results



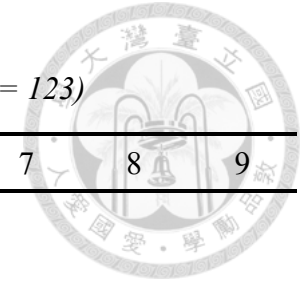
### 4.1. Preliminary Analysis

The means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables are presented in Table 4.1.

As shown, felt reliance was positively correlated with both occupational self-efficacy ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ) and subordinate-perceived LMX ( $r = .61, p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that when subordinates perceive greater reliance from their supervisors, they report higher self-efficacy in their work and perceive a stronger leader–member exchange relationship – providing preliminary support for the study's hypotheses.

As predicted, felt disclosure also demonstrated significant positive correlations with subordinate-perceived LMX ( $r = .64, p < .01$ ). Felt disclosure is also found to positively correlate with occupational self-efficacy ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ). Therefore, the relationship between felt disclosure and occupational self-efficacy is further analyzed through path analysis.

Regarding the associations between the mediators and outcome variables, subordinate-perceived LMX was positively related to both affective commitment to the supervisor and work engagement. This suggests that when subordinates perceive a higher quality relationship with their supervisor, they are more affectively committed and more engaged in their work – again providing preliminary support for the hypothesized model. In contrast, occupational self-efficacy was significantly associated with work engagement but not with affective commitment to the supervisor. This indicates that while higher occupational self-efficacy enhances subordinates' engagement in their work, it does not necessarily translate into a stronger emotional attachment to their supervisor – consistent with the study's theoretical expectations.



**Table 4.1**

*Mean, Standard Deviation of All Variables, Correlation Between Variables, and Scale Internal Consistency Reliability (N = 123)*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Control Variables</b>											
1. Subordinate's Trust in Supervisor	3.21	0.64	(.40)								
2. Subordinate's Gender	0.46	0.50	-.02								
3. Tenure with Current Supervisor (year)	4.14	4.98	-.18*	.11							
<b>Independent Variables</b>											
4. Felt Reliance	3.80	0.56	.35**	.21*	-.01	(.85)					
5. Felt Disclosure	3.51	0.82	.49**	.10	.02	.58**	(.87)				
<b>Mediating Variables</b>											
6. Subordinate-perceived LMX	3.71	0.66	.47**	.17	.05	.61**	.64**	(.89)			
7. Occupational Self-Efficacy	3.78	0.56	-.04	.06	.06	.37**	.25**	.33**	(.89)		
<b>Dependent Variables</b>											
8. Affective Commitment to Supervisor	3.54	0.67	.60**	.01	-.10	.44**	.53**	.62**	.05	(.87)	
9. Work Engagement	3.63	0.72	.14	.23*	.14	.33**	.23**	.40**	.49**	.31**	(.95)

*Note.* Subordinate's gender is a dummy variable, with male coded as 1, female coded as 0. Values in the brackets are the internal consistency reliability of the scale.

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

## 4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The present study conducted CFAs to evaluate the fit of the hypothesized measurement model and to perform model comparisons. The present study first tested the two-factor felt trust model against the aggregated one-factor felt trust model. Then, the hypothesized six-factor measurement model was tested against several alternative models to assess the construct validity of the hypothesized model. The hypothesized six-factor model included: felt disclosure, felt reliance, subordinate-perceived LMX, occupational self-efficacy, affective commitment to the supervisor, and work engagement.

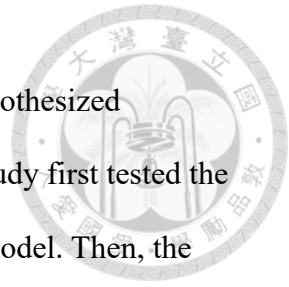
First, a CFA was conducted on the two felt trust dimensions – felt disclosure and felt reliance – to examine whether they should be treated as distinct constructs. The results (as shown in Table 4.2) supported a two-factor model, which demonstrated acceptable model fit:  $\chi^2(34, N = 123) = 84.41$ , CFI = .92, TLI = .90, SRMR = .07, and RMSEA = .11. This model also fit significantly better than a one-factor model, confirming the appropriateness of examining felt disclosure and felt reliance as separate constructs.

As shown in Table 4.3, the CFA results for the six-factor model indicated acceptable fit:  $\chi^2(155, N = 123) = 291.25$ , CFI = .92, TLI = .90, SRMR = .07, and RMSEA = .08. Among all tested models, the six-factor model demonstrated the best overall fit, supporting the distinctiveness of the constructs as specified in the hypothesized model.

## 4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The present study employed path analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. Given the observed positive correlations between felt disclosure and occupational self-efficacy, as well as between subordinate-perceived LMX and work engagement, these relationships were included in the model to further validate the proposed pathways.

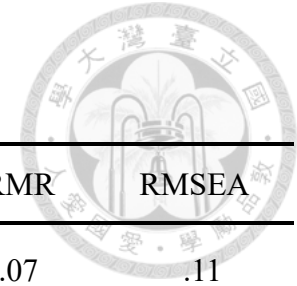
Following the approach recommended by Kenny et al. (1998), the present study first examined the effects of the independent variables (i.e., felt disclosure and felt reliance) on the



mediating variables (i.e., subordinate-perceived LMX and occupational self-efficacy). As shown in Table 4.4, the results indicated that felt disclosure significantly predicted subordinate-perceived LMX ( $B = .32, p < .01$ ) and occupational self-efficacy ( $B = .35, p < .01$ ), and that felt reliance significantly predicted subordinate-perceived LMX ( $B = .36, p < .05$ ). These findings provide support for H1a, H2a, and H3a. Additionally, felt disclosure did not significantly predict occupational self-efficacy ( $B = .11, p > .05$ ), which shows that felt disclosure did not lead to occupational self-efficacy.

Next, the effects of the mediating variables on the outcome variables were analyzed while controlling for the direct effects of the independent variables. As shown in Table 4.4, the results showed that subordinate-perceived LMX significantly predicted affective commitment to the supervisor ( $B = .48, p < .00$ ), and that occupational self-efficacy significantly predicted work engagement ( $B = .45, p < .00$ ). Additionally, subordinate-perceived LMX did not significantly predict work engagement ( $B = .22, p > .05$ ), nor did occupational self-efficacy significantly predict affective commitment to supervisor ( $B = -.07, p > .05$ ), supporting our prediction (check Figure 4.1 for the path analysis diagram).

