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From differential leadership to affective commitment: a sequential mediation model

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Doctor of Management

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I declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

Differential leadership is a culturally-embedded leadership style widely existing in Chinese organizations, which can accurately describe and summarize the psychology and behavior of Chinese leaders. Its effects are divergently reported in scientific literature being taken as bringing more advantages than disadvantages but also the reverse. This doubt is too important to remain unanswered and so this study asks: Will differential leadership affect subordinate affective commitment and what is the influence mechanism?

After the theory and literature review, we put forward the research hypotheses and theoretical model, which focus on the impact of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment, the mediation of insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice, and the moderation of employee categorization standard. With a sample of 199 dyads of subordinates and supervisors, where data was collected in two waves, after testing for psychometric quality of measures, findings show a sequential mediation model linking differential leadership to affective commitment via self-ascribed insider / outsider perception and subordinate perceived justice which is partially sensitive to the moderation of employee categorization standard. This largely supports the idea that differential leadership is positive for Chinese organizations, and provides clarification on previous contradictory findings relating it to organizational justice. However, it also uncovers boundary conditions and psychological self-serving bias that show it is a complex phenomenon.

Keywords: differential leadership; insider/outsider; affective commitment; employee categorization standard; subordinate perceived justice

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Resumo

A liderança diferencial é um estilo de liderança culturalmente integrado e amplamente existente nas organizações chinesas, que pode descrever e resumir com precisão a psicologia e o comportamento dos líderes chineses. A literatura científica reporta efeitos divergentes sugerindo que deve ser tomada como mais vantajosa que desvantajosa, mas também o contrário. Esta dúvida é demasiado importante para permanecer sem resposta e por isso este estudo questiona: Em que medida a liderança diferencial afecta o compromisso afectivo dos subordinados e qual é o mecanismo de influência?

Após a revisão da teoria e da literatura, apresentamos as hipóteses de investigação e o modelo teórico, que se centram no impacto da liderança diferencial no compromisso afectivo dos subordinados, na mediação do estatuto de interno/externo e na justiça percebida pelos subordinados, bem na moderação do padrão de categorização dos subordinados. Com uma amostra de 199 díades de subordinados e supervisores, com dados foram recolhidos em duas ondas, após testar a qualidade psicométrica das medidas, os resultados mostram um modelo sequencial de mediação ligando a liderança diferencial ao compromisso afectivo através do estatuto percebido de interno/externo e da justiça percebida pelos subordinados, que é parcialmente sensível à moderação do padrão de categorização de subordinados. Isto apoia largamente a ideia de que a liderança diferencial é positiva para as organizações chinesas, e esclarece anteriores conclusões contraditórias relacionadas com a justiça organizacional. No entanto, também indica condições de fronteira e processos psicológicos que mostram que se trata de um fenómeno complexo.

Palavras-chave: liderança diferencial; interno/externo; compromisso afetivo; padrão de categorização dos subordinados; justiça percebida

JEL: M12, M54

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摘要

差序式领导是一种广泛存在于中国组织中且具有本土性的领导风格，能精确描述与概括中国领导者的心理与行为。目前关于差序式领导是利大于弊还是弊大于利的研究结论不一，对这一问题的研究刻不容缓，因此本文试图回答：差序式领导是否影响员工情感承诺？其影响机制又是怎样的呢？

在文献回顾的基础上，我们提出研究假设和理论模型，主要研究差序式领导对员工情感承诺的影响，自己人/外人、员工公平感知的中介作用和员工归类标准的调节作用。研究采用面对面问卷调查，分两批次收集数据，最终得到下属和主管配对填写的 199 份问卷作为样本。通过检验量表质量和数据分析，研究结果表明，自己人/外人感知在差序式领导和情感承诺间存在完全中介作用，员工公平感知本身不能构成一个中介变量，员工分类标准对中介效应起到调节作用。这一研究结果很大程度上支持了差序式领导对中国组织具有积极作用这一观点，为先前差序式领导与组织公平的研究发现不一致提供了说明。同时，本文也揭示了差序式领导的边界条件和自我服务偏差，说明差序式领导是个复杂的现象。

关键词：差序式领导；自己人/外人；情感承诺；员工归类标准；员工公平感知

JEL: M12, M54

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Acknowledgements

Lucky and fortunate, Jingwei is cultivated by the school, belectured by the supervisors, helped by the fellows. True talents never advertise, but they are always shining; words of thanks words might end, but gratitude is everlasting; dare not to guarantee a payback, only a faraway bow with the most sincerity. Thanks to the school of economics and management of UESTC, to ISCTE, to my awesome supervisors professor Nelson Ramalho and professor Jihong Wu, to my great friends Xingyu Zhong, Chengmei Wang, Hongyue Zhang and each classmate of Dom 2017.

There are many gathering around you, but there is not always a good judge of talent,

There are many understanding you, but there is not always a soulmate.

May everyone encountered: successes be with you and everything surpasses expectations,

May the blossom expel the epidemic,

May the world peace!

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致谢

经纬有幸，得学校细心栽培，幸导师谆谆教诲，遇同门耐心帮助。桃李不言，下自成蹊；言辞有尽，师恩永记；不敢言报，罄折长揖。感谢电子科技大学经济与管理学院、里斯本大学学院，我最棒的导师 Nelson Ramalho 教授、吴继红教授，我的挚友钟兴宇、王成梅、张红月以及 DOM2017 级的每一位同学。

相遇有期，伯乐难遇。

知性有余，知音难觅。

愿相遇、相知的每一位：他日凌云，万事胜意。

愿花开疫散，世界和平！

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background

1.1.1 Practical background

The 21st century marks an era of fierce competition, and the focus of competition has shifted from physical resources to technology and knowledge competition, which can be attributed to the competition of talents. For enterprises, talents are a crucial strategic resource and an important bargaining chip for enterprises to maintain their core competitiveness in the market. Therefore, how to retain core employees in the fierce competition for talent is a problem that enterprise managers have to pay attention to. Abundant research has shown that organizational commitment can predict employee retention intention (L. J. Wang & Li, 2011). However, why do some employees have strong organizational commitment, while others have low organizational commitment? It has been found through research and management practice that leadership style and leadership behavior have a significant impact on employee organizational commitment.

When reviewing the leadership studies, what are familiar to us are traits theories leadership, leadership behaviors theories, contingency theories of leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership and LMX, which are set up through Western management practice and cultural preset. In Chinese situation, it seems the scholars and managers in China are repeating Western management theory to prove its generalization. Due to the lagging of indigenous management theory, when explaining Chinese management situations, western leadership are fully borrowed or just modestly modified, which ignored the historical origin and current situation of Chinese management and needs to be addressed (Tsui, 2022), leading to a biased interpretation. In fact, an effective leadership in a certain culture may fail in another (Hofstede, 1980), and the concept, characteristics and manifestations of leadership will vary with the cultural context (Fan & Zheng, 2000). Chinese and western management are different because of the huge difference between their cultural backgrounds. In Confucian culture, people may be intimate or distant. Fei (1947) described this phenomenon as “chaxu pattern” (differential pattern), based on which B. X. Zheng (1995) proposed differential leadership, a leadership style which categorize subordinates into insiders (i.e. relatives, team founders) and outsiders and

treat them differently. Differential leadership has been widely verified in Chinese management. In the case study of S. S. Liu et al. (2015), a private enterprise classifies employees into core group, close emotion group, close tool group, loose group according to their competence, loyalty and emotional attach with the organization. Differential human resources management are practiced on different employees. As the leader in the case reported by S. S. Liu et al. (2015, pp. 15) stated “Of course these are intimate and remote relationship; decades of friendship are a guarantee of trust and dependence for sure; when in home, rely on brothers, when go outside, rely on friends, this is the same to enterprises”, “employees are different concerning competence and loyalty; core staff have followed us a long time, they are competent and familiar; old staff are emotionally closed and reliable”.

In our perception, differential leadership as a bias leadership seems to induce negative employee reactions, which in turn will lead to negative organizational outcomes. However, many studies have proved that differential leadership is a more locally adaptive leadership style, which is more in line with China’s cultural situation and actual situation than Western leadership style, and its affective commitment to employees may also produce positive influence. Therefore, this study explores the impact of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment, which can re-verify the effectiveness of differential leadership, improve managers’ awareness of the importance of differential leadership, and help managers adopt appropriate differential leadership behaviors to improve subordinate affective commitment, enabling companies to retain employees and maintain their competitiveness.

1.1.2 Theoretical background

(1) Differential leadership becomes a hotspot in enterprise management

With the continuous improvement of China’s influence in the international community, more and more people pay attention to the phenomenon in Chinese organizations. Management practices show that management theory born from western culture cannot explicitly explain Chinese management, so it is a common sense of scholars to construct Chinese management theory under Chinese background. Scholars have noticed that the differential pattern proposed by Fei (1947) can explain the management phenomenon in Chinese organizations well. Different from the group pattern in the West, differential leadership has the characteristics of self-centered, outward-diffusing, and flexible, and has blurred boundaries between the group and the self, between the public and the private. Differential pattern is regarded as a unique tradition born in Chinese cultural environment (H. L. Zhang & Chen, 2018). B. X. Zheng (1995)

firstly proposed differential leadership and assumed leaders to divide subordinates into insiders and outsiders according to their competence, loyalty and guanxi with the supervisor, and insider subordinates are treated with more bias. Since then, differential pattern and differential leadership have become a research hotspot in Chinese indigenous management research (S. S. Liu et al., 2015), and scholars tend to use differential leadership to explain the leader behavior and leadership effectiveness in China. Extensive research has proved its existence in Chinese organization (H. H. Hu et al., 2004; D Y Jiang & Zhang, 2010; W. L. Xu et al., 2002). It is “Chinese own leadership” (D Y Jiang & Zheng, 2014), and may affect employees’ organizational behavior and result, e.g. differential leadership can improve employee innovation behavior (Du, 2016; Z. H. Yang, 2018; Yuan et al., 2016; C. Q. Zhang & Wang, 2018), lower employee turnover tendency (Shi & Lei, 2016), reduce employee counterproductive behavior (X. L. Guo, 2014; Z. C. Lin, 2016), improve insider subordinates’ self-efficacy so as to reduce employee silence behavior (W. S. Yang et al., 2018), improve employees’ organizational identification so as to promote employee voice behavior (A. Gao, 2015).

(2) The influence mechanism of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment requires further study

Since the proposal of differential leadership, scholars have conducted extensive research, including its origin and theory foundation, measurement, influence on employee behavior, attitude and perception, and influence on the team level. Still, there are limited research on differential leadership, and when discussing its influence on individual attitudes and behaviors, scarce research takes subordinate affective commitment as the outcome of differential leadership to explore its influence mechanism. Ever since Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed affective commitment as one dimension of organizational commitment, the research on affective commitment has increased, some of which supported the influence of western leadership, i.e. transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, on employees’ affective commitment. As for Chinese indigenous leadership, scholars focus more on paterlistic leadership, less attention is paid to differential leadership. Even some studies pointed out that differential leadership may influence subordinate organizational commitment (A. Gao, 2015), how differential leadership influences subordinate affective commitment and the boundary condition have not been fully researched.

Differential leadership emphasizes bias treatment after having categorized the employees, so categorization standard is important. In L. M. Gao and Wang (2013)’s analysis on differential leadership and cultural adaptation, they pointed out that the legitimacy of supervisors’

categorization standard is a prerequisite for subordinate to tolerate and wait, that is, leaders' subordinate categorization standard affects subordinates' acceptance of the differential treatment. Although previous studies have noted this, most are from the leader's perspective, but in fact, when subordinates perceived the categorization standard used by the supervisors, the effectiveness of differential leadership will be influenced. Therefore, when considering the influence of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment, we include subordinate perceived categorization standard to explore the boundary condition of differential leadership.

1.2 Research purpose and content

1.2.1 Research purpose

This thesis has two research purposes. The first purpose is to uncover the mechanisms that connect differential leadership with affective commitment, which ultimately will translate as a complete sequential mediation model. As will be explained, the choice falls upon subordinate perceived insider/outsider status and the four dimensions of subordinate perceived justice as suitable intervening variables, aiming to explain the influence mechanism of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment. Due to the existence of divergent findings in literature, the second purpose is to probe for boundary conditions, i.e. to examine the moderation of employee categorization standard on the relationships between differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice, subordinate perceived insider/outsider perception and subordinate perceived justice.

1.2.2 Research content

This study consists of six chapters.

The first chapter is introduction. This chapter starts from practice and introduces the research background, research purpose and significance, and expounds the research content, research methods and technical route.

The second chapter is theory and literature review. The cultural origin, theoretical basis and related research of differential leadership are illustrated, and the concept, measurement and related research of subordinate perceived justice, perceived insider/outsider status and employee categorization standard are demonstrated.

The third chapter is hypotheses and theoretical model. By reviewing the theory and relevant

literature, this thesis puts forward the hypotheses and theoretical model.

The fourth chapter is research design and method. This chapter illustrates the questionnaire design, variable measurement, sample overview and data analysis method.

The fifth chapter is data analysis. Relevant software is applied to deal with missing data and carry out common method bias test, reliability and validity test, statistical description, correlation analysis, regression analysis and hypothesis test, so as to verify the hypotheses and models proposed in this study.

The sixth chapter is conclusion and discussion. Based on the data analysis, this thesis draws the main research conclusions, puts forward the corresponding management suggestions, and expounds the shortcomings and development prospects of this research.

1.3 Research significance

Differential leadership is a leadership style with localized characteristics. The research on differential leadership has certain theoretical and practical significance.

1.3.1 Theoretical significance

At present, the research on the impact and mechanism of differential leadership and organizational outcomes needs to be expanded and deepened. Firstly, the research on the impact of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment is less, and when explaining this influence, researchers often adopt western theories but rarely consider Chinese local theories. Therefore, it is necessary to explore deeper in the influencing factors of employee performance. Secondly, the existing studies pay more attention to the outcomes of differential leadership, but research on the mechanism is not enough. The positive impact of organizational justice on employee performance is supported by a large number of theoretical and empirical studies, but there is little literature which particularly studies the impact of subordinate perceived justice on their performance. Meanwhile, when discussing about the moderation of the effectiveness of differential leadership, the current research mainly focuses on culture-related situations, such as individualism/collectivism, personal modernity/tradition, power distances. It is worth discussing whether there are other moderators. Therefore, this study has the following theoretical significance.

(1) This study enriches the theoretical research on differentiated leadership. With the continuous improvement of China's influence in the world, international scholars have increased their research on Chinese organizations. Differential leadership is a leadership style

which could precisely describe and generalize the psychology and behavior of Chinese leaders (L. Wang, 2013), and the research on it can not only enrich the theory of leadership style, but also further supplement the research on management localization.

(2) This study expands and deepens the research on the impact of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment and the mediating mechanism. Although the existing studies pay more attention to the outcomes of differential leadership, few take organizational commitment as the outcome and study the influence mechanism of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment, which makes it difficult to explain the effectiveness of biased leadership style. Subordinate perceived justice, a topic concerned by the researchers, has an important impact on subordinate attitude and behavior. At present, there are abundant empirical studies on organizational justice, but how different dimensions of justice influence organizational commitment and the antecedents of justice needs to be further studied.

Therefore, we construct a sequential mediation model to connect differential leadership and affective commitment through subordinate insider/outsider perception and subordinate perceived justice (four dimensions). This model can help to explain the relationship between differential leadership and organizational outcomes such as subordinate affect commitment, which is conducive to expanding the research ideas.

(3) This study establishes a moderated mediation model, which is beneficial to explore the influence boundary of differential leadership. This thesis examines the moderation of employee categorization standard between differential leadership and subordinate perceived insider/outsider status and between subordinate perceived insider/outsider status and subordinate perceived justice, breaks the limitation that existing studies only focus on culture-related situations when exploring leadership effectiveness, and is conducive to strengthening the recognition and comprehension of the influence boundary of differential leadership effectiveness.

1.3.2 Practical significance

For one practice significance, this thesis analyzed the influence and influence mechanism of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment and found that differential leadership affected subordinate affective commitment through their perceived insider/outsider status, which provided evidence for the adaptability of differential leadership in Chinese organizations. The research conclusions remind leaders to pay attention to the role of differential leadership and to understand that appropriate biased behavior will not damage

subordinate perceived justice and affective commitment, but will help increase affective commitment. Therefore, managers should flexibly use differential leadership to improve subordinates' insider perception, thereby increasing subordinate perceived justice and their emotional dependence, recognition, and willingness to contribute to the organization.

For the other practical significance, this thesis introduced employee categorization standard as a moderator when analyzing differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice, which is more suitable for the Chinese cultural situation and can more accurately and in-depth explain the effective boundary of differential leadership and provide directional guidance for managers' practical activities. Specifically, managers should adopt the standards recognized and expected by employees in Chinese organizations to distinguish themselves from outsiders, so as to increase subordinates' insider perception and thus improve subordinate perceived justice and affective commitment. Moreover, managers should focus on maintaining the mobility of the "quanzi" (circle) and creating a good organizational atmosphere. When insider subordinates perform poorly, leaders should consider removing them from the circle of insiders to avoid subordinates slack off because of they are insiders and bring negative organizational results. When outsider subordinates perform well, leaders should consider taking them as insiders and use more favoritism as a reward and incentive. Only in this way will subordinates regard the leaders' favoritism as reasonable and self-motivated.

1.4 Research methods and technical route

1.4.1 Research method

In this study, offline face-to-face questionnaire survey is adopted, and the supervisor questionnaire is paired with the subordinate questionnaire. One supervisor is paired with 2-5 subordinates who are selected by the supervisors participating in the survey. 3 private enterprises, 2 state-owned enterprises and 1 private college in Sichuan Province have been investigated, including industries such as private enterprises, state-owned enterprises and private colleges, covering finance, photovoltaic, education, medicine, real estate, science and technology. The survey is divided into two stages. The interval between the first survey and the second survey is 1-2 months. In terms of questionnaire design, this study uses the existing mature scales to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

In the first survey, 226 questionnaires were distributed to the subordinates of 50 supervisors, and 223 were actually recovered, with a recovery rate of 98.7%. Excluding 3 copies which

clearly involved much missing content, we recovered 220 effective copies for the first time, with an effective recovery rate of 97.3%. In the second survey, 218 copies were distributed to the subordinates of 50 supervisors, and 212 copies were actually recovered, with a recovery rate of 97.2%. Excluding the questionnaires which did not match the first ones in basic information and which involved seriously incomplete data, we obtained 199 valid samples, with an effective recovery rate of 91.2%. Since the first survey was selected from the employees on site, the participation and cooperation rate are ideal. However, the recovery rate of the second time is lower than that of the first time due to the interval time, during which some employees might quit the job or be on business trip. The 50 supervisors have participated in two surveys, and each supervisor has filled in the paired questionnaires of 2-5 of his subordinates. Finally, there were 199 valid samples.

1.4.2 Technical route

The overall research ideas of this thesis include: first, this thesis puts forward research questions on the basis of theoretical and practical background, then explains the theory and research significance. Second, this thesis reviews the literature referring to the six-step proposed by Jesson et al. (2011): (1) grasp what's done and needed to be done about differential leadership; (2) extensively search relevant literature, record the title, author, abstract, research method, year and journal in Excel; (3) Select the most relevant paper of our research by reading the abstract and access the quality of the paper by reading the whole content; (4) Record the title, method, research findings and contributions in the Excel; (5) comprehensively synthesize the papers; (6) write the literature review. Third, we brainstorm the research gap with our supervisor, construct conceptual model and put forward research hypotheses and research design; fourth, based on the sample data, this thesis conducts common method bias test, reliability and validity test, statistical description, correlation analysis, and hypothesis test via Process in SPSS; fifth, this thesis draws the research conclusion according to the empirical results, puts forward theoretical contributions and management enlightenment, and elaborates the shortcomings and prospects of this research. The overall framework of the thesis is shown in Figure 1.1.

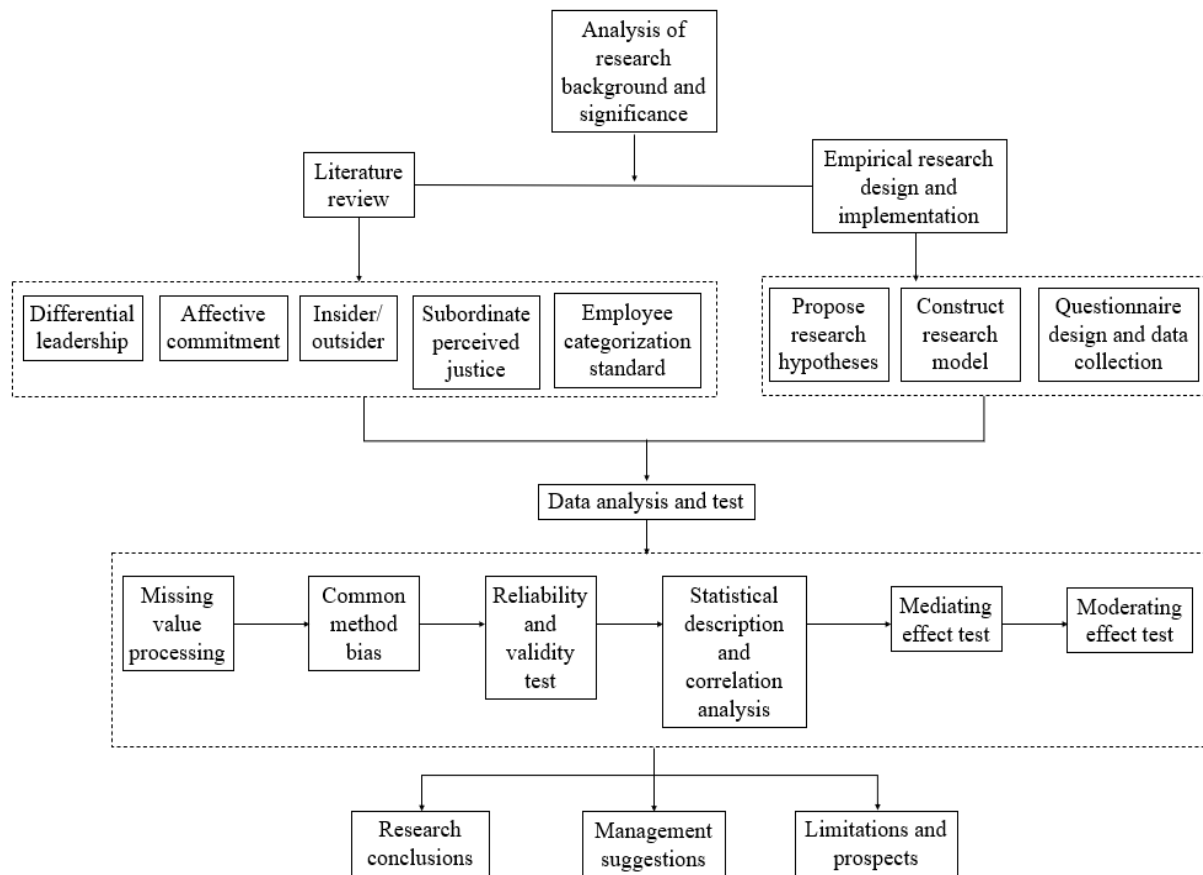


Figure 1.1 The technical route

1.5 Research innovations

This thesis may have the following innovations.

For the first innovation, this thesis discusses the moderation of employee categorization standard in differential leadership, which might be the main innovation. The previous research studies the relationship between employee categorization and different management behavior, but rare studies focus on the relationship between employee categorization and employees' perception and behavior. D Y Jiang and Zheng (2014) reviewed the literature on differential leadership and proposed possible research topics in the future, among which they emphasized the necessity of exploring the moderation of employee categorization standard in the differential leadership.

For the second innovation, the thesis explored the influence and influence mechanism of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment, which enriched the research on the outcomes of differential leadership and deepened the understanding of differential leadership. Up to now, no research has been found on the influence of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment.

For the third innovation, the thesis paid attention to the moderation of employee categorization standard in differential leadership. In domestic and foreign literature, there are less research on insider/outsider, and the concepts of insider/outsider are barely clearly illustrated. This thesis defined insider/outsider clearly and studied whether subordinate perceived insider/outsider status influences their behavior and outcome through perceived justice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature review guides us to explore the current research situation, including concepts, theories, and relevant studies, which then help us identify the research gap and lay the foundation for the subsequent research hypotheses and research model. During the literature review, this study refers to the six-stage approach proposed by Jesson et al. (2011), including (1) grasp the field through a scoping review; (2) comprehensive search; (3) quality assessment; (4) data extraction; (5) synthesis; (6) writing. Firstly, we started by mapping the field, aiming to understand what is known and unknown about differential leadership and subordinate affective commitment. Then, we attended relevant workshops and conferences to understand what has been done and still needs to be done in this field. Secondly, we searched the literature through CNKI, Wanfang database, and Duxiu platform to ensure we included as many recent papers as possible. Then, we listed the papers in an Excel sheet to record the title, author, abstract, research method, year, and journal. Thirdly, after reading the abstracts of all the papers, we selected those related to differential leadership, affective commitment, insider/outsider, subordinate perceived justice, and employee categorization standard, and then read the full-text to assess the quality of the papers based on two criteria: whether they are closely related to the above five concepts; how are their innovation and theoretical contributions. Fourthly, at the data extraction stage, we recorded the titles, methods, findings, and main contributions of the paper in the Excel. Moreover, to distinguish differential leadership and leader-member exchange, we also read papers on LMX, social exchange theory, social identification theory, renqing theory, and relative deprivation theory. Fifthly, we synthesized data from these papers and wrote the literature review.

Literature review will start by introducing the key-construct in this research, differential leadership, exploring its origins, conceptual nature, and theoretical basis to present findings from empirical studies relating it with several outcomes at individual and team level. Due to the possibility of conceptual confusion with other related concepts in leadership research, the chapter will explore such differences advocating for the conceptual uniqueness of differential leadership.

There are three aspects that gain central position in discussing differential leadership: perceived justice, insider/outsider status, and employee categorization standard. Thus, in our analysis of literature pertaining to differential leadership, this chapter proceeds to explore subordinate perceived justice, the “insider/outsider” status and the attributional process of

employee categorization. In all the three constructs the review starts by briefly exploring the conceptual nature, to show the existing measures, and shows the main findings pertaining to each aspect. Lastly, a critical analysis of the research gaps concerning differential leadership research are showed to suggest open avenues for research but mostly to indicate the research motivation of this study.

2.1 The origin and theoretical basis of differential leadership

2.1.1 The origin of differential leadership - differential pattern

2.1.1.1 Concept of differential pattern

After more than ten years of in-depth research on Chinese rural areas, Fei (1947) put forward the concept of “differential pattern” by comparing the social structures of China and the West in his book *Earthbound China*. He used the bundle of firewood as an analogy of the “group pattern” in Western society. He believed that groups in western countries have clear boundaries, and the insiders and the outsiders of the group cannot be blurred but must be clearly divided. The insiders form a group, and their relationship with the group is the same. If there are differences in groups or grades in the same group, it is always stipulated first. In Chinese traditional society, this difference is “differential pattern”, which is “the social relationship centered by oneself and connected with others, just like throwing a stone into the water, the people in the group are not at the same sequence, instead, it’s like the ripple of water, pushing out in circles, becoming farther and thinner.” Everyone is the center of the circle pushed out by his social influence, and what is pushed by the ripple of the circle is connected. At last, Fei (1947) summarized the structure of Chinese traditional society as “the difference and sequence of the social relationship pushed out.”

2.1.1.2 Characteristics of differential pattern

Many scholars believe that the differential pattern may be the core concept to understand Chinese Society (Y. X. Yan, 2006; Zhai, 2009). Fei (1947) took the “differential pattern” as the central concept and described the main characteristics of traditional Chinese society. Then, Y. X. Yan (2006) summarized them in five aspects. In order to better understand the differential pattern, we make a more specific interpretation of the characteristics of the differential pattern.

(1) Self-centered value

Self-centeredness is not individualism, but egoism (Fei, 1998). The difference between this

“egoism” and Western “individualism” lies in the boundary between oneself and others. Whilst M. Z. Li (1993) believed that everyone had a physical self and a social self, and the physical self-overlapped with the social self. And the social self of the Chinese growing up under the collectivist culture is greater than the physical self. Although it is still self-centered, the “self” entity is not an independent entity, individual or self, but is wrapped in “family and blood”, which is a social individual subordinate to the family (Bu, 2003). In other words, the self-region of Chinese people can be expanded to include other people, such as family / friends and others who have an important relationship with them (M. Z. Li, 1993). Therefore, J. M. Wang (2016) understood egoism as a way of thinking that takes oneself as the center and handles the relationship between self and others according to the principle of closeness, distance and proximity. Take the example in Earthbound China: in China, the concept of “home” can be expanded to include all people who have relatives with someone, and even anyone who is wanted to join the circle of someone. It can be seen that the “self” at the center of the differential pattern of “extension and contraction” pursues egoism.

(2) The order ruled by rites

The order ruled by rites means that, Confucianism emphasizes the use of traditional ethics to maintain social order. Confucian ethics are used to explain the rationality of difference and sequence in Chinese traditional social interpersonal relations.

“Benevolence” is the core of Confucian ethics and represents the Confucian cultural ideal. Mencius said that “love for family is benevolence”, which meant that, “love for family” was the fundamental requirement of benevolence. He also said that “benevolent people love everyone”, which meant that, the real “benevolence” is to love everyone, but “love” should first start from loving family and then to all people. It is emphasized that there is a process from near to far, from oneself to others, from “everyone loves their own parents and respects the elder family members” to “not only loves their own parents and cares about their own kids”. At the same time, “love is different” is actually an acknowledgement of the unequal relationship between people (Bu, 2003). This differential relationship is also expressed through the Confucian “five ethics” (Fei, 1947). Five ethics are the most basic five relationships between people: father and son, husband and wife, brothers, emperor and minister, and friends. Confucianism also regulates the behavior of different roles in the five ethics, that is “merciful fathers and obedient children, kind and brotherly brothers, loyal husbands and docile wives, modest elders and compliant youngsters, beneficent emperors and faithful ministers” (The Book of Rites-Chapter of rites). Therefore, the ethics centered on Confucianism in Chinese traditional society advocate embedding the self into role relationship, so as to shape social

structure and order, and determine people's respective rights, obligations and codes of conduct. Y. X. Yan (2006) believes that the five ethics embody the "sequence" of superior and inferior, reflecting the characteristics of asymmetric and unbalanced rights and obligations; Among them, the four ethics (emperor and minister, father and son, husband and wife, brothers) all contain the vertical relationship of "upper/lower" and "respect/inferiority", that is, the four dual role relationships imply the meaning of upper respect and lower inferiority, and the lower ones have more obligations, especially the obligation to obey the upper ones, which is of great significance to maintain the harmony and stability of the family and society (Bu, 2003). Therefore, Shen (2007) points out that the words "difference and sequence" actually reflect "a differential sequence of" renqing (human relation) "with respect as the core and then gradually extrapolated". In other words, "difference" represents the horizontal self-centered difference in "love for family", and "sequence" represents the vertical hierarchical "respect" (Y. X. Yan, 2006). We can say that "difference" is the basis of "sequence", and "sequence" is the extension and due meaning of "difference".

(3) The political mechanism of elders' ruling

The political mechanism of elders' ruling is actually a ruling system with parents as the core. As the Chinese saying goes, "there are thousands of people in a family and only one person is in charge". In ancient Chinese society, parents were the most respected elders in the family and had great power. The social hierarchy in traditional China is developed on the basis of patriarchy, and the relationship between father and son is also the first among the five ethics of Confucianism. Therefore, parents are the core of patriarchy and have the power to discipline their families, manage family property, organize production and life, and determine their children's marriage. The power and status of family members are also divided according to the model of "difference and sequence" (Bu, 2003). The feudal governance in ancient China was based on the family. Since the establishment of the Xia Dynasty, each generation of dynasties belonged to one royal family, and "all lands belong to the emperor". So the superior parent is undoubtedly the emperor. The emperor has the supreme power, which is particularly illustrated by the saying that "if the emperor wants his ministers to die, then the ministers have to die". Although there was also the saying that "if the emperor breaks the law then he should be punished just like the common people" in ancient times, under specific circumstances, the emperor often overrode the law. In order to consolidate the order based on the differences, people who dared to challenge the difference and sequence between the superior and the inferior would be punished by informal customs and formal law. In terms of the informal customs, the inferior could not call the superior directly by his or her name, otherwise it would be regarded

as disrespect; In terms of the formal law, people who disobeyed their parents and disrespected their elders would be punished harshly (Y. X. Yan, 2006). Both informal ethical norms and formal laws are partial to the superiors to ensure that the superiors enjoy special power. Therefore, under this parent-centered ruling system, the men-ruled governance inevitably breeds particular doctrines.

(4) The importance of kinship

The importance of kinship is mainly reflected in its impact on interpersonal relationship. Chinese people will judge the status of others in their interpersonal network according to their kinship with others, and identify their role based on their status. Therefore, Fei (1998) believed that the differential pattern reflected the Chinese people's "self-centered" interpersonal interaction, which then expanded to the external private relationship. As mentioned earlier, "self" is wrapped by "family and kinship". As for how to expand beyond blood relationship, we should return to the "five ethics" of Confucianism. There are five main role relationships, among which the relationship between family members (father and son, husband and wife, and brothers) occupies the main position, and the relationship between emperor and minister and that between friends are essentially the extension of the relationship between father and son and that between brothers; and the relationship between husband and wife can be extended to the relationship between men and women (Bu, 2003). In other words, in the view of Confucianism, as long as we can understand the three relationships between family members first, we can extend them to all interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the meaning of interpersonal relationship in Chinese traditional society is different from that in the West. It is not an optional relationship established by communication between independent individuals, and its logical starting point is not the "self" but family, clan, kinship and blood relationship. The idea of family and kinship is the mindset of the "self" (Bu, 2003).

(5) Relativity between public and private, group and self under the differential pattern

The relativity between public and private, group and self under the differential pattern is based on the self-centered "egoism". Ancient Chinese thinkers used to define "public" as "selfless". There is a saying in "Han Fei Zi-Wudu" that "Cangjie created characters in ancient times, and circling one's own field was called private and the contrast was called public. And Cangjie had already known about the contradiction between private and public." "Circling one's own field" is the demarcation of one's own possession, which refers to the self-related part. On the contrary, if it does not fall within the relevant part of individuals, it is public (Zhai, 2010). Because the public part indicates that there is no attribution, people can occupy it arbitrarily. If it is occupied by others first or others have their own but one does not, it will cause a sense of

unfairness, which is also the problem of “private” of Chinese rural people described by Fei (1947). Due to the self-scalability, public-private relations are also reflected in the expansion. In this self-centered differential pattern, standing in any circle, looking inward can be public or be in a group while looking outward can be private and self (L. P. Sun, 1996). Compared with the collateral blood group, the direct blood group is “self”; Compared with marriage and relationships in law, kinship is “self”; Compared with strangers, acquaintances are “self”; Compared with people from other villages, fellow villagers are “self” (Bu, 2003). Chinese people are used to measuring and judging the value of an event by guessing whether it is public or private. In this way of thinking, “public or private” has become the starting point for Chinese people to judge right and wrong (Zhai, 2010).

It can be seen from the characteristics of the differential pattern that the interaction between people in Chinese society is not treated equally, but there are differences in relations, which can be divided into close one and distant one, group-one and self-one. And this phenomenon is greatly related to the Confucian ethics long respected by the Chinese traditional feudal ruling class, so it is rooted in Chinese culture, and imperceptibly affects the behavior of Chinese people.

2.1.2 The theoretical basis of differential leadership

2.1.2.1 Social circle

Scholars believe that the differential pattern does vividly describe China’s traditional social structure (R. Ma, 2007). H. S. Zheng and Zhao (2003) believe that social structure can be regarded as a relatively stable relationship coordination system formed by social actors on the basis of interaction. In essence, it is an interactive relationship system, which can be shown in both group interaction and individual interaction. J. H. Zhang and Ka (2010) further proposes that the social structure should be composed of social organizations, and he believes that the differential pattern does not refer to the “difference and sequence” relationship itself, but the “social circle” formed through it, which means that the social organization composed of the “difference and sequence” relationship is dominant in Chinese society. Therefore, J. H. Zhang and Ka (2010) points out that the difference between Chinese and western social structures lies not in the fact that there are only groups in the West and only “social circles” in the East, but in the difference in the composition of the two communities.

According to the explanation of J. H. Zhang and Ka (2010), the social circle is formed by the gradual expansion of the community centered on the individual. With the continuous expansion, it forms the core and edge of the circle, and finally the scale and function of the

circle also depend on the size and influence of the central force. The process to form the “social circle” is also the process of various exchanges between the central individual and other individuals, as well as the process of production and reproduction of various “relationships”. The connotation and extension of the “social circle” depend on the various social resources, cultural resources and their features controlled by its central individual. This circle can constantly include some marginal or potential members in its circle, so as to establish the dominant and dominated relationship among its internal social members. Therefore, the whole Chinese society is composed of countless social circles of central forces, ranging from families, clans, communities, societies and countries, in which there are circles with the differential pattern influenced by personal forces (G. Z. Li, 2011).

2.1.2.2 Renqing and Mianzi model

Many western scholars who study Chinese Society also note that compared with westerners, Chinese people tend to divide people into different categories and treat them differently. G. G. Huang (1985) also proposed that Chinese people’s exchange rules and behavior rules applicable to different relationship layers are different. He extended the viewpoint of differential pattern and combined with the western theory of resource allocation to construct the model of Renqing (human relation) and Mianzi (reputation) to illustrate the different interaction rules adopted by Chinese people in different relationships.