To further assess indirect effects, bootstrapping mediation analysis was conducted following Edwards and Lambert's (2007) recommendations, using 5,000 random resamples. As shown in Table 4.5, the results of the mediation analysis revealed significant indirect effects supporting the hypothesized model. Specifically, felt reliance demonstrated a significant indirect effect on affective commitment through subordinate-perceived LMX (estimate = .15, 95% CI [.05, .30]), supporting H1b. Similarly, felt disclosure had a significant indirect effect on affective commitment via subordinate-perceived LMX (estimate = .17, 95% CI [.05, .34]), supporting H2b. Furthermore, felt reliance also yielded a significant indirect effect on work engagement via occupational self-efficacy (estimate = .16, 95% CI [.05, .32]), supporting H3b.



**Table 4.2**

*Model Comparison: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Felt Trust Dimensions*

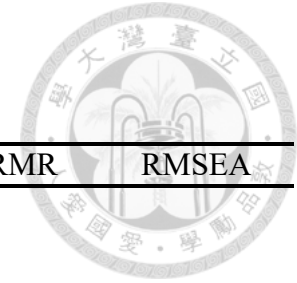
Models		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
2-Factor Model		84.41	34		.92	.90	.07	.11
1-Factor Model	Felt reliance and felt disclosure aggregated	189.13	35	104.72 ***	.77	.70	.10	.19

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 4.3**

*Model Comparison: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for The Proposed Model and Alternative Models*

Models		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
6-Factor Model		291.25	155		.92	.90	.07	.08
5-Factor Model (A)	Felt reliance and felt disclosure aggregated	391.41	160	100.16 ***	.86	.84	.08	.11
5-Factor Model (B)	Subordinate-perceived LMX and affective commitment to their supervisor aggregated	381.20	160	89.95 ***	.87	.86	.08	.11
4-Factor Model	Subordinate-perceived LMX, felt reliance and felt disclosure aggregated	454.00	164	162.75 ***	.83	.80	.08	.12



**Table 4.3 (Continued)**

*Model Comparison: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for The Proposed Model and Alternative Models*

Models		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
3-Factor Model	Felt reliance and felt disclosure; Subordinate-perceived LMX and affective commitment to their supervisor; occupational self-efficacy and work engagement aggregated	593.74	167	302.49 ***	.75	.71	.10	.14
2-Factor Model	Felt disclosure, subordinate-perceived LMX, and affective commitment to their supervisor; felt reliance, occupational self-efficacy, and work engagement aggregated	835.12	169	543.87 ***	.61	.56	.17	.18
1-Factor Model	Felt disclosure, felt reliance, subordinate-perceived LMX, occupational self-efficacy, affective commitment to their supervisor, and work engagement aggregated	969.46	170	678.21 ***	.53	.47	.13	.20

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



**Table 4.4**

*Path Analysis Results (N = 123)*

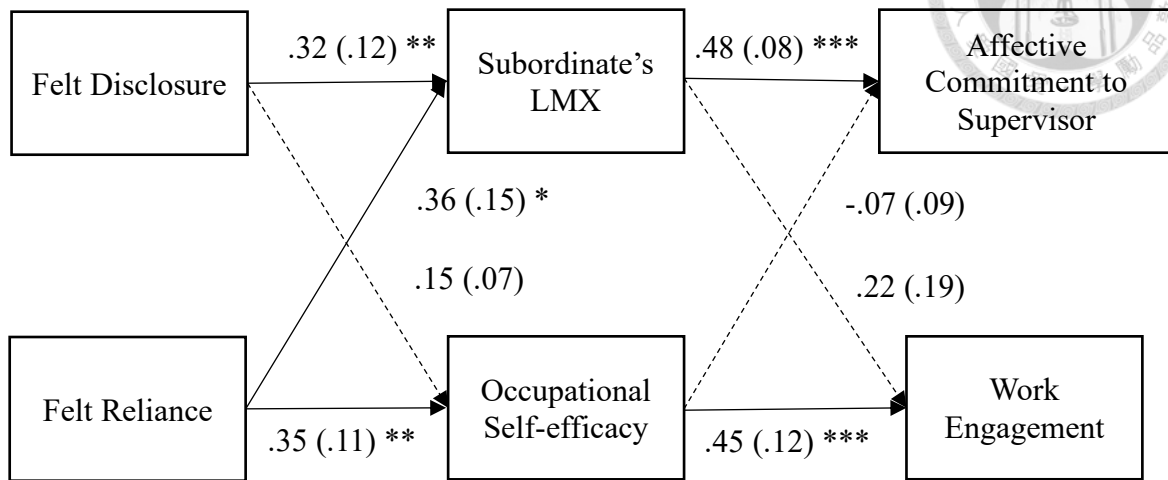
Variables	Subordinate-Perceived LMX		Subordinate's Occupational Self-Efficacy		Subordinate's Affective Commitment to Supervisor		Subordinate's Work Engagement	
	B (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	B (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	B (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	B (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)
(Constant)	(1.24)		(1.95)		(1.73)		(1.01)	
Control Variables								
Trust in Supervisor	.19 (.11)	.18 (.10)	-.19 (.08) *	-.22 (.09) *	.33 (.08)***	.32 (.07)***	.15 (.11)	.14 (.10)
Subordinates' Gender	.03 (.09)	.03 (.07)	-.13 (.09)	-.12 (.08)	-.01 (.09)	-.01 (.07)	.18 (.11)	.13 (.08)
Subordinates' Age	-.01 (.01)	-.18 (.15)	-.00 (.01)	-.07 (.16)	.01 (.01)	.22 (.14)	.01 (.01)	.19 (.16)
Subordinates' Working Tenure (Year)	.02 (.01)	.29 (.15) *	.02 (.01)	.31 (.16)	-.03 (.01) *	-.37 (.15) *	-.00 (.01)	-.04 (.16)
Independent Variables								
Felt Disclosure	.32 (.12) **	.40 (.13) **	.15 (.08)	.22 (.11)	.01 (.08)	.02 (.09)	-.05 (.10)	-.06 (.13)
Felt Reliance	.36 (.15) *	.31 (.14) *	.35 (.11) **	.35 (.10)***	.07 (.14)	.06 (.12)	.08 (.19)	.06 (.16)
Dependent Variables								
Subordinate-Perceived LMX					.48 (.08)***	.48 (.09)***	.22 (.19)	.22(.18)
Subordinate's Occupational Self-Efficacy					-.07 (.09)	-.06 (.08)	.45 (.12)***	.37 (.09)***

*Note: Subordinate's gender is a dummy variable, with male coded as 1, female coded as 0.*

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Figure 4.1**

*Path Analysis Results Diagram*



*Note.* Solid arrows are significant path coefficients, whilst dashed arrows are insignificant path coefficients. Values reported are unstandardized path coefficients, and standard errors are included in the brackets.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 4.5**

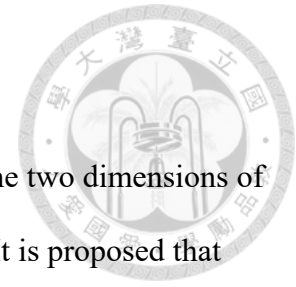
*Mediation Test Results (N = 123)*

Mediating Path	Estimation	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bounds	Upper Bounds
Felt disclosure to affective commitment to their supervisor mediated by subordinate-perceived LMX	.15 *	.06	.05	.30
Felt reliance to affective commitment to their supervisor mediated by subordinate-perceived LMX	.17 *	.07	.05	.34
Felt reliance to work engagement mediated by occupational self-efficacy	.16 *	.07	.05	0.32

*Note:* Results are analyzed through bootstrapping with a random sampling of 5000.

\* $p < .05$ .

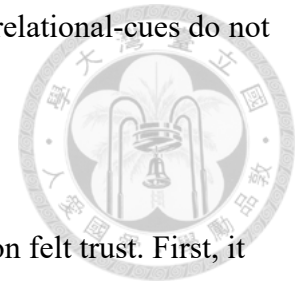
## 5. Discussion



The present study aimed to examine the differential effects of the two dimensions of felt trust – felt reliance and felt disclosure – on subordinate outcomes. It is proposed that these two forms of trust behavior convey distinct messages to the recipient (i.e., the trustee), leading to different interpretations and subsequent behavioral responses. Specifically, under the social exchange framework (Blau, 1964), both felt reliance and felt disclosure would enhance subordinates' affective commitment to their supervisors through increased subordinate-perceived leader–member exchange (LMX). This is because both behaviors are perceived as interpersonal benefits, prompting subordinates to reciprocate to maintain a high-quality relationship. In contrast, under the self-evaluative perspective (Zheng et al., 2019), it is posited that only felt reliance, and not felt disclosure, would enhance subordinates' work engagement by increasing their occupational self-efficacy, as only work-related trust signals are expected to influence task-related self-perceptions.

The model comparison test justified that it was more appropriate to view the felt trust construct as two-dimensional than unidimensional. The results of the path analysis supported the present study's hypotheses. Both felt reliance and felt disclosure were positively associated with subordinate-perceived LMX, which in turn was positively associated with affective commitment to the supervisor. Mediation analysis confirmed that subordinate-perceived LMX mediated the relationships between both felt reliance and felt disclosure and subordinates' affective commitment. Additionally, felt reliance was positively associated with occupational self-efficacy, which was in turn positively associated with work engagement. Occupational self-efficacy significantly mediated the relationship between felt reliance and work engagement. In contrast, felt disclosure was not significantly associated with either occupational self-efficacy or work engagement, consistent with the theoretical assertion that

felt disclosure may only carry relational-related information and these relational-cues do not elicit the self-evaluative pathway of felt trust.

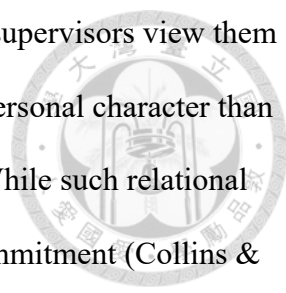


### **5.1. Theoretical Contribution**

The present study makes several contributions to the literature on felt trust. First, it advances the field by examining the distinct mechanisms underlying the two dimensions of felt trust – felt reliance and felt disclosure – rather than treating felt trust as a unidimensional construct. Prior studies often approached felt trust as a single factor, only to uncover differential effects post hoc and found that only felt reliance, and not felt disclosure, affected subordinate outcomes (Lau et al., 2014; Wang & Huang, 2019; Zheng et al., 2019). Hao et al. (2021) further investigated this differential effect and found felt reliance to be a more robust predictor than felt disclosure.


Supporting previous findings, the present study's results indicate that felt reliance and felt disclosure had differential effects in eliciting different felt trust mechanisms, and that felt reliance is a more robust predictor of subordinate outcomes than felt disclosure. Specifically, felt reliance elicited both the social exchange pathway and the self-evaluative pathway of felt trust. Felt reliance led to both heightened subordinates' perception of relationship quality with their supervisors (i.e., LMX) and increased subordinates' belief in their work capabilities (i.e., occupational self-efficacy). On the other hand, felt disclosure only elicited the social exchange pathway of felt trust, in which felt disclosure heightened subordinates' perception of relationship quality with their supervisors (i.e., LMX).