This model defines the two sides of interaction as “trustee” and “resource dominator”, and individuals take turns to play two roles of “trustee” and “resource dominator” in social interaction with others. It is assumed that when the “trustee” puts forward a favorable allocation request, the “resource dominator” will firstly make a relationship judgment, that is, the division of interpersonal relationships according to the proportion of emotional component and instrumental component, into three kinds: emotional relationship, mixed relationship and instrumental relationship, then choose three corresponding exchange rules: “demand rule”, “renqing rule”, and “fairness rule”, and finally make decisions and put them into action. The emotional relationship is a stable and long-term social relationship, which mainly applies to the “demand rule”, emphasizing that each takes what he or she needs and does what he or she can to exchange, which is a kind of efforts without expected return. The mixed relationship will last for a period of time or all the time. It applies to the “human relationship rule” and emphasizes the reciprocal exchanges, which is a kind of efforts with expected return. The instrumental relationship is a short-term and unstable relationship, which applies to the “fairness rule”. Since there is no expectation of continuous communication, it emphasizes the equivalent exchange

between each other, and it is a one-time effort for obtaining certain resources or materials.

In the follow-up study, G. G. Huang (1985) further pointed out that the three psychological processes of “resource dominator” (relationship judgment/choice of exchange rule/explicit action) correspond to the “benevolence-righteousness-ritual” system in Confucian ethics. “Benevolence” is “loving those who should be loved”, that is, to judge the intimacy and relationship; “righteousness” is “respecting those who should be respected”, that is, to choose the exchange rule; “ritual” is the differential reaction made according to “benevolence” and “righteousness”, and the explicit action should conform to “ritual”.

2.1.2.3 Relationship orientation

G. G. Huang (1985) believed that in the context of Chinese culture, we should emphasize the management of interpersonal relations and connections. For a long time, Chinese people have attached importance to relationship and used various methods to integrate others into their own role relationship. If someone has the control of certain resources and has value to interact with, people will further strengthen their emotional relationship by visiting and giving gifts.

G. S. Yang (1993) called Chinese people’s cultural characteristics based on relationship as relationship orientation, and summarized that relationship orientation had five features: (1) Relationship formalization: individuals define their identities by roles, and determine the communication between both sides by the norms of role relationship. In short, it emphasizes the importance of role obligation in interpersonal communication. This tendency of roles is not limited to the roles of five ethics, but also other relationship such as that between teachers and students and that between supervisors and subordinates (G. S. Yang et al., 2008). (2) Relationship reward: the interaction is for the purpose of return; (3) Relationship harmony: interpersonal interaction takes harmony as the ultimate goal; (4) Relationship fatalism: use the concepts of fate and destiny to resolve conflicts; (5) Relationship determinism: in different types of relationships, there are different treatment principles and methods. Specifically, G. S. Yang (1993) divides Chinese social relations into three categories according to their closeness: family, acquaintance, and stranger. Family relationship refers to the relationship between individuals and their family members. It is an unconditional interdependent relationship with the principle of responsibility, full protection and no conditions; Acquaintance relationship refers to the relationship between individuals and acquaintances (relatives and friends, teachers and students, colleagues, etc.), which stresses the principle of human relations, accommodation and conditional interdependence; Stranger relationship refers to the relationship between individuals and strangers (people who have no direct or indirect lasting social relationship),

which stresses interests and without any interdependence.

Compared with Huang's model of human relationship and reputation, Yang's view of relationship orientation emphasizes the difference of superior and subordinate in differential relationship, and the importance of role responsibility in the operation of Chinese relations (D Y Jiang & Zhang, 2010). Yang's categorization of relationship is actually similar to Huang's. Then even some scholars equate emotional relationship with family, mixed relationship with acquaintance, and instrumental relationship with stranger. Both of them highlight the importance of relationship to Chinese people, and also emphasize the special role of human relationship rule in Chinese interpersonal interaction.

2.1.2.4 Familialism and pan-familialism

(1) Familialism

Family is the core of Chinese social structure, and Chinese culture is family culture (Fei, 1947). The clan is based on family, so the influence of culture should not be ignored when understanding familialism. Therefore, G. S. Yang and Ye (2008) more rigorously defined familialism as "the family members hold a set of complex psychology and behavior towards their family. These organized psychology and behavior may be divided into different levels, which are formed from childhood and through a long, profound and extensive process of special cultivation in the family." And they expounded the connotation of Chinese familialism from three aspects: cognition, feeling and willingness.

First, in terms of cognition, the Chinese emphasize family harmony and unity. On the one hand, we need to unite to jointly resist enemies; On the other hand, assistance is needed to complete heavy farming activities. At the same time, the Chinese emphasize the wealth and reputation of the family as a whole, because only when the family is respected in society, can the individual have a position in society.

Secondly, in terms of emotion, Chinese people attach importance to kinship and have a strong sense of belonging, love and responsibility to the family. Chinese people feel deeply that they are part of the family and feel emotionally attached, so they don't leave the family easily. They have a strong sense of care for their families, which is reflected in the mutual care between family members, active experience of each other's subjective experience and feelings, and treating family members with a reasonable attitude of tolerance. The Chinese people's sense of responsibility to the family is often reflected in the unconditional full protection and help for the family and its members rather than expectation of equal returns. Therefore, Chinese people have formed an unconditional interdependence and trust in their families, while they show a

different and skeptical attitude towards outsiders.

Finally, in terms of willingness, in order to maintain the unity and harmony of the family, a hierarchical family power structure emphasizing the distinction of upper and lower dignity has been formed in the family. That is, in the family, different people are ranked in the order of high and low according to gender, generation and age, so as to restrict the family members. This class relationship is rationalized and habituated by socialized means. Therefore, all people psychologically accept this psychology and behavior of upper and lower order, and individuals must be tolerant and self-restrained rather than fussy. In addition, in order to avoid conflicts, Chinese family advocates humility rather than competition, emphasizes mutual commonality, and does not like eccentricity.

(2) Pan-familialism

G. S. Yang (1971) first put forward the concept of “familiarization tendency”, which was defined as “a habit of familiarizing groups and relationships outside the family”, and he believed that the main feature of this tendency was to regard the family as a model of other groups and organizations. In traditional society, Chinese people’s organizational life was mainly family life. Therefore, bringing the structural forms, relationship patterns and ways of doing things obtained in family life into non-family groups or organizations can be called “pan-familialism” (G. S. Yang, 1993). Pan-familialism mainly has three important connotations:

The first is to generalize the organizational mode of the family to other groups or organizations, forming a hierarchical structure with clear hierarchy from top to bottom. In this hierarchical organizational network, the superior plays a leading role in consulting, decision-making and resource allocating.

Second, generalize the role relationship in the family to other groups or organizations, and familiarize the members of non-family groups.

Third, generalize the concepts, attitudes and behaviors learned in family life to other organizations.

2.1.2.5 “Circle culture” in the organization

With the continuous expansion of the influence of differential pattern theory, some scholars gradually focus their research on the organizational situation, and use the idea of differential pattern to analyze the relationship between supervisors and subordinates. As described in the differential pattern, Chinese people live in circles centered on themselves. For an organization, because superiors have various powers and resources given by the organization, they are often the core of various circles in the organization, and their subordinates will gradually form several

circles around the superiors.

Liang (1998) found that there may be a “circle” around leaders by studying Chinese enterprise organizations. It is between formal organizations and non-formal organizations and relies on both formal power and informal power. He put forward the concept of “circle culture” for the first time. Liang believes that the emergence of “circle culture” in Chinese enterprises is closely related to China’s pyramid organizational culture and tradition, and the larger the organization with more levels, the greater the leaders’ demand on “circle”; In order to maintain a close relationship with each other, leaders may sacrifice the justice of the system and provide some additional benefits to subordinates in the “circle”; One of the main characteristics of “circle culture” is particularism, that is, there can only be “justice” within the circle, but no extensive justice contained in universalism (Liang, 1998).

Although the subordinates in the “circle” can get more support and trust from the leaders, compared with the subordinates outside the “circle” who are only constrained by the system rules, the subordinates in the “circle” also need to be constrained by the “circle rules”. As Yang said, the relationship between supervisors and subordinates also tended to be formalized. In this environment composed of formal relationships, subordinates can only attempt to hide themselves and act according to the norms of social roles (G. S. Yang et al., 2008). In the organization, a formal power circle centered on the leader may also form an informal power circle centered on a subordinate. Circles or different factions often appear in organizations, that is, different circles are constructed around the central individuals. The growth and decline of these circle forces constitute dynamic changes in the organizational structure (Liang, 1998).

From the above concepts extended from the differential pattern, we can see that due to the profound influence of Confucianism, the characteristics of difference and sequence are implicit in Chinese traditional culture, resulting in a circle centered on a core figure in both social life and organization. Therefore, in China, people will decide the way to interact with others according to their relationship. It is not difficult to understand that in the organization, leaders will also treat subordinates differently according to their relationship, while subordinates may regulate their behavior according to their own status, which creates conditions for the emergence of differential leadership.

2.2 Research on differential leadership

2.2.1 Concept and definition of differential leadership

Redding (1990) called the characteristic of personal relationship or personal preference affecting decision-making as personalism. When making decisions, Chinese people always consider personal relationship or personal preference (G. G. Huang, 1985). A comparison research of Chinese mainland managers and American managers' reward distribution shows that, compared with American managers, Chinese managers focus more on the relationship between subordinates and themselves, subordinates' relationship with colleagues and their personal needs than American managers when they give reward to their subordinates. Because Chinese leaders have many resources and powers, subordinates must obey their supervisors. In the Chinese culture that emphasizes harmony and relationism, subordinates are more likely to accept different treatment of leaders based on personalism (G. G. Huang, 1985; Liang, 1998; G. S. Yang, 1993; J. H. Zhang & Ka, 2010). Therefore, in Chinese society, favoritism has become an acceptable and reasonable behavior.

B. X. Zheng (1995) took a number of Taiwan family enterprises as case studies, observed and interviewed the leaders of these enterprises. He found that the leaders of family enterprises did not make biased decisions only based on relationship, but comprehensively considered relationship, loyalty and talents. Then he proposed that Chinese leaders classified all employees according to their relationship, employees' loyalty and talents, and divided employees into insiders or outsiders according to their preference for "relationship, loyalty, and talents". B. X. Zheng (1995) believes that with the idea of insiders, enterprises' leaders will treat the insiders better in terms of emotional attachment, leadership style, organizational structure, work design, employment relationship and resource allocation (see Table 2.1 for details). This different treatment of different employees is called differential leadership in his subsequent research.

Table 2.1 Six aspects of differential treatment

	Insider subordinate	Outsider subordinate
Emotional attachment	Intimacy; trust; mutual appeal; subjective care; management with a tendency to the Y theory (hard work/responsibility/self-restrain)	Distance; lack of trust and appeal; no care; management with a tendency to the X theory (work avoidance / irresponsibility /punishment and coercion)
Leadership style	More participation in decision-making/more appointment/frequent communication and interaction/tolerance	Less participation in decision-making/dictatorship/strict public management/rigor

Organizational structure	Management/middle management; core role	Operation/execution; peripheral role
Work design	Fuzzy work structure/high flexibility of performance indicators	Clear work structure/more objective performance indicators
Employment relationship	Long-term employment; fast and sharp promotion	Short-term employment; rare promotion chance
Resource allocation	Many opportunities to get large amounts of rewards; sharp pay rise; more resources	Little opportunities to get rewards; small pay rise; performance principle

Source: B. X. Zheng (1995)

D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) reviewed relevant studies and found that the biased treatment of leaders may include giving their subordinates more opportunities to participate in decision-making, caring and supporting them more, blaming them less when they have made mistakes, regarding them as confidants, giving them more additional assistance and more opportunities to be promoted and rewarded (W. L. Xu, 2004; W. L. Xu et al., 2002; B. X. Zheng, 1995, 2004). Moreover, D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) considered that differential leadership and employee categorization model should be different concepts. The employee categorization model describes the standards that supervisors will adopt to classify their employees; while differential leadership is to give more favoritism to their insider subordinates compared with outsiders (W. L. Xu, 2004; B. X. Zheng, 2004). Therefore, D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) defined Chinese differential leadership as: “in the atmosphere of personalism, leaders treat different subordinates differently, which is a leadership style that gives more favoritism to preferred subordinates”.

In the follow-up study, D Y Jiang and Zheng (2014) propose that differential leadership should be viewed from more perspectives, that is, in addition to being treated favorably by the leader, the insider subordinates also bear additional responsibilities. Therefore, they believe that differential leadership includes three components, which are, favoring insiders, being strict towards insiders, and being biased towards outsiders. According to the law of resource allocation, P. R. Xie (2015) divides differential leadership into emotional differential leadership and working differential leadership. Emotional differential leadership refers to that leaders give more favoritism to the insider subordinates in emotion-related spiritual resources; work-related differential leadership refers to that leaders have more favoritism to the insider subordinates in material resources.

This thesis holds that the initial definition of D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) fully considers the impact of Chinese culture on Chinese enterprises and clearly describes the phenomenon of differential leadership in Chinese enterprises, that is, the differential leadership is defined as the leaders' behavior in which leaders treat their subordinates differently in the atmosphere of

personalism, and it is a leadership style with favoritism to preferred subordinates.

2.2.2 Measurement of differential leadership

D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) reviewed the results of previous relevant studies and sorted out that the differential leadership should cover at least seven behaviors: decision-making and communication, care and support, tolerance of mistakes, confidence and trust, promotion and reward of subordinates, and the use of other resources. Based on this, they made a scale. They believed that the differential leadership should reflect the degree of leaders' differential treatment, that is, the degree to which leaders treat insiders better than outsiders. Therefore, the items of the scale show comparison from the perspective of insiders, such as "compared to outsiders, your supervisor will give lighter punishment to insiders". D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) tested the reliability and validity of the scale using the data of 312 employees in Taiwan's enterprises and organizations, and finally produced a differential leadership scale with 14 items in a three-factor structure including care and communication, promotion and reward, tolerance and trust. "Care and communication" refers to the interaction between the supervisor and the subordinates at work or in private, offering more assistance at work and more opportunities to participate in decision-making; "Promotion and reward" means that insiders can not only easily get promotion and more training opportunities, but also receive more resources from the supervisor, such as bigger salary rise, welfare and other rewards; "Tolerance and trust" includes tolerance of mistakes and trust, which means that supervisors are more lenient to insiders who make mistakes, and have less control over them, and insiders are likely to play a core role in the formal or informal structure.

Some researchers believe that the differential leadership scale developed by D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) needs to be further improved. On the one hand, the scale is based on theoretical deduction, but not the data induction in practice. On the other hand, the scale only reflects the behavior of leaders towards the insiders and does not reflect that towards outsiders. Therefore, the rich connotation of differential leadership may be ignored (D Y Jiang & Zheng, 2014). The research of Ye (2011) also found that in addition to treating the insiders in the ways of promotion and reward, high expectations, care and concern, getting along well, trust, empowerment and support, supervisors also treat the insiders strictly and harshly (being mean with authoritative discipline), or treat them indifferently and isolatedly (indifference, no important assignment, transferring from the work team). Therefore, D. Y. Jiang et al. (2014, May 15-17) developed a more detailed scale of differential leadership. They obtained an eight-dimension differential

leadership scale, which includes 25 items in five dimensions for the insiders (five dimensions are: tolerance of mistakes, promotion and reward, trust and consultation, interaction and intimacy, and high expectations), and 11 items in three dimensions for the outsiders (the three dimensions are: indifference in interaction, scruples and being on guard, making things difficult and blaming). They further summarized differential leadership into two directions: favorable treatment to the insiders and malice treatment to the outsiders.

Some researchers view differential leadership from different perspectives. P. R. Xie (2015) combined it with the resource categorization theory, and she believed that differential leadership could be reflected in “leaders’ biased distribution of economic or work-related resources” and “biased distribution of emotion-related resources”. The former is called work-related differential leadership, and the latter is called emotion-related differential leadership. With reference to the scale developed by D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010), She compiled a differential leadership scale with 21 items.

L. Wang (2013) first applied the differential leadership scale developed by D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) to the mainland. Taking the effective questionnaires of 46 directors and 350 subordinates of mainland enterprises as samples, he conducted exploratory factor analysis and found that although the differential leadership was still aggregated into three factors, only the factor of “tolerance for mistakes” maintained stable. And several items of “care and communication” and “promotion and reward” were interchanged, so he renamed the three aggregated factors “care and reward”, “tolerance for mistakes” and “cronyism”.

M. Y. Zhang (2014) validated the differential leadership scale of Jiang et al. by using the effective data of 651 employees in enterprises and governments in 5 major cities in East China, West China, North China, South China, and Central China, and considered that the differential leadership structure in Chinese mainland local organizations was the same as that of Taiwan’s differential leadership. They are both a three-dimensional structure composed of care and communication, promotion and reward, and tolerance for mistakes.

Although D. Y. Jiang et al. (2014, May 15-17) and P. R. Xie (2015) developed a new scale based on the differential leadership scale of D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010), the reliability and validity of the new scale have not been further verified by other scholars. In the empirical studies related to differential leadership carried out by scholars in recent years, the vast majority still use the scale developed by D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010).

2.2.3 Influence of differential leadership

(1) Individual level

The research on the impact of differential leadership on employees can be described from the aspects of employees' behavior, attitude and perception. Generally speaking, there are more studies on employees' behavior, while there are fewer studies on employees' attitude and perception. Thus, this thesis summarizes the empirical research on differential leadership at the individual level into two aspects: behavior and performance, and attitude and perception.

a. Behavior and performance

In terms of the impact of differential leadership on employees' behavior, the research mainly focuses on employees' innovation and anti-production behaviors. From the existing empirical research, scholars basically believe that the higher the degree of differential leadership, the better it can promote employees' innovative behavior (Du, 2016; Z. H. Yang, 2018; C. C. Yin, 2018; Yuan et al., 2016; C. Q. Zhang & Wang, 2018). Specifically, differential leadership affects employees' innovation through their work input (Yuan et al., 2016) and suggestion (Z. H. Yang, 2018). The support felt by employees from the organization (C. C. Yin, 2018) and employees' social capital within the organization (C. Q. Zhang & Wang, 2018) also affect employees' innovative behavior; Being more traditional, higher innovation expectation from the leaders, good and open atmosphere in the team can increase employees' innovation behavior (C. C. Yin, 2018). Other researchers believe that insiders may have a sense of psychological privilege in the organization, so it is likely to stimulate their deviant innovation behavior even if their opinions are different from those of their supervisors (H. Y. Wang et al., 2018).

In terms of the impact of differential leadership on employees' anti-production behavior, researchers believe that different dimensions of differential leadership have different effects on employees' anti-production behavior. When an employee makes mistakes at work, the supervisor treats insiders leniently and punishes ordinary employees strictly in accordance with the company's rules and regulations, this biased tolerance and trust will lead to outsiders' perception of injustice, which increases the employees' anti-production behavior; However, if the supervisor has more interaction with his preferred subordinates in public or private affairs, the two sides often exchange opinions and ideas, and the leader is more considerate to his preferred employees, and even has communication and care in daily life and encouragement, which is in line with the traditional Confucian thought of "love for others", so it will not lead to perception of injustice, but induces outsiders to work harder to win favoritism from

supervisors, thus reducing employees' anti-production behavior (X. L. Guo, 2014; Z. C. Lin, 2016). At the same time, power distance will adjust the relationship between differential leadership and employees' anti-production behavior.