The present study proposes that this divergence stems from the differing nature of the two dimensions: felt reliance is task-oriented, whereas felt disclosure is relational-oriented. Given the task-centric nature of most workplace environments, task-oriented cues such as felt reliance may carry more relevance and thus elicit a broader range of outcomes, supporting previous assumptions proposed by Zheng et al. (2019) and Hao et al. (2021). In contrast, felt



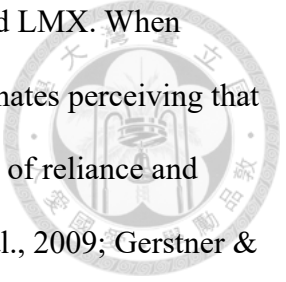
disclosure conveys relational messages that signal to subordinates that supervisors view them as trustworthy, ethical, and personally reliable – traits related more to personal character than to work performance (Collins & Miller, 1994; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). While such relational signals may enhance perceptions of relationship quality or affective commitment (Collins & Miller, 1994; Cozby, 1973; Masaviru, 2016), they do not necessarily provide the task-oriented feedback required to evoke a strong sense of occupational self-efficacy (Zheng et al., 2019). As a result, felt disclosure is less likely to directly influence work-oriented outcomes such as engagement. Past studies have found that felt disclosure neither affected work-based outcomes such as job performance and OCB, nor work-based self-concepts such as OSE and OBSE (Lau et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2019). Nevertheless, felt disclosure plays a crucial role in fostering interpersonal closeness and relational bonds, which in turn encourages subordinates to reciprocate through commitment to the supervisor. However, due to its relational focus, felt disclosure does not enhance subordinates' occupational self-efficacy, as it does not convey competence-based, work-relevant information.

Second, the present study offers a more comprehensive theoretical integration by bridging the social exchange and self-evaluative perspectives of felt trust. Whereas prior research has tended to focus on a single explanatory framework (e.g., Lau et al., 2014; Salamon & Robinson, 2008; Zheng et al., 2019), our findings suggest that both interpersonal and intrapersonal mechanisms operate simultaneously. That is, trust-related behavior from supervisors not only triggers a relational exchange process but also affects subordinates' self-evaluations. Specifically, felt reliance enhances both perceived relational quality with supervisors and beliefs in one's work competence, leading to outcomes that benefit both the supervisor (e.g., affective commitment) and subordinates' individual work (e.g., work engagement).



Third, the present study contributes to the literature by identifying mechanism-specific outcomes linked to each felt trust dimension. Early work on felt trust focused primarily on broad organizational outcomes, such as job performance, extra-role behaviors (OCBI/OCBO), and turnover intention (Lau & Lam, 2008; Lau et al., 2007; Lester & Brower, 2003; Salamon & Robinson, 2008). More recent research has begun to explore contextual and behavior-specific outcomes, such as voice behavior and knowledge sharing (Hao & Han, 2022; Hao et al., 2021; Xiao & Wang, 2021). Building on this trend, outcomes that are uniquely aligned with the characteristics of the two mechanisms are identified: the relationship-oriented, target-specific social exchange mechanism was linked to affective commitment to the supervisor, while the task-oriented, competence-based self-evaluative mechanism was linked to work engagement. The present study's findings confirm that each mechanism leads to distinct outcomes, which also subsequently support the fundamental difference between felt reliance and felt disclosure. Felt reliance is both relational-oriented and task-oriented, whilst felt disclosure is only relational-oriented.

Finally, the present study examined the relationship between felt trust and affective commitment. The relationship between trust and affective commitment has long been established (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer & Gavin, 2005). However, researchers have yet to examine the relationship under the felt trust lens. Past studies on trust and affective commitment have examined the relationship through the trusting perspective: when subordinates trust their supervisors, they identify and internalize their supervisors' values, enhancing their affective commitment to their supervisors (Marique & Stinglhamber, 2011; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009; Vandenberghe et al., 2004; Wayne et al., 1997). This is a more intrapsychic, proactive, and unilateral depiction of the process. From the felt trust perspective, the present study established that subordinates can also develop affective commitment when they are trusted by their supervisors. More specifically, felt trust leads to

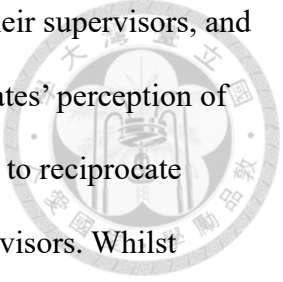


affective commitment to supervisors via enhanced subordinate-perceived LMX. When subordinates feel that their supervisors trust them, it will lead to subordinates perceiving that they hold a high-quality relationship with their supervisors, as behaviors of reliance and disclosure will only display when relationship quality is high (Ferris et al., 2009; Gerstner & Day, 1997). Under the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the perception of a high-quality relationship will drive subordinates to reciprocate supervisors for valuing this relationship, as subordinates will want to maintain this relationally beneficial relationship – therefore enhancing their affective commitment to their supervisors as a form of reciprocation (Colquitt et al., 2007). Examining this relationship under the social exchange perspective captures the interpersonal and cyclical dynamics of trust relationship – which cannot be captured under the trusting perspective.

## **5.2. Practical Implication**

The present study has found that subordinates' felt trust has significant effects on subordinate outcomes, namely affective commitment to supervisors and work engagement. These findings imply that felt trust elicits both relational and work-oriented aspects of subordinate outcomes, highlighting its versatile impact on subordinates. This suggests that making subordinates feel trusted leads to positive outcomes. The present study recommends that supervisors should regularly and overtly confirm with subordinates on whether they feel like they are trusted and actively manage subordinates' felt trust through exhibiting trust-inhabiting behavior.

The present study found that felt reliance and felt disclosure differentially influence subordinate attitudes. This result suggests that different facets of felt trust (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure) carry different information to subordinates, therefore eliciting different subordinate outcomes. Felt reliance carries both relational and motivational information to subordinates. When subordinates feel that they are relied on by their supervisors, they will



perceive that (a) they possess a high-quality positive relationship with their supervisors, and (b) they have good work abilities, judgments, and knowledge. Subordinates' perception of having a good relationship with their supervisors will elicit subordinates to reciprocate supervisors through increasing their affective commitment to their supervisors. Whilst subordinates' perception of possessing good work abilities, judgments, and knowledge will enhance their belief in their work capability, subsequently enhancing their work engagement. Felt disclosure, on the other hand, only carries relational information to subordinates. When subordinates feel that their supervisors disclose personal and sensitive information to them, they will perceive that they have a high-quality relationship with their supervisor. In turn, subordinates will reciprocate supervisors through an increased affective commitment to them.

The present study suggests that supervisors can actively manage subordinates' felt trust through deliberately curating specific trust-related behaviors based on the specific relational or motivational felt trust outcomes they aim to elicit. Specifically, supervisors may elicit subordinates' felt reliance through displaying reliance behaviors, which involve delegating tasks or expressing confidence in subordinates' abilities, and subordinates' felt disclosure through disclosure behaviors, which involve sharing personal values and opinions, or other sensitive information. These trust signals form the foundation for developing respective facets of subordinates' felt trust (i.e., felt reliance and felt disclosure) and ultimately different subordinate outcomes (i.e., affective commitment to supervisors and work engagement). In contexts where work engagement is a primary goal, eliciting subordinates' felt reliance may be more effective than emphasizing felt disclosure. On the other hand, in a context where relationship development is needed, supervisors can elicit both subordinates' felt reliance and felt disclosure to achieve optimal relational results. Despite previous studies mostly finding no effects of felt disclosure on general subordinate outcomes such as job performance and OCB (e.g., Lau et al., 2014; Wang & Huang, 2019; Zheng et al.,

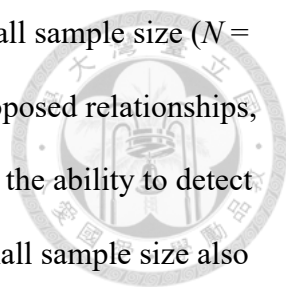
2019), recent studies have found initial evidence of felt disclosure's effects when subordinate outcomes were more context-specific such as voice behavior (Hao et al., 2021). The present study adds to this narrative, alongside self-disclosure literature (Altman & Taylor, 1973), that disclosure is crucial in developing and deepening interpersonal relationships – which is also critical in the workplace (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008).

### **5.3. Limitation**

The present study is not without limitations, and acknowledging them is with the aim of guiding future research in this area.

First, although a two-wave data collection design with a one-week time lag is employed to mitigate common method variance (CMV), all data were collected from the same source—subordinates. This single-referent approach may still have introduced CMV, potentially inflating the observed relationships among variables. However, model comparison testing supported the discriminant validity of the constructs, with the proposed six-factor model demonstrating the best fit among all alternatives. This suggests that the constructs are empirically distinguishable. Nonetheless, it is recommended that future studies incorporate multi-source data, particularly from supervisors, to further reduce CMV and enhance the dyadic nature of supervisor–subordinate trust relationships. Supervisor responses would also strengthen the relational specificity of the model and validate cross-perceptions of trust dynamics.

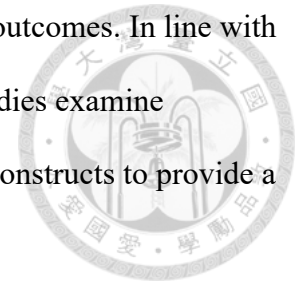
Secondly, the mediating variables of the present study were collected on the first wave of data collection, instead of the second wave. Considering the sequential design of the proposed model, a stricter temporally ordered data collection of variables should be more ideal in avoiding the possibility of reverse causality and CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future researchers should account for the sequences of variables when collecting data to capture a more accurate depiction of the relationships between variables.



Third, another limitation of the present study is its relatively small sample size ( $N = 123$ ). While the study's findings provide preliminary support for the proposed relationships, small samples may reduce the statistical power of the analyses, limiting the ability to detect significant effects – especially for indirect or mediating pathways. A small sample size also increases the risk of Type II errors and reduces the stability and generalizability of the parameter estimates (Kline, 2016). In the context of path analysis, small samples can lead to poor model convergence, unreliable standard errors, and inflated fit indices (Wolf et al., 2013). The relatively small sample size may also occur due to data collection and questionnaire design. Details such as the length of the questionnaire (e.g., number of items), the channels through which it was distributed, and the procedures for participant consolidation and follow-up during the second wave of data collection may have contributed to participant attrition and ultimately insufficient data collection. As noted in prior research, survey fatigue, unclear communication, and lack of structured follow-up protocols can significantly impact response rates and longitudinal retention (Porter et al., 2004; Dillman et al., 2014). Future research should aim to recruit a larger and more representative sample to improve the statistical power and generalizability of the findings (Kline, 2016; Wolf et al., 2013). Additionally, more rigorous participant follow-up strategies and clearer communication during multi-wave data collection are recommended to minimize attrition and ensure adequate sample retention over time (Dillman et al., 2014; Porter et al., 2004).

Fourth, the study focused exclusively on attitudinal outcomes – namely, affective commitment to the supervisor and work engagement. While previous studies have established the practical significance of these attitudes for predicting work-related behaviors (Christian et al., 2011; Vandenberghe et al., 2004), the present study does not empirically link these attitudes to concrete behavioral outcomes. Despite this, our findings provide initial support for the distinct psychological mechanisms evoked by the two dimensions of felt trust – felt

reliance and felt disclosure – which may, in turn, influence behavioral outcomes. In line with Ajzen’s (1988) principle of compatibility, it is suggested that future studies examine behavioral outcomes that are theoretically aligned with the attitudinal constructs to provide a more precise and comprehensive understanding of felt trust’s effects.



Lastly, considering how being trusted includes two dimensions: subordinates’ felt trust and supervisors’ actual trust (Brower et al., 2000), the present study has failed to control for supervisors’ actual trust in the examination. Despite the incongruity between subordinates’ felt trust and supervisors’ actual trust being the common case (Campagna et al., 2019), there is still no denying that supervisors’ actual trust potentially affects the process of felt trust, as the source of being trusted is still supervisors’ behavior and attitude. In addition, the lack of supervisor-rated variables may raise questions as to whether the phenomenon found is exclusive to supervisor-subordinate relationships. The present study suggests that future studies include both subordinates’ and supervisors’ responses in the data collection to get a more accurate picture of how felt trust operates in the supervisor-subordinate relationship.

#### **5.4. Further Direction**

The present study believes that there is still a lot to uncover regarding the mechanisms of felt trust and has proposed a few future directions the literature can further examine to capture a deeper and more comprehensive picture of how felt trust operates.