However, when supervisors adopt differential leadership style, they may also induce employees' pro-organizational unethical behavior, that is, employees take behaviors that are conducive to organizational interests but violate ethical norms. Liu (2003) believes that, on the one hand, the tolerance of supervisors to insiders will weaken the organizational identity of outsiders, resulting in an increase in employees' unethical behavior in the workplace. On the other hand, the supervisor's communication and care for insiders will enhance the employees' organizational identity. Due to the good interaction with the supervisor, insiders will feel the elastic power given by the supervisors, improve their psychological empowerment to successfully achieve the goals at work, and reduce the employees' unethical behavior in the workplace. In addition, (Y. H. Lin & Cheng, 2017) and others found that the biased treatment of supervisors to insiders will let them form resource dependence and emotional dependence, and then produce a strong sense of identity; In order to "repay" the supervisor's kindness, insiders will take pro-organizational unethical behaviors that may benefit the supervisors or organizations, but violate ethical norms or laws; For outsiders, when their collectivism tendency is higher, or they feel that the supervisor is more representative of the organization, they are more likely to adopt pro-organizational unethical behavior to win favor of the supervisor (Y. H. Lin & Cheng, 2017). Similarly, Yan's empirical study found that there was a significant positive correlation between differential leadership and employees' prosocial violations; Psychological ownership plays a mediating role in the relationship between the two, and power distance positively regulates the relationship between psychological ownership and employees' prosocial violations, and then regulates the mediating role of psychological ownership in the relationship between differential leadership and prosocial violations (S. Z. Yan, 2018).

The study also finds that differential leadership is positively correlated with employees' suggestion behavior, active behavior and job performance, and negatively correlated with subordinates' silence behavior. Specifically, the higher the degree of differential leadership of leaders, the higher the commitment of insiders to the organization, and the stronger the perception of insiders' identities, so it is more likely to put forward constructive opinions to their supervisors (A. Gao, 2015); Yang and others also believe that differential leadership style can improve the self-efficacy of insiders and reduce employees' silence behavior (W. S. Yang et al., 2018). However, different favoritism behaviors in differential leadership style seem to have different effects on subordinates. When the supervisor shows favorable communication

and care, it can stimulate the employees' positive mood and make the employees have higher recognition of the organization, so as to enhance the employees' enthusiasm and trigger their active behaviors. However, tolerance and trust are regarded as a negative leadership behavior. The supervisor's lenient treatment of the mistakes made by insiders makes other employees feel that there is only reward but no punishment, which leads to their psychological dissatisfaction, which will reduce their recognition of the organization, frustrate their work enthusiasm, and inhibit the generation of employees' active behaviors (G. L. Wang, 2017).

In addition, the effectiveness of differential leadership is also a topic that researchers are willing to discuss, that is, can favoritism really improve employee performance? D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010), scholars from Taiwan, took the lead in discussing about this. Their research shows that differential leadership has a positive effect on job performance. The research of L. Wang (2013) also shows that differential leadership is positively correlated with subordinates' job performance and subordinates' altruistic behavior. Y. Xie (2017) found that job satisfaction plays a mediating role between differential leadership and employees' job performance. In terms of regulation, D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) found that the higher the power distance, the more significant the positive impact of differential leadership on employees' job performance; The master's thesis of L. Wang (2018) shows that individualism orientation negatively regulates the positive correlation between differential leadership and employees' job performance, while collectivism orientation plays a positive moderating role. In the above research on the impact of differential leadership on employee performance, differential leadership is mostly taken as a whole, and the impact of different dimensions of differential leadership on employee performance is less considered. Moreover, the current research on differential leadership and employee performance mostly adopts employees' self-evaluation, and mostly focuses on the impact of differential leadership on employee performance of their roles.

b. Attitude perception

Previous studies have shown that differential leadership has a positive impact on employees' perceived attitude. Attitude perception is mainly reflected in employees' job satisfaction, turnover intention and justice perception. Firstly, empirical research has shown that differential leadership is positively correlated with employees' job satisfaction (Y. Xie, 2017; M. Y. Zhang, 2014), that is, differential leadership can make employees be more satisfied at their job via their sense of belonging (M. Y. Zhang, 2014); and employees' job performance plays a mediating role between differential leadership and job satisfaction.

Secondly, differential leadership can negatively predict employees' turnover intention from their workplace exclusion (Dang, 2018), while employees' initiative indirectly regulates the

relationship between differential leadership and employees' turnover intention by adjusting the relationship between differential leadership and employees' workplace exclusion, that is, with the enhancement of initiative personality, the negative correlation between supervisors' differential leadership and workplace exclusion is strengthened, and employees' turnover intention will be reduced (X. Y. Li et al., 2018). Recent empirical studies have also found that supervisors' care and communication, and promotion and reward for insiders promote employees to maintain a positive mind, so as to be more devoted to their job (Mao et al., 2019).

Finally, differential leadership has an impact on employees' justice perception, and there are inconsistent conclusions in existing studies. On the one hand, scholars' research shows that differential treatment of supervisors will damage organizational justice. For example, Z. Y. Liu (2003) found that employees' perception of differential atmosphere is negatively related to procedural justice through a study of 265 employees in 33 enterprises in Taiwan. X. L. Guo (2014) once again confirmed the negative correlation between differential treatment of supervisors and interpersonal justice with the data from 374 samples in military organizations. On the other hand, some scholars' empirical studies have proved that differential leadership is positively correlated with employees' justice perception. For example, D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) found that differential leadership was positively correlated with employees' perception of procedural justice and interpersonal justice; H. P. Wu (2011) once again confirmed the positive correlation between differential leadership and employees' perception of supervisor's procedural justice and interpersonal justice based on the dual data of 218 pairs of supervisors and subordinates in Taiwan enterprises, and this relationship was weakened by subordinates' perception of identity, which meant that when subordinates perceived themselves as insiders, the correlation between differential leadership and supervisor's procedural justice and interpersonal justice became weaker. In addition, the researchers also found that different dimensions of differential leadership had different effects on interaction equity (X. L. Guo, 2014; Z. C. Lin, 2016). Specifically, the two dimensions of communication and care and promotion and reward have a significant positive impact on interpersonal justice; The dimension of tolerance and trust is contradictory to the relationship between interpersonal justice. Based on 336 sets of supporting data from supervisors and subordinates, X. L. Guo (2014) found that there was no significant relationship between tolerance and trust and interpersonal justice of differential leadership, while Z. C. Lin (2016) concluded that tolerance and trust were negatively correlated with interpersonal justice based on 451 sets of effective data of employees at all levels of enterprises and institutions. Overall, the research conclusions of differential leadership and employees' justice perception are still controversial. In addition,

the discussion around the influence mechanism of differential leadership on employees' justice perception is insufficient. At present, it is only found that subordinates' identity perception and power distance play moderating roles.

As for the influence of differential leadership on employee behavior, there are studies noticing the mediation of organizational commitment between differential leadership and employee behavior. A. Gao (2015) conducted questionnaire investigation in five cities in China and found that organizational commitment mediates the relation between differential leadership and employee voice, and differential leadership positively correlates with organizational commitment. X. Y. Li et al. (2018) collected 511 valid questionnaires and concluded that differential leadership influence employee voice via subordinate organizational commitment. Most recently, a mediated moderation was reported by C. Zhang et al. (2021) where proactive personality increased the magnitude of the relationship between perceived insider status (of the organization) and thriving at work. Most existing research regards organizational commitment as mediator, and no research has been found on the influence and influential mechanism of differential leadership on organizational commitment.

(2) Team level

At present, there are relatively fewer studies on the impact of differential leadership on team level and is inconsistent. Some scholars assume differential leadership beneficial to the team outcome. X. H. Zhong (2011), a researcher in Taiwan, found that differential leadership had a positive impact on team performance and knowledge sharing within the team, while the (standard) difference of insiders and the interdependence of team tasks positively regulate the positive correlation between differential leadership and team performance and team knowledge sharing. T. Y. Wu (2013) conducted a cross-layer analysis on the effective data of 97 working groups and 550 subordinates of Taiwan enterprises, and found that differential leadership was positively correlated with group citizenship behavior, in which group collectivity played a positive moderating role; Differential leadership was also positively correlated with group political behavior, while group collectivity negatively regulated the relationship between them.

Some other scholars found the negative impact of differential leadership on the team. Differential leadership will give outsiders a sense of injustice and jealousy, causing team conflict, which then affects the in-depth information processing of team members and reduces the cohesion and trust among members (J. Liu et al., 2009). Zhao et al. (2018) conducted research on the direct supervisors and their team members of 113 knowledge teams and found that differential leadership in the knowledge team can improve the vitality of the team and prompt team members to propose innovated thoughts and ideas to solve the problems. However,

differential leadership will intensify team conflicts, reduce the level of trust among members, and hamper open communication among team members, and lead to knowledge hiding behaviors among members.

On the Chinese mainland, L. Wang (2013) found that the differential leadership was positively related to team innovation by using the dual samples of “supervisors-subordinates” from 87 teams. Du (2016) analyzed the dual samples of 80 work teams. The results show that differential leadership has an impact on team creativity through the mediating role of suggestion atmosphere in the team. Zhao et al. (2018) analyzed the sample data of direct supervisors and their team members in 113 knowledge teams, and found that differential leadership affected team creativity through the mediation of team conflict; Moreover, the stronger the differential leadership style of team supervisors, the more likely team members hide their knowledge, in which high team identity plays a negatively moderating role.

(3) Summary of the effects of differential leadership

In summary, it can be seen that in the current literature, the outcome variables of differential leadership at the individual level mainly include employee innovative behavior (e.g. C. Q. Zhang & Wang, 2018), counterproductive behavior (e.g. Z. C. Lin, 2016), nonethical behavior (e.g. Y. H. Lin & Cheng, 2017), pro-social violation (e.g. S. Z. Yan, 2018), proactive behavior, constructive behavior, silent behavior (e.g. W. S. Yang et al., 2018), job engagement, job performance (e.g. D Y Jiang and Zhang, 2010), job satisfaction (e.g. M. Y. Zhang, 2014), intention to leave (e.g. Dang, 2018), and perception of fairness; the outcome variables at the group level mainly include team creativity (e.g. Du, 2016), team innovative climate, team performance, team knowledge sharing, team political behavior, team citizenship behavior, team knowledge hiding, team knowledge transfer, and team performance.

Meanwhile, among the mechanisms of differential leadership, existing studies have mainly explored the role of perceived justice which have been divergent (e.g. D Y Jiang and Zhang, 2010), but also, across the studies cited one can find empirical focus on insider identity perception, internal social capital, self-efficacy, supervisor trust, organizational commitment, organizational identity, organizational support perception, employee constructive behavior, work engagement, work performance, workplace rejection, interactive memory system, psychological ownership, psychological sense of privilege, psychological empowerment, psychological capital, team conflict, and the mediating role of team construct climate.

In addition, existing studies have also focused on the moderating effects of employment relationship climate, organizational structure organicity, cognitive conflict, organizational trust, employee traditionality/modernity, collectivist tendencies, leadership organizational

representativeness, team construct climate, team innovation climate, power distance, team identity, proactive personality, subordinate identity perceptions, superior-subordinate relationship identification, employee liking for supervisors, team task interdependence, and group collectivity. Boundary conditions are explored to ascertain contingencies on the effectiveness of differential leadership.

2.2.4 Related concepts

Some akin concepts in leadership research can be closely related with differential leadership but they are not redundant.

(1) Leader member exchange

At first, when studying organizational behavior, western researchers believed that the same supervisor treated all subordinates with the same leadership style, and all subordinates had the same perception and response, which was Average Leadership Style (ALS). However, in the practice of organizational management, due to limited resources or time constraints on tasks, supervisors need to seek help from competent subordinates to achieve work objectives/perform tasks; These subordinates often undertake work beyond the contract, so the supervisor gives them support and attention beyond the contract. Thus, in order to achieve effective management, supervisors do not treat each subordinate equally (Dansereau et al., 1975). Graen and Cashman (1975) further proposed the vertical dyad linkage model (VDL) to replace the average leadership style. They believe that when studying leadership, we should focus on the dual structure of each pair of supervisors and subordinates, that is, there are different relationships between supervisors and subordinates in the same unit. This view has been confirmed in subsequent studies.

Liden and Graen (1980) conducted a horizontal survey on three semi-autonomous service departments in universities and found that in the dual sample, more than 90% of the supervisors and subordinates formed different relationship qualities. Subordinates with high relationship quality with supervisors assumed greater work responsibilities and had more opportunities to participate in management and administrative decision-making. At the same time, they also received more support and attention from the supervisors. Subsequently, Graen et al. (1982) pointed out that in the organization, the supervisors established a social exchange relationship with some subordinates beyond the relationship stipulated in the work contract; And they officially changed the name from “vertical dyad linkage model” to “leader member exchange” (hereinafter referred to as LMX).

The proposal of leader member exchange has aroused the enthusiastic response from researchers. However, for a long time, researchers have focused on how the LMX relationship is formed, that is, what factors affect the relationship quality between supervisors and subordinates. Research shows that subordinates' job potential, job performance (including performance and ability), personality traits and upward influence strategies can affect the LMX relationship quality perceived by supervisors (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Duchon et al., 1986). The supervisor's power, accidental reward behavior, supervisor's personal characteristics, expectation and trust in subordinates' success, evaluation of subordinates' performance, subordinates' justice perception and evaluation of supervisor's behavior play an important role in the development of subordinates' LMX perception (Dulebohn et al., 2012). In addition, demographic variables (age, education and gender), team size, organizational policies, organizational culture, efforts of supervisors and subordinates, and perceived efforts of each other all affect the formation of LMX (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001).

However, few researchers have made a clear explanation of the meaning of LMX. Based on the review of literature about LMX, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) defined LMX as the relationship-based social exchange between supervisors and subordinates. They believe that LMX reflects the overall relationship between supervisors and subordinates. Schriesheim and others believe that LMX represents the exchange quality between supervisors and subordinates (Schriesheim et al., 1999). Liden and Maslyn (1998) also point out that high LMX means social exchange between supervisors and subordinates, emphasizing mutual obligations and reciprocity; while low LMX means that there is a utilitarian exchange between supervisors and subordinates, which is limited to economic exchanges and formally agreed contents of the organization. From the above researchers' point of view, LMX can be described as the relationship between supervisors and subordinates, and can also be reflected in the quality of exchange between them.

The research of LMX theory points out that different exchange relationships will develop between supervisors and subordinates, and the quality of this relationship has a great impact on subordinates. The past analysis found that LMX quality perceived by subordinates was positively correlated with subordinates' job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, procedural justice, distributive justice, salary satisfaction and psychological empowerment, and negatively correlated with political perception (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

(2) LMX differentiation

However, researchers feel that most studies on LMX are located at the dual level of

supervisors and subordinates, but each dual relationship occurs in another relationship system (Cogliser & Schriesheim, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to test the theoretical or empirical research of LMX at the team level (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Therefore, researchers began to make attempt to aggregate this different binary relationship to the team level.

The discussion on LMX differentiation was triggered by empirical research. Liden et al. took the lead in discussing about the relationship between LMX and team performance on the team level. By analyzing the data of 834 employees in 120 work teams, they found that the relationship between LMX differentiation and team performance was regulated by task dependency. The higher the task dependency, the greater the LMX differentiation among members, and the higher the team performance; On the contrary, for the team with relatively low task dependence, the LMX difference between subordinates had nothing to do with team performance; In addition, in the team with low median of LMX, LMX differentiation was positively correlated with team performance, while in the team with high median, LMX differentiation was not correlated with team performance (Liden et al., 2006).

Next, Henderson et al. made a theoretical discussion on the concept of LMX differentiation. They described LMX differentiation as a set of exchange relationships between team leaders and members (Henderson et al., 2009). After theoretical discussion, they put forward some propositions about LMX differentiation, which was that the relationship between team supervisors and their superiors, the information and resources available to team supervisors, team size and team aggressive culture were positively correlated with LMX differentiation; When the team culture was characterized by respect for others, emphasized collectivism and team orientation, and the organizational structure was more mechanized, the LMX differentiation of the team would be smaller (Henderson et al., 2009).

Other scholars further discuss about the concept of LMX differentiation. Some scholars believe that LMX differentiation refers to the degree of difference in the relationship quality between team leaders and team members (Henderson et al., 2009), or the degree of difference in LMX quality within teams. Some scholars also put forward similar concepts, such as relative LMX, which refers to the individual LMX quality relative to the average LMX quality of the work team. It is measured by subtracting the average of the team LMX score from one person's LMX score (Henderson et al., 2009); LMX relationship separation refers to the uniqueness or difference between one person's LMX score and other members' LMX scores.

There are two views on the impact of LMX differentiation on the team. On the one hand, researchers believe that LMX differentiation should be maintained at a low level on the team level. Because overly high differentiation may lead to unfair views or form unhealthy factions,

thus reducing team cohesion (Liden et al., 1997). This view is supported by empirical research. Henderson et al. (2009) investigated 31 work teams and confirmed that LMX differentiation was negatively correlated with subordinates' job satisfaction and well-being, and positively correlated with team conflict. On the other hand, some scholars support high-level LMX differentiation. Boies and Howell (2006) measured LMX differentiation using Rwg index and found that when the average LMX of the team was high, LMX differentiation may be related to higher team performance and lower team conflict.

From the conclusion of empirical research, the results of most studies show that high LMX differentiation will have an adverse impact on the organization. It seems that maintaining a low level of LMX differentiation is more beneficial to the outcome variables of the organization. However, research also finds that LMX differentiation has no effect on work results, or discovers a positive effect (Boies & Howell, 2006).

(3) Similarities and differences between differential leadership and LMX theory

Reviewing the literature of differential leadership theory and LMX theory, we can find that the common point between them is that both differential leadership and western LMX theory emphasize that supervisors do not treat their subordinates equally, but treat them in different ways. However, there are obvious differences between differential leadership and LMX, and between differential leadership and LMX differentiation.

The difference between differential leadership and LMX is mainly in two aspects. On the one hand, their cultural roots are different. Western culture emphasizes equality and mutual respect, and pays attention to the legal system, so the power distance between supervisors and subordinates in western enterprises and organizations is small (D Y Jiang & Zhang, 2010). In such a cultural context, supervisors pay more attention to the improvement of management efficiency. Therefore, the development of LMX is based on the characteristics of working relationship rather than personal relationship or friendship. Supervisors pay more attention to the ability of subordinates when establishing high-quality LMX relationship with subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX theory does not emphasize the status difference between supervisors and subordinates. The resource exchange between supervisors and subordinates usually considers the balance of interests of both sides. If it is unbalanced, it will reduce or increase the input of their own resources. The biased treatment of supervisors in Chinese differential leadership may be more based on relationship than ability.

In Chinese society, it emphasizes the relationship orientation of superiors being respected while inferiors being humble, so there is a leader-follower relationship between supervisors and subordinates in Chinese enterprises. Leaders' dominant position in power and lack of

institutional supervision further lead to a strong color of personalism in management (D Y Jiang & Zhang, 2010). Since the superior has greater power and the inferior has greater obedience obligation (Fan & Zheng, 2000), when the supervisor shows favoritism, the subordinates can only try their best to please the supervisor in order to obtain the desired resources and rewards. Even if the subordinates feel a short-term imbalance, they will continue to make effort, and even be willing to sacrifice their own interests in order to obtain the supervisor's appreciation. In short, western culture requires supervisors to be normalized by the system, which reflects more legal characteristics; While in Chinese enterprises, although there are systems, the feature of personalism is more noticeable.

On the other hand, they have different emphases on the theoretical level and influence process. Although the early VDL theory emphasized the differential treatment with the internal and external team members in the organization, with the development of the theory, the meaning of LMX theory changed to the differential treatment by establishing different relationships between supervisors and each subordinate; The differential treatment referred to by Chinese differential leadership is not the supervisor's differential treatment of certain subordinate, but the conceptual sub-group of his own subordinates (D Y Jiang & Zheng, 2014). LMX theory regards the relationship between subordinates and supervisors as the key factor to promote leadership effectiveness. On the one hand, giving more support and attention to subordinates with high LMX quality can exchange for their efforts and contributions beyond the contract. In differential leadership, the differential treatment of leaders is not equal to the differential relationship. For example, leaders may treat talented subordinates as insiders and give them more favored treatment, but such differential treatment does not mean that leaders have a high quality of social exchange with their highly talented subordinates (D Y Jiang & Zheng, 2014). The focus of differential treatment in differential leadership is to use social comparison to make insiders feel valued and encourage outsiders to work hard (D Y Jiang & Zheng, 2014; X. H. Zhong, 2011).

The biggest difference between differential leadership and LMX differentiation lies in the different emphasis. LMX differentiation is a collection of exchange relationships between team leaders and team members, which represents the degree of difference in the quality of relationship between team leaders and team members (Henderson et al., 2009). In other words, LMX differentiation emphasizes the degree of difference in LMX quality within the team. Differential leadership focuses on leadership behavior, which refers to the specific behavior of leaders towards different subordinates. More specifically, it reflects the degree of differential treatment of supervisors, that is, the degree to which supervisors treat insiders better than

outsiders.

2.3 Affective commitment

2.3.1 The concept of affective commitment

Organizational commitment was firstly proposed by Becker (1960), he assumed organizational commitment to be a psychological phenomenon that employees are willing and have to stay in the organization with the increase of their unilateral investment to the organization. This unilateral investment includes employee welfare, work energy, professional skill mastered only for specific organizations.

Porter et al. (1974) regarded employee commitment as an emotional experience consisting of their acceptance and belief towards values, willingness to make efforts for organizational goal, and strong desire to work in the organization. They denied Becker (1960)'s opinion that employee stay in an organization for financial and time consideration.

In 1990, Allen and Meyer composed the former studies and came to the three-factor structure model consisting of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Among them, affective commitment is individual's emotional attachment to the organization, which is an agreement of organizational goal, value and organizational regulation.

Chinese scholar Ling et al. (2000) proposed five dimensions of Chinese employees based on the cultural and management background of Chinese enterprises, including affective commitment, ideal commitment, normative commitment, economic commitment, and opportunity commitment. Affective commitment is the psychological attachment of the employee to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Moreover, other Chinese scholar also enriched the concepts of affective commitment according to their research needs (Dou, 2015; L. Liu et al., 2011; S. N. Wang et al., 2017). Although various definitions of affective commitment, most research adopts Meyer and Allen (1991)'s definition, i.e. Affective commitment is individuals' emotional attachment towards organizations, their identification of organizational goal, value and organizational regulation, and their willingness to stay. This thesis also adopts this definition.

2.3.2 Dimensions and measurement of affective commitment

2.3.2.1 Dimensions of affective commitment

Since Meyer and Allen (1990) compiled the three-dimensional affective commitment sub-scale,

many other dimensions are put forward. For example, L. Liu et al. (2011) divided affective commitment into organizational identification, organizational attachment and loyalty. Le et al. (2006) divided affective commitment into three dimensions: how organizations treat the perception, the support obtained in the organization and the expected standard, and the attitude of the organization.

Despite various dimensions, most scholars agree with the three dimensions by Meyer and Allen (1991), which includes identification, trust and loyalty. Therefore, this thesis adopts the affective commitment sub-scale compiled by Meyer and Allen (1991) to measure affective commitment.

2.3.2.2 The measurement of affective measurement

The initial measurement of organizational commitment is designed by Porter et al. (1974) according to their definition. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire measured from three aspects: the acceptance of organizational values and organizational goal, the willingness of contributing to the organization, the willingness to stay in the organization. Porter et al. (1974)'s definition of organizational commitment is more the affective commitment, so the organizational commitment scale is actually the measurement of affective commitment. The scale consists of 15 items and is not ideal in structural validity.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) develop a 21-item scale according to the three organizational commitment stages they divided, that is obedience, internalization and identification. Each dimension has 7 items, and the results show that 12 items are effective.

The 8-item Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) developed by Allen and Meyer in 1990 is further expressed as a 6-item scale, whose reliability has been tested in studies (Y. Q. Cheng & Stockdale, 2003; M. Zhang et al., 2002).

Moreover, Ling et al. (2001) compiled an organizational commitment scale suitable for Chinese employees. The scale includes 5 parts: affective commitment, ideal commitment, normative commitment, economic commitment and opportunity commitment. The scale shows good reliability in affective commitment and has been recognized by domestic scholars and applied in the measurement.

2.3.3 Relevant research

2.3.3.1 Antecedents

Affective commitment is the most ideal form of organizational commitment (J. M. Hassan, 2010) and has been largely addressed to. As pointed out in Kossivi et al. (2019)'s review, the

antecedents of affective commitment are more than 50, which could be divided into individual factors and organizational factors.

(1) Individual factors

Individual factors include individual characteristics, such as personality, education, value, as well as demographic variables, such as age, gender, education, experience, and marital status. Meyer and Allen (1991) pointed out that individual characteristics such as age, work years, gender, and education and demographic variables can influence affective commitment, which is confirmed by later studies. For example, L. Liu et al. (2011)'s research showed that emotional intelligence positively related to subordinate affective commitment, i.e. the higher individual's emotional intelligence, the higher their emotional attachment, identification and loyalty towards the organization. Pan (2009) found affective commitment of unmarried managers lower than married ones. Compared with managers with 11-15 working years, the affective commitment of managers with 6-10 working years have greater influence on their turnover tendency. Cui (2003) stated that demographic characteristics variables such as gender, education, household, and region can affect affective commitment. Xia et al. (2020) found gender, working years, and education can impact employees' affective commitment.

Moreover, Meng et al. (2019) investigated 292 civil servants in eastern China and verified the positive correlation between resilience and affective commitment. Paul et al. (2019)'s study showed that resilient employees are more adaptable and positive, which would result in stronger emotional attachment to the organization and form emotional commitment. Nisar et al. (2020) proved willpower significantly and positively related to affective commitment. Kossivi et al. (2019) noted that personality traits such as agreeableness, responsibility, and emotional stability are antecedents of affective commitment. Kim et al. (2020) surveyed Korean hotel employees and found employees' achievement needs, power needs, and belonging needs would increase their affective commitment via reciprocity.

(2) Organizational factors

A large number of studies have shown that organizational-level factors have an impact on subordinate affective commitment, including organizational culture, leadership style, organizational structure, job satisfaction, organizational justice, job content, and workplace friendships.

Extensive research has verified leadership's influence on subordinate affective commitment. For example, Benevolent leadership was positively associated with affective commitment (H. F. Wei & Li, 2021). N. Hu et al. (2021) investigated 204 Chinese employees and found shared leadership in positive relation with employees' affective commitment. Subordinates under

authentic leadership are more likely to develop trust (A. Hassan & Ahmed, 2011) and identification (C. A. Wong & Laschinger, 2013) with the leader, resulting in stronger affective commitment (Baek et al., 2019). Inclusive leadership can strengthen employees' affective commitment to the organization via personal support (Y. F. Wang et al., 2021). X. Y. Wang et al. (2022) surveyed top managers, HR supervisors and employees from 139 companies and found CEO authentic leadership in positive relation with employees' affective commitment and ethical leadership can increase knowledge-based employees' affective commitment (L. Q. Jiang et al., 2018), etc.

Besides leadership, the influence of organizational justice on affective commitment has also been addressed to. Distributive and procedural justice are found to strengthen affective commitment (X. J. Zheng et al., 2018). Interactive justice and distributive justice can enhance affective commitment, and organizational justice influences organizational commitment through organizational support (P. Liu et al., 2008). F. Wei and Lee (2017) survey 10 companies in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing, Wenzhou, Wuhan and Qingdao and found the positive effect of interactive justice on affective commitment. The research by J. Zhou et al. (2017) demonstrated through a survey on university employees from China, Korea, and Australia that procedural justice were related to affective commitment in Australia, and distributive justice and procedural justice were related to affective commitment in China and Korea. (Aryani & Widodo, 2021) surveyed 439 honorary teachers in private schools in Indonesia and the empirical results showed that organizational justice has a direct impact on affective commitment.

In addition, Jiang et al. (2018) stated that organizational identity can upgrade knowledge employees' affective commitment. Nie (2014) and X. Y. Li et al. (2018) concluded the positive effect of job satisfaction on affective commitment. After surveying 921 volunteers in Australia, Cormick and Donohue (2019) verified that perceived organizational support can positively predict affective commitment. Nie (2014) verified the positive effect of organizational culture on organizational commitment through a survey in Chinese companies. Xia et al. (2020) proved that mutual-invested employee-organizational relationship and excessive-invested employee-organizational relationship were positively associated with affective commitment.

2.3.3.2 Outcomes

On the one hand, affective commitment can affect employees' motivation and attitude, including turnover tendency, dedication, commitment, and attitude toward organizational change. On the other hand, affective commitment can affect employees' behavior and

performance, including organizational citizenship behavior, innovation behavior, voice behavior, pro-organizational non-ethical behavior, courageous followership behavior, job performance, and innovation performance.

(1) Motivation and attitude

Steers (1977) verified the negative relation between organizational commitment and turnover tendency, which is further confirmed by abundant studies. For example, L. Liu et al. (2011) surveyed 227 teachers in two general secondary schools in Langfang, Hebei Province, and found affective commitment negatively influence their turnover tendency, i.e., a teacher with higher affective commitment are less willing to leave the organization. Y. X. Chen et al. (2006) pointed out that stronger affective commitment will lead to lower tendency to leave. Pan (2009) proved the negative effect of affective commitment on employees' propensity to leave. X. Y. Li et al. (2018) collected data from 389 employees in 25 companies and found their affective commitment negatively affect turnover tendency.

Furthermore, Oreg and Berson (2011) believed that affective commitment increases subordinates' positive attitudes toward organizational change. A survey on knowledge workers in SMEs indicated that affective commitment positively affects work engagement and its three factors of dedication, focus, and vitality (S. Li et al., 2021).

Lu et al. (2013)'s study verified the positive influence of affective commitment on knowledge employees' engagement, task-centeredness, dynamism, proactive engagement, value internalization, and efficacy. The results of N. Hu et al. (2021) found the positive effect of affective commitment on employee engagement.

(2) Behavior and Performance

P. Liu and Jing (2007) conducted an investigation on 200 employees in Sichuan Province and found affective commitment significantly associated with organizational citizenship. Y. T. Wong (2017) surveyed 255 employees in three joint ventures and 253 employees in three state-owned enterprises in China and found affective commitment promote employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Xia et al. (2020) also noted that affective commitment positively influences organizational citizenship behavior.

Q. Zhou (2021) pointed out that affective commitment can significantly promote courageous followership behaviors, including courage to be responsible, to serve, to innovate, to challenge, and to adopt ethical behaviors. Ma and Su (2020) concluded that higher affective commitment leads to better innovative performance. F. Wei and Zhang (2020) found affective commitment to be a predictor of pro-organizational non-ethical behavior. In addition, employees' affective commitment can promote their innovative behavior, i.e. the higher the

employee affective commitment, the better their innovative behavior performance (W. Ma & Su, 2020). In an empirical study, Qian and Bao (2010) pointed out that among the three dimensions of organizational commitment, affective commitment influences employees' voice behavior the most. X. Y. Li et al. (2019) also noted that affective commitment influence employees' voice behavior.

Meanwhile, Y. X. Chen et al. (2006) found that organizational commitment contributes to task performance and situational performance, and that perceived organizational support influences employee performance via organizational commitment. Cobbinah (2021)'s study indicated that all three dimensions of organizational commitment significantly improve employee performance, and that affective commitment mediates organizational culture and job performance the most. The outcomes of affective commitment are concentrated on employee turnover tendency and organizational citizenship behavior.

2.3.4 Section summary

Organizational commitment was first proposed by Becker (1960). Porter et al. (1974) redefined organizational commitment and pointed out that organizational commitment is more an emotional connection between employees and the organization than an economic tool. Meyer and Allen (1991) summarized and combined with previous research, pointing out that affective commitment is the degree of social interaction between the organization and the members. Since then, research on organizational commitment began to attract attention in China. Scholars such as Ling et al. (2000), L. J. Wang and Li (2011) have conducted extensive research on the definition, dimension, measurement, and influencing factors of affective commitment. In fact, among the three dimensions of organizational commitment, affective commitment can best reflect employees' psychological dependence and emotional identification with the organization. Through previous research, it can be found that in the research on organizational commitment, the dimension of affective commitment is the most concerned. Affective commitment is the embodiment of employees' emotion towards the organization, and it is the best way to evaluate the relationship between the employee and the organization. This is one reason why this study chose to study affective commitment rather than organizational commitment.

Moreover, scholars have done abundant research on affective commitment, including research on the antecedents and outcomes of affective commitment. However, although scholars have paid attention to the impact of leadership style on subordinate affective commitment, there are few studies that consider the influence and influence mechanism of

differential leadership on affective commitment.

2.4 Subordinate perceived justice

2.4.1 Definition of subordinate perceived justice

At present, the academic understanding of subordinate perceived justice is mainly from the perspective of organization. It is considered that it is subordinates' perception of whether they are treated fairly within the organization. Therefore, it is also called "organizational justice" in some studies. But the difference is that some researchers believe that this perception comes from organizational systems, policies and management measures related to employees' individual interests (Y. Li et al., 2002). Some researchers believe that it not only comes from the organization's reward and punishment decision-making, but also includes the degree of respect for employees in the decision-making process and the degree to which employees know the basis of organizational measures (W. Zhang, 2004). Some researchers also believe that subordinate perceived justice comes from the understanding and evaluation of the justice of organizational management, including the degree of justice, the justice perception, the value of justice, and the factors causing injustice (S. G. Chen, 2005). In addition, some researchers regard the justice perception as a psychological construction of employees. For example, X. Z. Zhang (2007) believes that employees' justice perception is their inner experience and evaluation of organizational justice, while H. P. Sun et al. (2007) further put forward that employees' justice perception is employees' value experience and evaluation of return after working for certain time in the organization.

By reviewing the previous literature on employees' justice perception, this thesis believes that employees' justice perception is a subjective judgment and feeling of whether employees are treated fairly. It comes not only from all aspects of management measures in the organization, but also from employees' evaluation of input and return.

2.4.2 Measurement of subordinate perceived justice

Although there are extensive studies on subordinate perceived justice abroad, there are still differences on its structure and measurement. At present, there are mainly single-factor theory, two-factor theory, three-factor theory and four-factor theory (Y. Li et al., 2002).

The four-factor theory was proposed by Colquitt (2001). He believed that perceived justice was composed of four parts: distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and

informational justice. However, the proposal of the four factors was not achieved overnight, but gradually developed. Firstly, the researcher led to the discussion of distributive justice from the social comparison theory. The concept of distributive justice was first put forward by Homans. He believed that the expected salary was proportional to the cost or input, which paid attention to the fairness of distribution (Homans, 1961). In the organization, the research of distributive justice is the employees' cognition of the distribution results, that is, to investigate whether employees are satisfied with the distribution. Secondly, some researchers have proposed procedural justice. Thibaut and Walker (1975) found that when the litigant had the right of process control, which meant that as long as the litigant subjectively perceived that the trial procedure was fair, even if the judgment result was unfavorable to him, he tended to evaluate the whole case as fair and just. Leventhal (1980) believed that the concept of procedural justice could be applied to social situations beyond the law. He advocated that procedural justice was an important factor of individual justice perception in the decision-making process of resource and reward distribution. Therefore, the researchers introduced the above views into organizational management and put forward the concept of procedural justice. In short, procedural justice is whether the standards considered in the decision-making process are consistent, whether the policies are explained, and whether people have opportunity to exchange views and participate in debates (Z. Y. Liu, 2003). Then, on the basis of procedural justice, interpersonal justice is further derived. Bies and Moag (1986) believed that in the process of decision-making, the need for communication between supervisors and subordinates was inevitable. The procedure implies the interaction between both sides and affects decision-making. It includes two aspects: first, when managers implement decisions, whether they communicate with employees in a sincere mode, whether they express their concern for employees, show their respect for employees and consider their feelings. Second, whether managers have a clear and reasonable explanation for the decision-making of employee distribution results. Finally, Greenberg further subdivided interpersonal justice through a series of exploration and analysis (Zhu et al., 2013). It is divided into two categories: interpersonal justice and informational justice. Interpersonal justice refers to whether the supervisor maintains basic courtesy and respects the employees in the distribution outcomes or in the distribution procedures; Informational justice refers to whether the supervisor conveys the information that should be informed to the employees and provides necessary explanations.

Single-factor theory came into being in the early stage of justice theory. At the beginning, researchers only understood subordinate perceived justice from the perspective of distribution. However, with the proposal of procedural justice, although there is a certain distinction between

the two concepts, researchers believe that the two are closely related and have high correlation in empirical research, so it's hard to distinguish between them. Therefore, even if the two aspects of distributive justice and procedural justice are measured, they still advocate one-dimensional structure. Supporters of the two-factor theory divide the justice perception into distributive justice and procedural justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Supporters of the three-factor theory believe that perceived justice should be divided into three parts: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interpersonal justice (Masterson et al., 2000). Supporters of the four-factor theory believe that perceived justice consists of four parts: distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001). However, Y. Liu et al. (2003) adapted Colquitt (2001)'s four-factor scale based on China's cultural background. After exploratory factor analysis, they obtained a scale including four dimensions: procedural justice, distributive justice, leadership justice and informational justice. They believe that distributive justice is "material distribution", while leadership justice can better reflect "spiritual distribution", and this factor is different from the interpersonal justice emphasized in western studies.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the common measurements of perceived justice in the current empirical research include Adams (1965)'s single-dimension scale (distributive justice), Sweeney and McFarlin (1997)'s two-dimensional scale (distributive justice and procedural justice), Masterson et al. (2000)'s three dimensional scale (distributive justice, procedural justice, and interpersonal justice), Colquitt (2001)'s four dimensional scale (distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice), Y. Li et al. (2003)'s four dimensional scale (procedural justice, distributive justice, leadership justice, and informational justice).