First, while differential effects of felt trust dimensions are identified, the present study acknowledges that these effects may vary under different contextual or individual conditions. Prior studies have shown that contextual factors such as workplace uncertainty, job autonomy, and job complexity can moderate the felt trust–outcome relationship (Baer et al., 2015; Skiba & Wildman, 2018). Moreover, individual differences such as reciprocity beliefs, pride, intrinsic motivation, and proactive personality have also been found to shape how

subordinates respond to being trusted (Hao & Han, 2022; Xiao & Wang, 2021; Zheng et al., 2021). Future research should explore these boundary conditions to gain a more nuanced understanding of when and for whom felt trust leads to positive outcomes.

Second, most research on felt trust – including the present study – focuses on its positive effects. However, recent work suggests that felt trust can also have unintended negative consequences. For instance, Baer et al. (2015) found that felt trust may lead to emotional exhaustion, especially when subordinates feel pressure to meet elevated expectations. Under certain conditions, felt trust may even facilitate counterproductive behavior, potentially due to the dynamics of idiosyncrasy credit (Hollander, 1992). Idiosyncrasy credit refers to the “earned latitude” individuals accumulate through prior conformity and performance, which may give them perceived license to deviate from norms without facing consequences. As the adage goes, “too much of a good thing can be bad.” Understanding the potential dark side of felt trust, especially from the subordinate’s perspective, is essential – particularly in identifying and mitigating risks related to performance strain or norm violation. This line of inquiry holds practical significance for leaders and organizations seeking to manage trust dynamics effectively.

Third, the present study focused on understanding how felt trust affects subordinates’ outcomes. The present study is an addition to the numerous studies that have concluded that felt trust has a significant impact on subordinate outcomes (de Jong et al., 2024). Future studies can turn their interest to understanding the role of felt trust antecedents play in this model. Numerous studies have also established different antecedents of felt trust, such as leadership style, trusting behavior, justice, etc (de Jong et al., 2024). However, these researchers have yet to incorporate the differential effects of felt trust dimensions in their discussion (e.g., Zhu et al., 2019). Considering how the differently characterized felt trust dimensions induce different behaviors, they should also be elicited by different trust-inducing

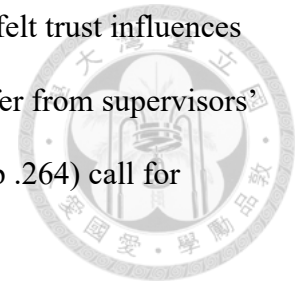
behaviors and attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). By aligning the trust-inducing behaviors with the felt trust dimensions characteristics, it will further clarify why exactly certain behaviors can elicit certain facets of felt trust – providing more precision into our understanding of felt trust.



Fourth, another important direction for future research involves revisiting the measurement of felt trust. In the present study, felt trust was assessed using an adapted version of Gillespie's (2003) Behavioral Trust Inventory (BTI), in which the original items measuring a trustor's willingness to rely on or disclose to a trustee were modified to reflect the trustee's perception of those behaviors. While this top-down adaptation approach has been widely used (e.g., Lau et al., 2014; de Jong et al., 2024), it may not fully capture the lived experiences, psychological interpretations, or contextual nuances of what it means to feel trusted from the subordinate's point of view. Scholars have argued that simply modifying item wording does not guarantee construct validity, especially when measuring meta-perceptions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A more robust approach would involve developing a felt trust scale from the ground up using qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups) and inductive item generation to ensure content validity and alignment with the construct's conceptual distinctiveness. Such a bottom-up measurement strategy would allow future studies to better capture the dynamic, relational, and interpretative nature of felt trust in supervisor-subordinate relationships.

Fifth, felt trust research has mostly been conducted under the supervisor-subordinate context (check Salamon & Robinson, 2008 for an exception). This line of research was developed due to the importance of trust in the supervisor-subordinate context (Brower et al., 2009; de Jong et al., 2024). However, trust between colleagues is just as important (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Schaubroeck et al., 2013), as colleagues are the people individuals interact with the most in the workplace (Uslukaya & Demirtas, 2024). Therefore,

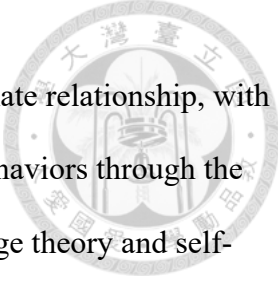
it can be assumed that there is value in understanding how colleagues' felt trust influences individuals' behaviors and attitudes – especially on how the effects differ from supervisors' felt trust. This line of research can address Dirks and de Jong's (2022, p. 264) call for broadening the trust referent studied.



Sixth, building on the previous recommendation to understand the effects of felt trust from colleagues, future research should further attempt to integrate the understanding of felt trust elicited by colleagues with our current understandings of felt trust elicited by supervisors, addressing calls from Dirks and de Jong (2022, p. 264) which urges the addition of other referents (e.g., colleagues and team) in trust literatures, and expanding understanding on level-integration models. This is especially relevant in today's work climate as work becomes more collaborative, interdependent, and embedded (Kozlowski, 2020; Rico et al., 2020).

Lastly, the key construct of relational leadership proposed by Brower et al. (2000) has developed two lines of research: (a) research on understanding how being trusted and trusting simultaneously affect subordinate outcomes (e.g., Brower et al., 2009; Lester & Brower, 2003; Skiba & Wildman, 2018), and (b) research on understanding how actual trust and felt trust simultaneously affect trustee outcomes (Campagna et al., 2019; Hao et al., 2021). The first line of research focuses on the subordinate perspective, where subordinates are both the trustor and trustee. The second line of research focuses on the trustee perspective, which can be the subordinate or the supervisor. The integration of these perspectives can lead to a more accurate and precise understanding of the unique effects of each facet of trust, or even the interactive effects between these different facets. This feat can also address calls from Dirks and de Jong (2022, p. 264), in which they urge the need to integrate the trustor and trustee perspectives of trust.

## 5.5. Conclusion



The present study examined trust within the supervisor–subordinate relationship, with a specific focus on how trust affects subordinates’ work attitudes and behaviors through the lens of felt trust. Drawing on two theoretical frameworks: social exchange theory and self-evaluative theory, the differential effects of the two dimensions of felt trust – felt reliance and felt disclosure – on subordinate outcomes were investigated, and the present study approached this question by exploring the underlying psychological mechanisms associated with each dimension. The research findings showed that both felt reliance and felt disclosure activated the social exchange mechanism by increasing subordinate-perceived leader–member exchange (LMX), which in turn led to greater affective commitment to the supervisor. However, only felt reliance was found to activate the self-evaluative mechanism, enhancing occupational self-efficacy and, subsequently, work engagement.