2.4.3 Research on subordinate perceived justice

One of the reasons for researchers' interest is that they want to confirm the hypothesis that enhancing organizational justice can improve employees' psychology and behavior (such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, etc.).

Y. Li et al. (2003) and X. Y. Yin (2015) review the literature related to organizational justice, and the results show that subordinate perceived justice is positively related to outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational identity, evaluation of authority, trust in supervisors, organizational citizenship behavior, innovation behavior, and task performance, while it is negatively related to employees' withdrawal behavior (such as turnover

intention) and negative reaction.

Researchers generally believe that different dimensions of justice have different effects on different outcome variables. For example, distributive justice has more impact on specific individual behavior and attitude. Specifically, the research shows that distributive justice has a positive correlation with employees' job satisfaction, job performance and trust in supervisors, while it has a negative correlation with negative emotion and turnover intention (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Skitka et al., 2003). Procedural justice has a greater impact on the evaluation of organizations. Current research shows that procedural justice can trigger subordinates' organization-oriented citizenship behavior, reduce turnover intention and increase organizational commitment (Masterson et al., 2000; Miao et al., 2012).

Existing studies regard organizational justice as an important antecedent of employee performance. Adams (1965) once pointed out that when employees perceived that their input and income were unequal, they would feel nervous, and then were urged to take actions, such as reducing work input or lowering down their work quality, to balance their perceived injustice. This theory provides a theoretical explanation for the impact of distributive justice on performance, that is, employees maintain justice by changing the quality and quantity of work. Aryee et al. (2004) studied the impact of organizational justice on employee performance from the perspective of procedural justice, and found that procedural justice had a significant predictive effect on task performance and related performance. The empirical study of Masterson et al. (2000) found that there was a significant positive correlation between interpersonal justice and job performance. The research of X. Y. Wang and Liao (2009) also shows that interpersonal justice can significantly predict employees' task performance. Zhu et al. (2013) studied the relationship between the four dimensions of organizational justice, task performance, and situational performance. Their research shows that interpersonal justice and informational justice have significant impact on task performance, while distributive justice and procedural justice have no significant impact on task performance. The four dimensions of organizational justice can significantly explain the situational performance. This is consistent with most research conclusions at home and abroad. However, the impact of different dimensions on task performance is still controversial.

In addition, researchers question the conclusion that they only pay attention to the specific dimensions of justice and ignore the overall justice. More and more researchers call for paying more attention to the research on the perception of overall justice. We should combine the specific dimensions of justice to form overall justice, and believe that it is the basis of individual attitude and behavior.

2.4.4 Section summary

At present, there are abundant empirical studies on organizational justice, but most of the antecedents of organizational justice is organizational justice, and rare studies take subordinate identity perception as the antecedent. In addition, although there are studies explaining the relationship between subordinate perceived justice and organizational commitment, this thesis still wants to explore whether the influence of the four dimensions of organizational justice on affective commitment is the same with the former research.

2.5 Insider/outsider

2.5.1 Concept of insider/outsider

As described in the differential pattern, Chinese people live in circles centered on themselves. In organizations, leaders often grasp the power and resources given by the organization, and therefore become the core of the circle. The implicit assumption of differential leadership is that leaders classify employees in management, generate the awareness of insider, divide employees into insiders and outsiders, and then treat employees differently according to their preferences. Z. Y. Liu (2003) uses the perception of relationship position to show the intimacy and interaction between subordinates and their immediate supervisors. She believes that when supervisors classify subordinates as insiders or outsiders, they may be biased in terms of their usual attitude, care and substantive rewards to subordinates. Although the words “insider” and “outsider” also appear in some researchers’ articles from time to time, few Chinese researchers have made a clear discussion on their concepts so far. Y. Y. Yang (2008) believes that the division of insiders and outsiders is the “relationalization” of Chinese people in the categorization of interpersonal relationships, which means that the process of dividing insiders and outsiders in the differential pattern actually is the process of “localization”.

Western scholars Masterson and Stamper (2002) put forward the concept of “perceived insider status (PIS)”, which was described as “the personal space obtained by employees who perceive themselves as members of the organization and the degree of acceptance”. At the same time, they mentioned “perceived insider status”. This concept is also applied to the research of management by Chinese researchers. When reading the literature, some readers may not pay attention to the “perceived insider status”, so they are confused with insider/outsider and think that they are the same concept, but in fact, the meanings they emphasize are very different. This thesis believes that insider/outsider reflects the “localization” of interpersonal relations by

Chinese people on the basis of self-centered egoism, and the so-called “localization” by Y. Y. Yang (2008) can also be understood as “circlization”, i.e. taking oneself as the center and dividing different circles from far and near. Compared with “perceived insider status”, the concept of insider/outsider emphasizes more on employees’ sense of belonging to specific individuals. In the enterprise, it can be understood as subordinates’ sense of belonging to their immediate supervisors. Therefore, it draws lessons from Masterson and Stamper (2002) on “perceived insider status”. In this thesis, insider/outsider is defined as “the degree to which subordinates perceive that they are a member of the circle of their direct supervisor”.

2.5.2 Measurement of insider/outsider

There are three main methods for measuring insiders and outsiders.

The first is that researchers directly ask the subjects to point out their perception of being an insider or an outsider. The second is that researchers regard the perceptual role as a continuous dimension. For example, Z. Y. Liu (2003) used “relationship position perception” to evaluate the degree of intimacy between subordinates and supervisors. She used a concentric circle (corresponding to numbers 1-6) divided into six layers from the inside to the outside. The innermost layer was 1, which was the core position of the concentric circle. The closer it was to the inner circle, the closer it was to the supervisor. The outermost layer was 6, which was the edge position of the concentric circle. The closer it was to the outer circle, the more distant the subordinate felt from the supervisor. Similarly, H. P. Wu (2011) took a direct approach and marked it with 0 to 100. Subordinates were asked to evaluate whether they were the supervisor’s insiders or outsiders in the interaction with the supervisor. The lowest score of 0 was marked as “complete outsider”, and the highest score of 100 was marked as “complete insider”. The third is to set up multiple items in the form of a scale to consider the scores of the subjects. For example, L. Wang (2013) used seven items to measure the interaction between subordinates and supervisors to measure the degree of subordinates’ perception of being insiders or outsiders. Relatively speaking, the first two measurement methods directly refer to “insiders” or involve sensitive topics such as “circle”, which are more direct on the whole, while the third method avoids directly referring to sensitive words and adopts an indirect way to measure. The indirect way of integrating multiple items is more scientific at present.

2.5.3 Relevant research

At present, there are few studies on insider/outsider. Z. Y. Liu (2003) proposed that relationship

position perception played a mediating role between differential atmosphere and procedural justice. H. P. Wu (2011) found that the relationship between differential leadership and subordinate procedural justice and interpersonal justice was regulated by subordinate's identity perception. When subordinates perceived themselves as insiders, the correlation between differential leadership and procedural justice and interpersonal justice became weaker. Wang Lei's research shows that insider/outsider plays a moderating role between authoritarian leadership and subordinates' turnover intention. Specifically, compared with subordinates who are outsiders, insiders' turnover intention is higher when supervisors show more authoritarian leadership.

2.5.4 Section summary

Firstly, through the literature review, it can be found that there are few studies on insider/outsider at home and abroad. Although similar concepts have been mentioned in some studies, such as "relationship position perception", "identity perception", etc., few researchers have made a clear exposition of the concept of insider/outsider.

Secondly, researchers may confuse the two concepts of insider/outsider and perceived insider status in the West. In fact, due to cultural differences, there are great differences between the two. The concept of perceived insider status emphasizes more on the sense of belonging to the organization, while the concept of insider/outsider is for characteristic individuals.

Finally, in the few empirical studies, some researchers believe that insider/outsider plays a mediating role, while others believe that insider/outsider plays a moderating role, which needs to be further discussed on.

2.6 Employee categorization standard

2.6.1 Proposal of employee categorization standard

B. X. Zheng (1995) introduced the idea of differential pattern into enterprise management and took the lead in proposing the employee categorization model, that is, leaders of Chinese enterprises will classify employees into eight categories according to the three categorization standards of relationship, loyalty and talent (see Figure 2.2), and then generate the awareness of insider, dividing employees into insiders and outsiders. Among the three standards, the relationship refers to the distance between supervisors and subordinates. It includes not only the objective special social solidarity with kinship or quasi kinship, but also the communicative

relationship with “appreciation” from supervisors (B. X. Zheng, 1995). Loyalty essentially reflects a kind of private loyalty, that is, employees’ sincere loyalty to the supervisor and their unconditional obedience. Talent mainly refers to whether employees have the ability to complete work tasks (this ability includes employees’ skills, knowledge and work experience) and the degree of effort to apply their ability to work.

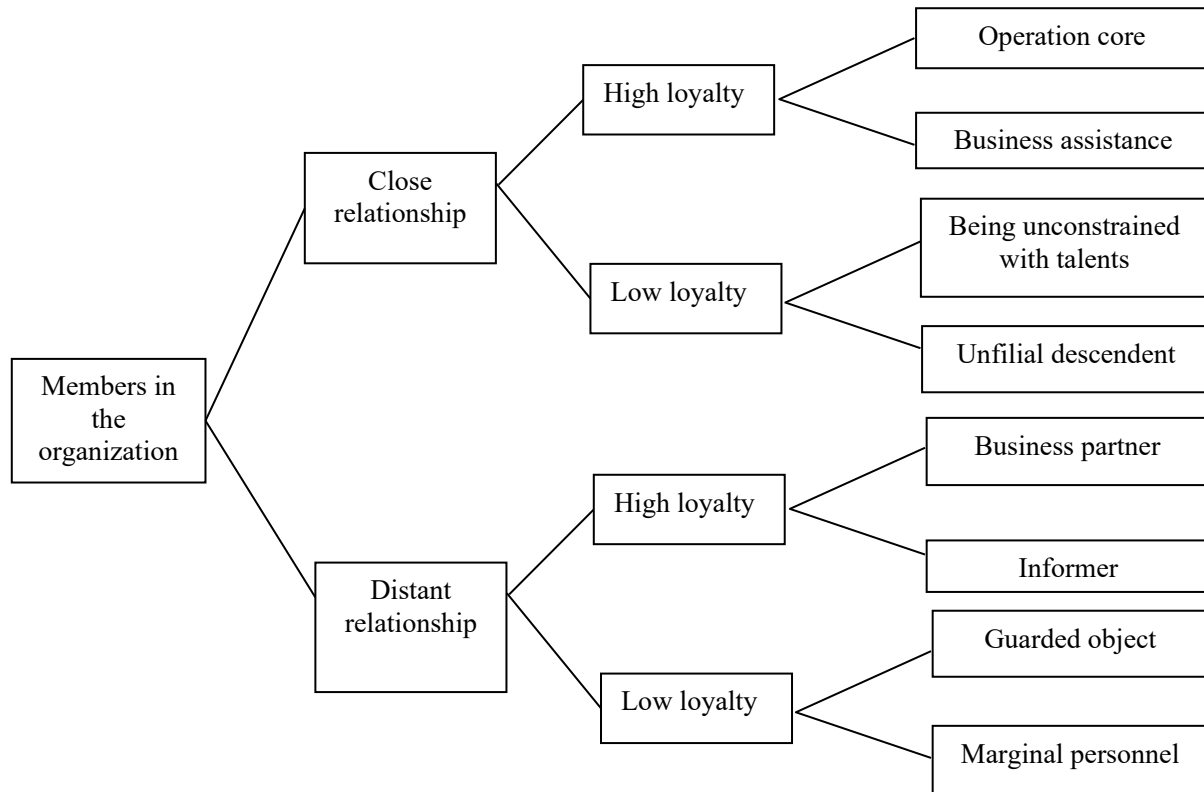


Figure 2.1 Categorization process and eight category prototypes of employees in Chinese enterprises

2.6.2 Measurement of employee categorization standard

In the early stage, B. X. Zheng (1995) used scenario experiments to simulate the situation of “relationship, loyalty, talent”. Then, W. Z. Xu (2005) integrated and put forward the three-dimensional scale of “relationship, loyalty, talent” according to the elaboration of the three categorization standards of relationship, loyalty and talent in the employees management model by B. X. Zheng (1995), taking the three categorization standards as independent dimensions and combining them with the research involving similar concepts. After that, Jiang et al. found in the interview that in addition to the three categorization standards of relationship, loyalty and talent, enterprise executives also pay much attention to the team spirit and character (integrity and honesty) of employees. Therefore, they put forward a five-dimensional employee categorization scale and compiled a new scale.

2.6.3 Research on employee categorization standard

The research on employee categorization standard mainly includes the following four aspects:

Firstly, the researchers discuss about the importance of different categorization standards for leaders to classify insiders/outsideers. Some researchers believe that the three standards of relationship, loyalty and talent are very important. For example, through in-depth interviews with supervisors and employees of seven large private enterprises in Taiwan, B. X. Zheng and Lin (1998) found the objective relationship basis (social connection), loyalty and talent were the main standards for supervisors to classify insiders and outsiders. Some studies have found that loyalty and talent are the most important. Ren et al. (2002) targeted professional managers and their subordinates of 30 banks, and found that subordinates' loyalty (including obedience, sacrifice and dedication) and talent could be easily distinguished between insiders and outsiders, with an accuracy rate of over 80%. W. Z. Xu (2005) also got a similar conclusion. He surveyed the members of the management team of 120 schools and summarized the categorization standards that school principals attached most importance to. The results showed that 47% of the members in the management team thought principals attached most importance to loyalty; 40% thought it was talent; and only 13% thought it was close relationship. Therefore, he believed that the loyalty and talent of subordinates were the key for managers to classify subordinates, while relationship was only a basic standard. Other researchers believe that the preference of leaders for categorization standard is related to their position level in the organization. L. Wang (2013) speculated that senior managers may think loyalty was the most important, while ordinary managers thought talent was the most important because they paid more attention to performance improvement. Other researchers believe that when leaders make promotion decisions, their consideration of loyalty and talent is also influenced by whether they are traditional or not and characteristics for jobs after promotion (including professionalism, confidentiality, resource control, privacy and the number of vacancy); Traditional leaders pay more attention to loyalty; when the position is professional, confidential or the number of vacancy is small, they focus more on talent in promotion decision; for the position of resource control, they focus more on relationship; for the position of privacy, they focus more on loyalty.

Therefore, some researchers have studied the influence of the three categorization standards of relationship, loyalty and talent on the psychology and attitude of subordinates. B. S. Cheng et al. (2002) collected questionnaires from 173 pairs of supervisors and subordinates by using the one-to-two dual pairing method to explore the effects of relationship, loyalty and talent on trust between supervisors and subordinates and on subordinates' attitude (satisfaction with work

and leaders). The results show that loyalty can significantly predict the trust between supervisors and subordinates, supervisors' management behavior and subordinates' attitude (job satisfaction and satisfaction with leaders), while relationship has a predictive effect on management behavior and satisfaction with leaders, and talent has a predictive effect on trust between supervisors and subordinates, but talent has no predictive effect on job satisfaction or satisfaction with leaders.

In addition, researchers have explored the impact of loyalty on supervisors' management behavior. H. H. Hu et al. (2004) studied the reward distribution of 287 business executives in Taiwan and found that leaders gave more rewards to subordinates with higher levels of relationship, loyalty and talent, and the distribution methods were different in the open and confidential situations. In the confidential situation, leaders gave more rewards to subordinates with higher level of relationship, loyalty and talent than in the open situation.

Finally, some researchers have also explored other standards for the categorization of subordinates by supervisors in Chinese enterprises. D Y Jiang and Zheng (2011, October 17-18) interviewed 90 supervisors in Taiwan and Chinese mainland, and found that five items of talent, loyalty, character (personal quality), team spirit and relationship were important standards for supervisors to classify insiders. The order of importance was talent (43%), loyalty (26%), character (13%), team spirit (10%) and relationship (7%); At the same time, they also found that supervisors would also classify subordinates as outsiders on the contrary of this standard, and the importance was as follows: low level of talent, team spirit, loyalty, character, and relationship.

2.6.4 Section summary

The employee categorization model essentially reflects supervisors' classified management of subordinates, that is, supervisors measure subordinates according to certain standards, and then select intimate subordinates based on their own preferred standards. At present, some discussions have been made around the categorization standard, mainly including: the preferred standard for supervisors to divide insider/outsider; In addition to the three standards of relationship, loyalty, and talent mentioned by Zheng, there are other categorization standards; The influence of supervisors' categorization standards on subordinates' psychology, attitude and supervisors' management behavior.

2.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, we review the origin of differential leadership--the concept and characteristics of differential pattern, the theoretical foundation of differential leadership, including social circles, renqing and mianzi model, relationship orientation, familism and pan-familism, and circle culture in organizations. On this basis, we review relevant research differential leadership concerning its concept, measurement, impact on employees and organizations, and relevant concepts.

By reviewing the literature, extant studies on the influence mechanism of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment is scarce. Some studies may have noticed organizational commitment, but most regard it as the mediator in differential leadership instead of outcome.

In addition, we reviewed the concept and measurement of subordinate affective commitment, insider/outsider perception, employee categorization standard and found that although there are studies on leadership and organizational commitment, the leadership involved are mostly western leadership i.e. transformational leadership, transactional leadership, charming leadership, there are still limited research on the indigenous leadership on subordinate commitment. Meanwhile, when reviewing the literature on insider/outsider, we found that previous studies used concepts such as insider perception and relationship location perception, the concept of insider/outsider still needs to be clarified.

Through the review of the above literature, it is also found that the existing research has preliminarily verified the role of power distance as a moderating variable, but when discussing about the moderating effect of the effectiveness of differential leadership, the current research mainly focuses on culture-related situations, such as individualism/collectivism, personal modernity/tradition, right distance and other variables, but there might be other moderating variables. The function mechanism of differential leadership is that after leaders perceive the characteristics of subordinates, they classify employees according to certain standards, have the idea of difference and sequence in their mind, and show this idea in management, thus affecting the work attitude and behavior of subordinates (B. X. Zheng, 2004). However, previous studies only described the relationship between employee categorization and different management behaviors, but rarely explored the relation between employee categorization and employees' actual perception and behavior. D Y Jiang and Zheng (2014) reviewed the research literature of differential leadership and put forward some topics to be studied in the future, in which they emphasized that the employee categorization standard should be used as a moderating factor in

the effectiveness of differential leadership. In addition, based on the influence of Chinese culture, if the supervisors' categorization standard for "insiders" and "outsiders" is achievable goals for individuals, which means that the acceptance of favoritism by subordinates can promote the work motivation of subordinates and be conducive to positively promote subordinates' attitude and behavior.

To sum up, this study hopes to establish a mediating model with moderation to explore the impact of differential leadership on employees' justice perception, employee performance and organizational commitment, so as to provide managers of Chinese enterprises with referential differential management experience, that is, for employees with different conditions, supervisors should adopt appropriate differential leadership style to make more employees perceive justice, so as to improve their performance and organizational commitment.

Chapter 3: Developing a Conceptual Model

From the general literature reviewed in the last chapter, there are conflicting findings pertaining the how much is differential leadership impactful on subordinates' sense of justice, but also some surprising blind spots in empirical research, as e.g. how does it relate with an important proxy of positive organizational outcomes, such as affective commitment. This has been under-researched. The overall idea that this has process nature indicates mediations should occur in the explanatory process of differential leadership outcomes, but likewise, as in most cases, human interactions are complex and so, moderations should also be operating in the whole process as already started to be probed (e.g. C. Zhang, 2021). Based on this premises, this chapter will be dedicated to design a conceptual model that targets the main aspects reviewed while also including affective commitment as a relevant dependent variable. As a first step, theory can guide thinking about which intervening variables may be most suited, and therefore, we will start by exploring some theories, besides differential leadership theory, that may be helpful into enlightening some psychological aspects.

3.1 Relevant theories

Amongst the theories that can be found in literature we have chosen four classic theories: relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966), vicarious learning (Bandura & Walters, 1963), social exchange (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), and renqing (Fei, 1947).

(1) Relative deprivation theory

American sociologist Stouffer first put forward relative deprivation, and later scholars have defined relative deprivation from different perspectives. From the perspective of individual, Runciman (1966) divided relative deprivation into individual relative deprivation and group relative deprivation, and proposed four conditions for a person to have a sense of relative deprivation: (1) he does not have X; (2) others got X in the past or will get X at an expected time in the future; (3) he wants X; (4) he thinks he deserves X. Smith and Ortiz (2002) distinguished individual relative deprivation and group relative deprivation, and added emotional response. He defined relative deprivation as the emotional response that individuals feel worse for themselves or the groups they are in after making comparison with certain standard and then feel angry or resentful. This sense of deprivation includes both deserving and wanting. Previous studies have studied relative deprivation from the individual level, inter-

group level and social level, and put forward an integrated model of relative deprivation.

(2) Vicarious learning theory

Vicarious learning is a concept in social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963) referring to individuals' learning by observing others' behaviors and outcomes so as to avoid the cost and risk of learning from their own behaviors or experiences. Vicarious learning was first applied in the field of education and then introduced into organizations. Vicarious learning theory holds that organizations can make self-change by observing and imitating the behaviors of other organizations, and individuals in organizations can also improve their behaviors by observing and imitating members within the organization or in other organizations.

(3) Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory is based on the exchanges in classical economics, anthropology and behaviorist psychology. American scholar Homans (1961) first put forward the social exchange theory in combination with behavioral psychology and economics, and is regarded as the founder of this theory. Homans (1961) regards all social behaviors as exchange activities, which occur between two or more people, and must pay the corresponding price or get the corresponding return. Homans' social exchange theory focuses on individualism at the micro level, but lacks research at the macro level. Blau (1964) investigated the influence of the basic exchange process on the formation and development of social system, and extended the social exchange theory to the macro level. After Blau (1964), other scholars further developed the social exchange theory. Emerson redefined the basic concept of exchange and divided the exchange relationship into unilateral monopoly exchange relationship, division-of-labor exchange relationship, social circle, hierarchical network exchange relationship and central network exchange relationship. Barnard (1938), the founder of social system school, put forward the exchange theory in organizations - incentive-contribution theory, that is, organizations provide employees with material and spiritual incentives (motivations) to let them make efforts (contributions) to achieve organizational goals. After that, some scholars put forward the incentive-contribution model, and they believed that it was an interactive exchange between the organizations' incentives providing and the employees' contributions.

(4) Renqing theory

Human interaction is a necessary basis for maintaining the close social cohesion of the Chinese people (Fei, 1947). Different scholars have different definitions of "renqing" (人情). Jin (1988) and G. G. Huang (1988) point out that there are three different meanings of renqing in Chinese culture: ① human emotion, which refers to the emotional reaction that individuals

may have when they encounter various life situations; ② gift, which is a kind of resource given to each other when people have social transactions; ③ worldly wisdom, which is the social norm of how people should get along in Chinese society. Hsu (1971) selected the most important or pivotal meaning of renqing and held that renqing is an inevitable and indispensable emotion in the established interpersonal relationship (i.e. human relationship) in Chinese society. It is obligatory and in line with “etiquette”. “renqing” and “real affection” are produced and expressed in interpersonal interaction. The difference lies in the starting point, that is, the former is out of obligation, and the latter is out of willingness. Hsu (1971) also thought that Chinese people pay more attention to the obligatory emotion of renqing than the intimate spontaneous emotion, and the general interpersonal interaction is mostly controlled by this obligatory emotion. W. Z. Chen and Ren (2015) summarize the connotation of renqing into three aspects: ① a special interpersonal emotion, that is, a new belt that maintains the relationship between individuals in the close community based on relatives and friends, and characterized by differential pattern in Chinese traditional acquaintance society; ② a universal obligation and social norm of mutual assistance between people; ③ a kind of benefit and resource, which is a utilitarian tool for both parties to realize mutual benefit on the basis of renqing.

Renqing is the core and essence of human relationship (W. Z. Chen & Ren, 2015). The Chinese people’s “relationship” is different from that of the west. Western “relationship” generally refers to the relationship between people, people and things, people and events, people and organizations, and so forth. However, the “relationship” of Chinese people refers more to the special human relationship between people. For example, it is commonly referred to as “looking for relationship”, “connecting relationships”. C. C. Chen and Chen (2012) point out that guanxi is a process in which both sides of interaction constantly benefit and help each other, which is the basic requirement of the rule and norm of renqing.

(5) Self-serving bias

Self-serving bias was first proposed by Miller and Ross (1975) and was defined as the tendency of individuals to attribute positive events to themselves and negative events to external sources. Bradley (1978) expanded the theory and argued that self-serving bias can help to improve both personal image and public image, which could then achieve self-esteem protection and promotion. After Bradley, Miller (1978) suggested that this bias stems from a distortion of causality perception or description. (Gibbs, 2003) further differentiated cognitive distortion into primary distortion and secondary distortion. Among which, primary distortion

refers to self-centered attitudes and beliefs, i. e. views, expectations, needs, rights, feelings, and desires, which is more important than ordinary views and expectations. Secondary distortion refers to a deliberate loss of conscience, empathy, and guilt, after a crime to rationalize one's behavior and maintain one's self-image (Barriga et al., 2001; J. Guo et al., 2011). Self-serving bias, which is prevalent in everyday life, can facilitates individuals to maintain and enhance their positive selves, resist negative events and feedbacks, better adapt to society and keep psychological well-being (Sanjuán & Magallares, 2014).

These five classic theories help understand the fundamentals of differential leadership effects at the psychological level, e.g. relative deprivation explains why differential treatment may exert a negative feeling in those that are in the outsider group, but it may also depend on the naturalization of that behavior which means that if those individuals learned through social example that it is the norm, then they may not experience such negative deprivation feelings. Likewise, the renqing concept entails the fundamentals of social exchange theory, and self-serving bias may explain why people adopt positive attitude towards differential treatment.

3.2 Differential leadership and subordinate affective commitment

Among the three dimensions of organizational commitment, Allen and Meyer (1990) defined affective commitment as employees' emotional attachment to the organization and believed individuals with strong affective commitment identify strongly with organizational goals, values, and norms, and are willing to maintain organizational membership and sacrifice for the organization.

J. M. Hassan (2010) argued that affective commitment is the most desirable form of organizational commitment, and abundant studies have also confirmed that affective commitment affects employee motivation and attitudes, including turnover tendency (L. Liu et al., 2011), dedication (Lu et al., 2013), commitment (S. Li et al., 2021), and attitude toward organizational change (Oreg & Berson, 2011). Meanwhile, Affective commitment also affects employees' behaviors and performance, including organizational citizenship behavior (Y. T. Wong, 2017), innovation behavior (W. Ma & Su, 2020), voice behavior (X. Y. Li et al., 2019), pro-organizational non-ethical behavior (F. Wei & Zhang, 2020), courageous followership behavior (Q. Zhou, 2021), job performance (Y. X. Chen et al., 2006), and innovation performance (Cobbinah, 2021). Leader is always regarded as the agency of the organization, especially when the leader is of high rank or large influence, the way leaders treat employees will be regarded as the organizational behavior, and leadership styles might have different

impacts on subordinate organizational commitment (Y. Huang et al., 2018). This is a well-documented relation (Y. X. Chen et al., 2006; X. J. Li & Wei, 2007; X. P. Liu, 2003; Qin et al., 2011; L. Zhang et al., 2013). Y. X. Wu and Li (2020) made a proposal that in differential leadership, the exchange relationship between leaders and insiders is both economic and social, including not only equal exchange of materials, but also emotional interdependence (Y. X. Wu & Li, 2020). Therefore, in differential leadership, there is a “quasi kinship” between leaders and employees, and between employees themselves, making organization not only the workplace of employees, but also where their emotions belong other than their families. Differential leadership gives human touch to the organization and bring employee a sense of belonging, which could meet employee’s emotional needs to a great extent. Therefore, subordinate’s affective commitment to the organization will be enhanced.

Based on the above analysis, we propose hypothesis 1.

H1: Differential leadership is positively associated with subordinate affective commitment.

3.3 The mediation of subordinate perceived justice

3.3.1 Differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice

As mentioned before, leaders with differential leadership will treat their subordinates differently depending on their relationships. Compared with outsiders, insiders can get more favoritism from the leader. According to the logic of western justice theory, outsiders who are not favored by the leaders will feel unjust. However, this is not the case in China. This is because under the influence of China’s cultural atmosphere, the value of justice in China is different from that of the West, and the evaluation standards of justice are also different. Furthermore, in the context of Chinese culture, difference and order is viewed as a law of justice.

According to western theories, justice can generally be divided into three types: procedural justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), distributive justice (Adams, 1965) and interpersonal justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). The traditional distributive justice holds that people will measure justice according to the proportion of their input and output. Deutsch (1975) put forward three laws suitable for different situations: the “demand law” of giving resources according to individual needs; the “equilibrium law” of equal distribution of resources among all participants; the “justice law” of allocating resources according to each person’s contribution. The justice law is adapted to situations where economic productivity and work efficiency are the main objectives; the equilibrium law applies to situations where the main goal is to maintain friendly relations

and collective harmony; when interactors are very intimate and attach importance to each other's needs and welfare, the demand law is adopted. On this basis, G. G. Huang (1985) put forward the Chinese model of "Renqing (human relation) and Mianzi (dignity)", and pointed out that different laws of justice should be adopted for people with different relationships. However, in the real situation, Chinese people attach great importance to Renqing and Guanxi (relationship), and rashly adopting the seemingly just practice of "business is only the business" is actually very unjust to Chinese people (Zhai, 2010). Chinese people use different standards for justice judgment according to different relationships with others. In fact, due to the difference in the understanding of justice between China and the west, the distribution principles between them are different. Western ethics is a kind of Christian ethics which holds that everyone is an equal individual and a pure "person" after abandoning identity, status and family background. Therefore, the judgment of justice is universal (G. G. Huang, 1991); while the Confucian ethics is based on "benevolence and righteousness", which means that the Confucian standard of justice takes "benevolence" as the core, which is a kind of "status ethics", that is, the Confucian ethics has different requirements for people of different statuses, such as "ethics for common people" and "ethics for scholar bureaucrats" (G. G. Huang, 1991; L. Wang, 2017). This shows that there is an essential difference between the Chinese view of justice and the universal justice of westerners. The Chinese view of justice is based on the difference kernel, while the westerners' view of justice is based on the equality kernel. Simply treating Chinese people with the western concept of justice may not increase Chinese peoples' perceived justice (L. M. Gao & Wang, 2013). Chinese people pay attention to reasonable distribution with consideration of renqing, which not only needs to be rational, considering contributions ("reasonable"), but also needs to be in line with human relation. Only the distribution combined with ration and human relation is what Chinese people think "just". Furthermore, the core of Chinese view of justice is to meet other peoples' expectation on their own roles (Chiu, 1991), that is, they need to fulfill their respective roles and obligations. Therefore, according to different relationships, everyone needs to fulfill different roles and obligations, so the distribution rules are also different. Z. X. Zhang (2006) also points out that Chinese view of justice is essentially a norm to moderate interpersonal relations, rather than a pure rational law to guide the distribution of interests.

From the perspective of organization, it is reasonable that differential leaders distribute more resources or assistance to insiders than outsiders. In the view of insiders, this is in line with their expectations for the role of leaders, so they tend to think it is just; while outsiders have low expectations for the role of leaders according to their previous interaction experience,

so they may not have a strong sense of injustice. More importantly, for outsiders, influenced by Confucian ethics on the rationalization of inequality, how to become insiders may be their first consideration (L. M. Gao & Wang, 2013).

From the perspective of procedural justice, on the one hand, Chinese peoples' perception of procedural justice lies in that there are rules to follow and act upon in the process of distribution decision-making. On the other hand, it is likely to lie in the permeability of the boundary from outsiders to insiders, which is also the social mobility mechanism mentioned by Y. X. Yan (2006). From the perspective of procedure, if leaders insist on classifying employees according to consistent standards such as talent, loyalty or relationship, insiders may become outsiders, and outsiders can become insiders by making efforts, which is in line with the psychological expectations of subordinates so as to realize the perception of procedural justice. Meanwhile, the procedural justice of Chinese people also integrates the principle of ration and human relation. For example, leaders in family enterprises will treat their children as insiders, while other subordinates who do not have natural relationships with the leaders can only obtain identity and status through interaction. D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) also finds that differential leadership can improve subordinates' perception of procedural justice from supervisors. In other words, the partial treatment of leaders is in line with the expectation of Chinese cultural value.

In addition, due to the importance attached on relationship, Chinese people may pay more attention to interpersonal justice with leaders. Similarly, insiders and outsider may have different role expectations for the interpersonal justice of leaders. Insiders expect to communicate more with leaders, while outsiders may be used to getting direct orders from leaders. X. D. Gao et al. (2015) also point out that a person's self is based on relational self or collective self, and people feel that respect and integration are very important. The additional promotion of social relations in the differential pattern will improve the perceived justice.

Based on the above analysis, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2a: Differential leadership is positively associated with subordinate perceived justice.

3.3.2 Impact of subordinate perceived justice on affective commitment

From the perspective of social exchange theory, when employees feel just about the distribution results and procedures as well as the interaction with their superiors, employees will have a stronger willingness to maintain their organizational membership and are more willing to work hard to achieve organizational goals. In other words, employees will repay the organizations' efforts to ensure justice with stronger organizational commitment. A large number of studies

have also confirmed that employee perceived justice has a positive impact on subordinate affective commitment. Tian (2014) pointed out that the three dimensions of organizational justice had significantly positive impact on the three dimensions of organizational commitment, and interpersonal justice had a more significant impact on affective commitment and normative commitment, while procedural justice had a more significant impact on continuance commitment. X. F. Xu and Gao (2019) pointed out that interpersonal justice was positively related to employee affective commitment through a survey of employees in various enterprises and institutions. X. D. Gao et al. (2015) found that there was a positive correlation between organizational justice and organizational commitment, whether in the group pattern or the differential pattern. X. W. Liu (2020) reviewed relevant literature and also found that there was a positive correlation between organizational justice and organizational commitment. In this study, affective commitment is used to measure organizational commitment. Based on the above analysis, we propose hypothesis 2b.

H2b: Subordinate perceived justice is positively associated with affective commitment.

To sum up, we further propose the hypothesis 2:

H2: Subordinate perceived justice mediates the relation between differential leadership and affective commitment.

Among the reasons that have been stated in literature to sustain the process that links differential leadership to a sense of justice and outcomes such as affective commitment, there is an intrinsic consequence of differential leadership that has not yet been sufficiently approached from a process perspective: the insider / outsider perceived status.

3.4 The mediation of insider/outsider

3.4.1 Differential leadership and insider/outsider

As we have been emphasizing, Chinese society shows a characteristic of differential pattern under the influence of Confucian ethics. Interpersonal communication and interaction should obey two basic principles of “be kind to the kin” and “be respectful of the respectable”, and differential order is the human ethics under the principles of kinship and respect (Shen, 2007). “Be kind to the kin” emphasizes the proximity of the relationship, while “be respectful of the respectable” emphasizes the superiority of the status. Differential pattern and differential leadership are maintained by the reproduction of “be kind to the kin” and “be respectful of the respectable”. From the ethical norms, leaders control the power and resources needed by the

subordinates. Under the principle of “be respectful of the respectable”, subordinates will form an affiliation towards leaders, and the principle of “be kind to the kin” requires different behavioral norms according to the kinship, and any violation will lead to condemnation by the public. Therefore, one of the key aspects of differential leaders is that action of dividing their subordinates into insiders and outsiders, and treat insiders partially (D Y Jiang & Zhang, 2010; B. X. Zheng, 1995). The subordinate will also try to get closer to the leader in order to get more support from the leader for better development. In fact, the different treatment of the supervisors will also influence subordinates’ perception of insider or outsider status. For subordinates who regard themselves as insiders, they will have a higher perception of insiders when given more tolerance, care, resources and chances, and this perception will deepen when subordinates are treated more partially, which is in conformity with the expectation of Chinese people, that is it is reasonable to favor those in closer relationship (L. M. Gao & Wang, 2013).

When subordinates attribute leaders’ different treatment, they will also be influenced by self-serving bias. People tend to attribute success to themselves and failure to external factors (Miller & Ross, 1975). Under differential leadership, insider subordinates will receive more preference in resources and care, so obtaining leaders’ preference is a success, otherwise is a failure. When a subordinate receives preference from the leaders, he/she will attribute this success to his/her insider identity, which corresponds with the social expectation. While when a subordinate fail to receive preference, he/she will attribute this failure to external factors such as limited resources and wrong timepoint to protect the active self, prevent negative influence and present a good image. Therefore, no matter who leaders favor, subordinates’ insider/outsider perception will increase. This leads us to hypothesize:

H3a: Differential leadership is positively associated with insider/outsider perception.

3.4.2 Insider/outsider and affective commitment

Under differential leadership, subordinates self-ascribed as insider feel more care and support from the leader and the organization. According to LMX theory, subordinates with higher insider perception will grow organizational identification and emotional attachment more easily, motivating the subordinates to maintain their organizational membership, make efforts towards organizational goal, and pay back to the organization with higher affective commitment. Comparatively, subordinates with lower insider perception feel less care and support from the leader and the organization, leading to less organizational identity and emotional attachment.

H3b: Insider/outsider perception is positively associated with affective commitment.

To sum up, we propose hypothesis 3.

H3: Insider/outsider mediates the relation between differential leadership and affective commitment.

This hypothesis, together with the previous hypotheses (H1 and H2) suggest a parallel mediator operating together with perceived justice. However, there is theoretical basis to propose that the perceived insider / outsider status is also linked directly to the sense of justice. This would indicate a sequential mediation.