The present study underscores the importance of considering perspective alignment between the source of trust and its targeted outcomes. By examining how the two felt trust dimensions operate through distinct mechanisms, the present study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the trust–outcome relationship. Moreover, by accounting for the specific characteristics of the trust behaviors, felt trust mechanisms, and the contextual dynamics of supervisor–subordinate relationships, the study offers a more comprehensive and precise understanding of how felt trust shapes employee attitudes and behaviors in organizational settings.

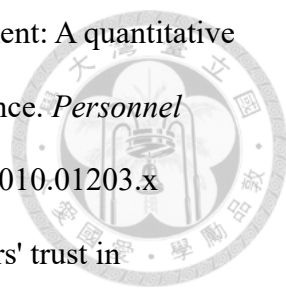
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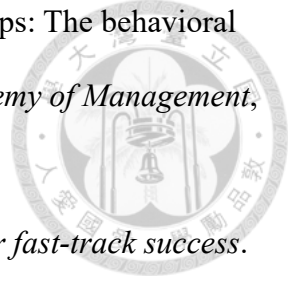
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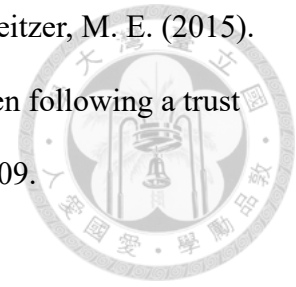
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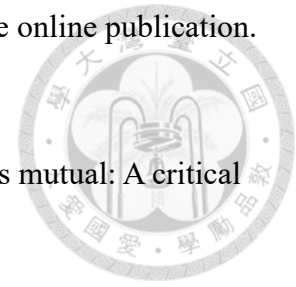
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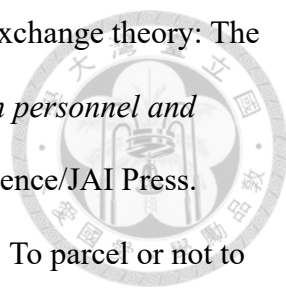
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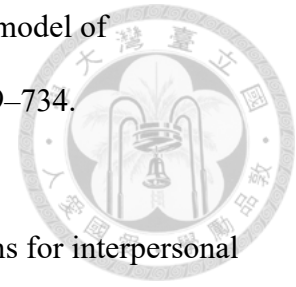
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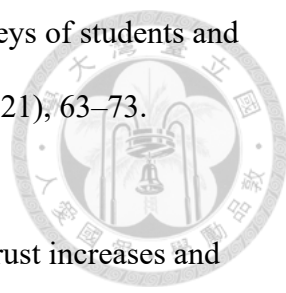
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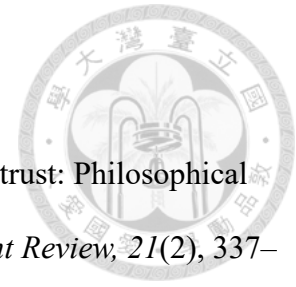
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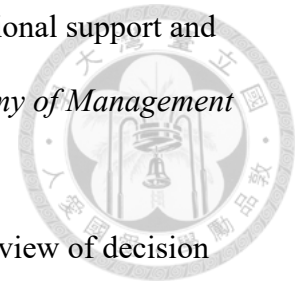
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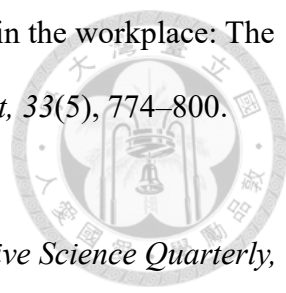
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## Appendix



### Appendix 1. Survey Instructions

您好：

感謝您撥空參與我們的研究。這是一份關於員工職場體驗的調查問卷，主要希望透過一系列問卷了解「您與主管的互動情形」以及「您目前在職場中的工作體驗」，調查對象為工作超過三個月的工作者。本研究將進行三階段資料收集，共三份問卷，間隔一週時間作答。第一、二階段由您填寫，第三階段由您的主管填寫。我們將於第二階段填寫完畢時，傳送邀請信給您所邀請參與研究的主管。三份問卷填答完成且為有效問卷者，兩人將獲得抽 Airpods Pro 2 的機會，作為答謝。您的填答只有本研究研究人員得以瀏覽，並不會傳送給主管，請放心填答。本問卷為第一階段問卷，問卷總共 118 題，分為四個部分：個人價值調查 5 題、主管部屬互動調查 66 題、個人工作價值觀調查 41 題，以及基本資料 6 題，約需 15-20 分鐘。本問卷為了配合前後三次的資料配對以及發送得獎通知，將蒐集您的電子信箱。資料使用僅供學術研究使用，進行研究結果分析時，將對資料做整體性分析，不會針對個人或單一團隊進行分析，並於研究分析後將可辨識的個人資料刪除。研究團隊將盡力維護您的隱私及善盡保密責任，不會洩漏您的個人隱私或帳號，敬請安心作答。

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Email：xxxxxxxx@ntu.edu.tw 2024 年 08 月

若您與您的主管有意願參與，請在此留下您與您主管的 E-mail，我們會在一週後將寄送第二份問卷至您所提供的 E-mail，並於兩週後寄送第三份問卷至您提供的主管信箱。電子信箱與姓名最後一個字僅供資料配對使用，請放心填寫。

第○部分 1 您的電子信箱 \_\_\_\_\_

第○部分 2 您姓名的最後一個字 \_\_\_\_\_

第○部分 3 您主管的電子信箱 \_\_\_\_\_

第○部分 4 您主管姓名的最後一個字 \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2. Demographic Information Collection

### 個人基本資料

【第四部分：個人基本資料】：共 6 題，此為第 1-6 題

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#### 第四部分 1 您的性別

生理男

生理女

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#### 第四部分 2 您的年齡

歲 \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 第四部分 3 您的總工作年資

年 \_\_\_\_\_

月 \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 第四部分 4 您目前所服務的組織產業別

資訊與通訊傳播 (1)

金融與保險業 (2)

不動產 (3)

服務業 (4)

住宿與餐飲業 (5)

運輸與倉儲業 (6)

一般製造業 (7)

營造業 (8)

高科技電子業 (9)

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其他 (10)

第四部分 5 您的工作性質

生產 (1)

業務 (含銷售、行銷企劃) (2)

工程 (含研究開發、品管) (3)

管理 (含人事、資訊、財務) (4)

後勤 (含物料、採購、客服、出貨) (5)

其他 (6)

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第四部分 6 您與現任主管共事多久了？

年 \_\_\_\_\_

月 \_\_\_\_\_

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### Appendix 3. Questionnaire Items

Felt trust 知覺信任量表	
Reference: Gillespie, N. (2003). Measuring trust in working relationships: The behavioral trust inventory. Melbourne Business School.	
Felt reliance 知覺依賴	
1	At work, your supervisor is willing to rely on your work-related judgments. 在工作中，主管願意依賴我在工作上的判斷。
2	At work, your supervisor is willing to rely on your task-related skills and abilities. 在工作中，主管願意依賴我在工作任務上的技能與能力。
3	At work, your supervisor is willing to depend on you to handle an important issue on their behalf. 在工作中，主管願意依賴我代他處理重要的問題。
4	At work, your supervisor is willing to rely on you to represent their work accurately to others. 在工作中，主管願意相信我能夠很準確地向其他人表達他的工作在做什麼。
5	At work, your supervisor is willing to depend on you to back them up in difficult situations. 在工作中，主管願意在困難情況下依賴我的支持。
Felt disclosure 知覺揭露	
6	At work, your supervisor is willing to share their personal feelings with you. 在工作中，主管願意和我分享他的個人感受
7	At work, your supervisor is willing to confide in you about personal issues that are affecting their work. 在工作中，主管願意向我吐露正影響著他工作的私人問題
8	At work, your supervisor is willing to discuss how they honestly feel about their work, even negative feelings and frustration. 在工作中，主管願意和我討論他對工作的真實感受，就算是負面感受或挫折也可以
9	At work, your supervisor is willing to discuss work-related problems or difficulties that could potentially be used to disadvantage them. 在工作中，主管願意和我討論可能被用來對他造成不利的工作問題或困難
10	At work, your supervisor is willing to share their personal beliefs with you. 在工作中，主管願意和我分享他的個人信念

Leader-Member Exchange 主管部屬交換關係	
Reference: George B. Graen, Mary Uhl-Bien(1995), Relationship-based approach to leadership: development of leader-member exchange(LMX) theory of leadership over 25years: applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. <i>The leadership quarterly</i> , 6(2), 219-247.	
1	Usually, I would know how satisfied my supervisor is with what I do. 一般來說，我清楚主管是否滿意我的工作表現。
2	My supervisor understand my job problems and needs. 我覺得主管非常了解我工作上的問題及需要。
3	My supervisor recognizes my potential. 我覺得主管對我的潛力非常了解。
4	Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has buit into his/her position, my supervisor would use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work? 不論主管的職權有多大，他都會運用他的職權來幫我解決工作上重大的難題。
5	Regardless of the amount of formal authority, my supervisor has, he/she would “bail me out,” at his/her expense. 不論主管的職權有多大，他都會犧牲自己的利益來幫助我擺脫我工作上的困境。
6	I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so. 我很信任主管，即使他不在場，我會替他所作出的決策辯護和解釋。
7	I would characterize my relationship with my supervisor to be very good. 我和主管的工作關係非常好。

Affective Commitment to Supervisor 對主管的情感承諾	
Reference: Vandenberghe, C., Bentein, K., & Stinglhamber, F. (2004). Affective commitment to the organization, supervisor, and work group: Antecedents and outcomes. <i>Journal of vocational behavior</i> , 64(1), 47-71.	
1	7. I feel a sense of respect for my supervisor. 我尊敬主管。
2	8. I appreciate my supervisor. 我欽佩主管。
3	9. I feel proud to work with my supervisor. 能與我的主管共事，我引以為傲。
4	10. My supervisor means a lot to me. 主管對我來說很重要。
5	11. I am attached to my supervisor. 我依賴主管。
6	12. I feel little admiration for my supervisor. (R) 我不怎麼欣賞主管。(R)

Occupational Self-Efficacy 工作中自我效能感	
Reference: Schyns, B., & Von Collani, G. (2002). A new occupational self-efficacy scale and its relation to personality constructs and organizational variables. <i>European journal of work and organizational psychology</i> , 11(2), 219-241.	
1	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations in my job 我的機智，讓我知道如何面對工作中的突發狀況
2	If I am in trouble at my work, I can usually think of something to do 當我在工作中遇到困難時，我通常可以想到該做的事
3	I can remain calm when facing difficulties in my job if I try hard enough 只要我夠努力，我在工作中遇到困難時都可以保持冷靜
4	When I am confronted with a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions 當我在工作中遇到問題時，我通常可以找到多個解決方案
5	No matter what comes my way in my job, I'm usually able to handle it 無論工作中遇到什麼困難，我都能應對
6	My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for my occupational future 我過去的工作經驗，為我的職涯未來鋪好了路
7	I meet the goals that I set for myself in my job 我實現了我為自己在工作中所訂下的目標
8	I feel prepared to meet most of the demands in my job 我已經準備好面對工作中的各種要求

Work Engagement 工作敬業	
Reference: Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. <i>Educational and Psychological Measurement</i> .66, 701-716.	
1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy. 在我工作時，我覺得充滿動力
2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous. 在我工作上，我覺得強健且精力充沛
3	I am enthusiastic about my job 我對我的工作充滿熱忱
4	My job inspires me 我的工作會激勵我
5	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work. 當我早上起床，我會想要去工作
6	I feel happy when I am working intensely. 當我認真工作時，我覺得很快樂
7	I am proud of the work that I do. 我對於工作所做的事情引以為傲
8	I am immersed in my work. 我會埋首於工作中
9	I get carried away when I am working. 當我工作時，會覺得很振奮