3.5 Sequential mediation

Differential leadership influences subordinates' insider/outsider perception, which will sequentially influence subordinate justice perception. In Confucian culture, there is a natural distinction between close and distant relationships, which is recognized and accepted in the society. People should balance between the kinship-based behavioral norms and the idea of benevolence. Therefore, leaders will classify their subordinates into insiders and outsiders according to their *guanxi* with subordinates and their observation of subordinates' competence and loyalty during the interaction. More bias given to insiders conforms with subordinates' psychological cognitions and expectations.

For subordinates with higher insider perception, leaders' partial behavior may have greater influence on justice perception. When subordinates with higher insider perception perceive more partial treatment, they will regard it as more fair and granted considering Chinese people's social expectation that insiders should be treated nicer (L. M. Gao & Wang, 2013). Meanwhile, when self-ascribed insider subordinates perceive less partial treatment from the leaders, their sense of injustice will increase as it does not meet their expectation as insider. For subordinates with lower insider perception, leaders' partial behavior will not have that strong influence. When receiving more partial treatment, self-ascribed outsiders do not feel justice and even feel injustice as they think "I do not deserve it". When receiving no or less partial treatment, they will not have strong sense of injustice because they think "I am an outsider".

As stated, subordinate perceived justice should impact on their affective commitment. Therefore, combined with hypothesis 2 and 3, we hypothesize that:

H4: Insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice sequentially mediate the relation between differential leadership and affective commitment.

3.6 Employee categorization standard as moderator

As proposed in the previous hypotheses, the process that sequentially links differential leadership with affective commitment has two important mediators (insider / outsider self-ascribed status, and perceived justice) but many studies are calling attention to the cultural context where this process makes differential leadership an asset instead of a liability. A relevant construct that is often mentioned in the differential leadership in China concerns the criteria leaders use to decide who belongs to the inner or outer circle. These criteria may change how much each subordinate perceives leadership behavior. Amongst these criteria are competence, loyalty, teamwork, and guanxi. They represent very different natures of work and intrinsic explanations for the relative added value each subordinate represents in the organization. The first classification standard is competence, that is subordinates assume supervisors to classify insiders and outsiders according to the competence, and those who are willing to fulfill work tasks are more likely to become insiders. When subordinates assume supervisors to use loyalty as the classification standard, they think subordinates who are loyal to their superiors and obey unconditionally are more likely to be appreciated and become insiders. When subordinates assume supervisors take team spirit as the classification standard, they think subordinates with overall situation consciousness, cooperation spirit and service spirit can become supervisors' insiders. Guanxi refers to the closeness between the supervisors and subordinates, that is, subordinates think employees who have biological or quasi biological relationship with the supervisor or employees who have communicative relationship with the supervisor are more likely to become their insiders.

3.6.1 The moderation between employee categorization standard and insider/outsider

Leadership is not an objective reality to only subordinates, but rather the subordinates' self-perceptions (B. X. Zheng, 1995). As mentioned earlier, a core of differential leadership is how leaders differentiate between their insider and outsider subordinates. Subordinates identify themselves as insiders or outsiders through their perception of leadership behaviors (L. Wang, 2013). We argue that when subordinates perceive their leaders' categorization standard in differential leadership, their insider/outsider perception may be enhanced, that is, when a subordinate perceives the leader use loyalty, guanxi, competence and team spirit as categorization standard, i.e., the leader is more concerned with whether the subordinate is loyal, whether the subordinate has a special guanxi, whether the subordinate is willing and able to

complete the job, and whether the subordinates has a big-picture awareness and a service spirit, the more care and communication, tolerance of mistakes, promotion and reward leaders give to subordinate, the more subordinates will feel as insiders. This is related to the “be kind to the kin” principle in Confucian culture, that is, Chinese people should follow the social norm of “treating insiders better than outsiders”, and any violation will even be condemned by society (L. M. Gao & Wang, 2013; L. Wang, 2013). In organizations, “be kind to the kin” principle is that leaders treat their insiders better, so when the leader values his/her categorization standard more, the subordinate who receives favoritism from the leader may rationalize this favoritism and attribute to “I am the insiders expected by the leader, otherwise, why would the leader be partial to me?”, thus deepening his or her insider/outsider perception.

Similarly, under the influence of self-serving bias, subordinates who do not receive favoritism still think that he/she has met the standards expected by the leader. Although he/she does not receive favoritism, they blame it on external factors and think him/her still an insider, and the more the leader values the categorization standard, the more likely he/she will receive favoritism. This effect also applies to subordinates who have received favoritism from the leader. In other words, regardless of whether the subordinate is insider or outsider, as long as the subordinate perceive the different treatment according to the categorization standard, the more bias given to insiders, the more subordinates will regard himself as insiders. Therefore, we hypothesize H5:

H5: Employee categorization standard enhances the positive relation between differential leadership and insider/outsider.

3.6.2 The moderation of employee categorization standard between differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice

Similarly, when subordinates perceive the categorization standard of the leader, the higher differential leadership, the more subordinates will feel themselves as insiders. For the subordinate who receives favoritism from the leader, on the one hand, he/she is culturally influenced to associate this favoritism with the social expectation of “being nicer to insiders” and believes that he/she has met the leader’s standard of insiders and judge the leader’s favoritism to be fair. On the other hand, the subordinate may also be influenced by the self-serving bias and attributes the favoritism to that they have met the leader’s standard and is insider, so it is reasonable for him/her to receive favoritism. Either way, once perceived the leader’s categorization standard, differential treatment by the leader will enhance the justice

perception for subordinates who have received favoritism. For the subordinate who does not receive favoritism, the self-serving bias motivates him/her to attribute it to external factors rather than to failure to meet the leader's expectations, i.e., he/she still perceives the favoritism as fair in order to maintain a positive self and reduce feelings of isolation. Therefore, when subordinates perceive the leader's different treatment based on categorization criteria, the more bias given to insiders, the fairer the subordinates will feel, regardless of whether they are insiders or outsiders. Therefore, we hypothesize H6:

H6: Employee categorization standard enhances the positive relationship between differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice.

3.6.3 The moderation of employee categorization standard between insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice

Driven by self-serving bias, when employees perceive the standard that leaders use to categorize their subordinates, subordinates with higher insider/outsider perception will care about every behavior that could become or maintain the insider identity, even these behaviors are only in his/her mind. In other words, subordinates will attribute their perception to categorization standard to rationalize their insider/outsider perception, which will then reinforce his/her justice perception.

Therefore, we hypothesize H7:

H7: Employee categorization standard enhances the positive relation between insider/outsider and subordinate justice perception.

3.7 Research model

This study takes differential leadership as an independent variable to explore its impact on organizational results. Unlike the previous research which takes job performance, employee innovative behavior and altruistic behavior as the outcomes, this study takes affective commitment as outcome variable, which could enrich the research on the outcomes of differential leadership. Meanwhile, this study takes insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice as a mediator to explore the influence mechanism of differential leadership on affective commitment. Moreover, this study takes employee categorization standard as moderator to explore the boundary conditions of differential leadership on insider/outsider perception and subordinate perceived justice and of insider/outsider perception on subordinate justice perception. The theoretical model is presented in Figure 3.1.

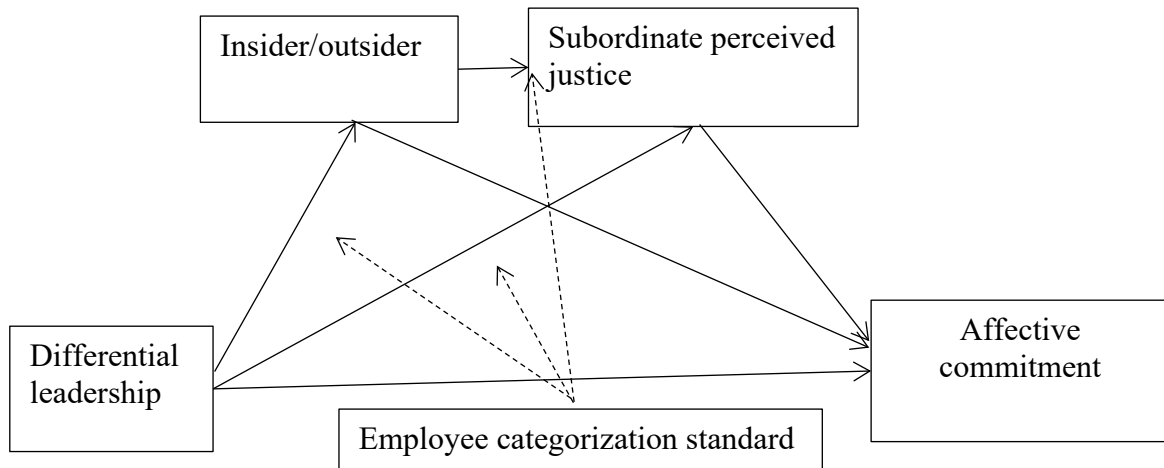


Figure 3.1 Research model

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, we first reviewed relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966), vicarious learning (Bandura & Walters, 1963), social exchange (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), renqing theory and self-serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975). Meanwhile, this chapter proposed 7 hypotheses based on the literature review in chapter 2 and the theoretical basis. Finally, we proposed the research model to show the relationships between the variables.

Chapter 4: Research Method

4.1. Research design

4.1.1 Survey process

To guarantee the survey goes well, we first sent a letter of intent to 10 organizations to see whether they would like to participate in our research. In the letter, we stated that we were researchers studying leadership and its effects, and that the research topic was how supervisors' differential leadership (i.e., treat insider subordinate and other subordinate differently based on their relationship with the subordinates) and employee classification standard (i.e., classify the subordinates as insiders according to guanxi, competence and loyalty) influenced subordinate insider/outsider perception (i.e., the degree to which a subordinate perceive themselves as an insider of the supervisor), justice perception and affective commitment. Moreover, we explained the object, frequency and required time of the survey: the first survey was objected to the supervisors of each department and their 2 to 5 subordinates, and each questionnaire would take about 5 minutes; the second survey was also objected to the same people about four weeks later, and each questionnaire would take about 5 minutes, which would not occupy much time.

Considering that the performance appraisal system of a company/unit can reflect the leadership style of the supervisor, such as the supervisor's tolerance to mistakes and reward and promotion, we also stated in the letter of intent that the investigation requires the cooperation of the human resources department. In the first survey, we expected the human resources department give us a general introduction to the company's performance management status, match the supervisors and subordinates in the survey, and provide the appraisal results of the fourth quarter or annual performance of the subordinates who participated in the survey (if available). Among the six organizations, four participating companies provided the performance information, which was illustrated in the sample company profiles in this chapter.

To obtain higher support from the company or unit, we explained to the company/unit the benefits that the company/unit or its employees can get from participating in this survey, including: (1) Employees who answer the questionnaire can be rewarded with a small gift each time. (2) The research team can provide the company/unit with a brief research report (without providing personal data). The content of the research report includes the following four aspects:

first, the differential leadership style of supervisors, and to what extent do supervisors treat their insider subordinates and other subordinates differently; second, among guanxi, competence and loyalty, which do supervisors consider more when they treat their subordinates differently in management; third, employee's perception of organizational justice in terms of distribution, procedure, interpersonal relations and information; fourth, employees' affective commitment, i.e., employees' belonging towards the company. We expect that employees with higher affective commitment are less likely to turnover and are more active in work. The above information may help the company/unit to manage better.

After our sincere invitation, six enterprises were willing to participate, among which three are private enterprises and two are state-owned enterprises, one is a private college, covering employees from industries such as finance, photovoltaics, medicine, real estate, education, and software.

4.1.2 Questionnaire survey design

This study collected data via face-to-face questionnaire surveys, which was conducted at two time points. In the first survey, the employee's questionnaire included employee categorization standard scale, differential leadership scale, and insider/outsider perception scale, and the supervisor's questionnaire included categorization standard scale and differential leadership scale. In the second survey, the employee's questionnaire included justice perception scale, work performance scale, organizational commitment scale, and insider/outsider perception scale, and the supervisor's questionnaire included categorization standard scale and differential leadership scale.

The first survey was carried out from December 2020 to January 2021, and the second survey was carried out from the end of February 2020 to the end of April 2021. Table 4.1 is the survey record.

Table 4.1 Survey overview

	Time	Organization name	Industry	Number of questionnaires issued	Number of questionnaires collected	Number of valid questionnaires	Valid rate	Valid sample
The 1 st survey	Dec. 2020 - Jan. 2021	SSD company, HT company, RJ company, TW company, W college,	Software, medicine, real estate, photovolt	226	223	220	97.2 %	199

The 2 nd survey	Feb. 2020 - Apr. 2021	S bank	aics, education , finance	218	212	199	91.2 %
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The specific process of the questionnaire survey are as follows:

1. In the surveyed enterprises, the human resources managers were firstly interviewed to acquire the current situation of the enterprises' performance management, obtain the list of employees, and know whether the annual performance appraisal data of employees could be provided.

2. For the first survey, the printed questionnaires were sent to the supervisors who were willing and able to participate, and then to 2-5 of their subordinates. Junior managers can only participate in the survey either as subordinates or as supervisors, avoiding filling in both the questionnaires for supervisors and subordinates. When issuing the questionnaires, the university researchers or research assistants introduced themselves to the respondents, demonstrating that the survey was for the research project, and the data would only be used for research and would not be disclosed to the company or the public. Considering the sensitivity of some items, the questionnaire was sealed in an envelope with only a label on the surface in order to eliminate the psychological burden of the respondents and ensure the authenticity and effectiveness of their answers. The labels would be torn off when the questionnaire was distributed, and the employees would put the questionnaire into the envelope after filling the answers and returned it on the spot. In order to match the data collected at two time points, the questionnaires were numbered according to the departments, and the numbers were slightly marked in the inter-layer of the questionnaire. Moreover, the same demographic characteristic items were set in the two questionnaires to check whether the relevant information of the respondents was consistent.

3. Researchers distributed questionnaires in the conference room or the respondent's office to avoid supervisors and subordinates filling out questionnaires in the same room. When we distributed the questionnaires, we also gave gifts to the respondents. The gift in the first survey was a USB flash disk, and the gift in the second survey was a box of signing pens. The two gifts were worth about 30 yuan.

4. After at least four weeks, we contacted the human resources department to carry out the second survey. The survey process was the same as the first time.

The first survey was conducted when the employees presented, so they show high cooperation and participation. In the first survey, 226 questionnaires were distributed to the subordinates of 50 supervisors, and 223 were actually recovered, with a recovery rate of 98.7%.

Excluding 3 copies which clearly involved much missing content, we recovered 220 effective copies for the first time, with an effective recovery rate of 97.3%. In the second survey, the recovery rate of the second time is lower than that of the first time due to the interval time, during which some employees might quit the job or be on business trip. 218 copies were distributed to the subordinates of 50 supervisors, and 212 copies were actually recovered, with a recovery rate of 97.2%. Excluding the questionnaires which did not match the first ones in basic information and which involved seriously missing data, we obtained 199 valid samples, with an effective recovery rate of 91.2%. The 50 supervisors participated in both two surveys, and each supervisor filled in the paired questionnaires of 2-5 of his subordinates.

4.1.3 A brief introduction of the sample companies

Before having an overview of the sample, we introduce the sample company/organization. The sample company/organization are SSD company, HT company, RJ company, TW company, W college, S bank. Among them, SSD company, RJ company, TW company provided the performance appraisal document, and HT company described their performance appraisal method. While carrying out the questionnaire survey, we collected the annual performance appraisal data of the respondents in the survey.

(1) SSD company

Founded in 2013, SSD is a comprehensive Internet informatization company that focuses on modern information services such as high-quality enterprise informatization services, enterprise telecommunication value-added services, enterprise network integrated marketing, mobile Internet promotion, mobile game development, promotion and operation. SSD is an important content provider that cooperates closely with the three major domestic mobile operators. It is committed to providing customers with informational services such as complete and professional enterprise information service solutions, e-commerce solutions, mobile Internet solutions and enterprise network marketing solutions. The founding team of the company has the concept of “Think before you act, and morality goes first”, which expresses the corporate philosophy of emphasizing morality, thinking and acting. As a national high-tech enterprise, SSD Technology integrates R&D and application, and has long been focusing on cutting-edge artificial intelligence technology innovation. Based on edge intelligent hardware and with intelligent vision algorithms as the core, SSD company creates AI vision solutions for embedded and edge deployment scenarios. Meanwhile, SSD company has rich industry experience and strong technical support in big data analysis and IoT applications. After

development, the company has accumulated partners including Tongwei, China Construction Eighth Bureau, ZTE, China Fifth Metallurgical, Langchao. Moreover, the company has also won a number of honors such as electronic intelligence qualification, weapon equipment quality management system certification, and credit grade A certificate.

The performance appraisal of the company follows the principle of survival of the fittest, adopts the combined assessment methods of the competition-for-the-first system and the elimination-of-the-last system, and is divided into monthly and annual assessments. The assessment content mainly includes employees' work performance, work attitude and comprehensive ability, and employees are scored according to the work completion form and monthly work assessment form of the month. The monthly assessment results are presented by scores, which are classified into Level A, B, C, D and E. The assessment results are directly linked to the monthly performance salary, which accounts for 20% of the total payroll of employees. The annual assessment is classified into Level A, B, C, D and E according to the average score of the annual performance assessment.

(2) HT company

HT is a pharmaceutical company established in 2001. Its business scope covers narcotic drugs, class I and class II psychotropic drugs, biochemical drugs, Chinese herbal medicines, Chinese herbal decoction pieces, medical equipment, cosmetics, food, etc. The company has standardized operation and management, perfect sales channels, and customers all over Sichuan. Since its establishment, HT has taken "providing professional health services to customers from the perspective of doctors" as its business philosophy, and has always been loyal to customers and strives for excellence in service quality. HT has 60 directly-operated stores and more than 300 franchised stores, and has successively won honors such as AAA-level law-abiding and honest company, China's pharmaceutical retail chain enterprise with outstanding growth ability. In 2013, HT purchased 100 acres of land in the national high-tech zone of M City and built a "Healthy City" project with a total investment of 380 million yuan. The company made every effort to develop the health industry and has become a whole industry chain health that integrates scientific research, production, e-commerce, information release, medical service, health examination, health care, health education, new product promotion, commodity exhibition and sales, office and conference affairs, accommodation and catering, modern warehousing and logistics, financing and communication. Meanwhile, SSD aims to establish a corporate operation platform for food, daily necessities, cosmetics, western medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, health care products, and medical equipment sales services.

The company has 200-299 employees, it adopts monthly assessment and annual assessment.

The assessment content includes employees' KPI, work attitude and work ability, which are scored by the superior, and the assessment results are presented in the centesimal system.

(3) RJ company

Founded in 2004, RJ is a second-level enterprise of XC Group Co., Ltd., mainly responsible for the comprehensive urban development and operation business, and has the first-level qualification for real estate development. Since its establishment, RJ has firmly served the urban strategy of M city, and has undertaken strategic support projects such as area development, TOD comprehensive development, talent apartments, and affordable housing. At present, RJ's total assets have exceeded 75 billion yuan, and it manages more than 40 subsidiaries. RJ's comprehensive strength ranks first among state-owned urban development enterprises in X City.

RJ company's mission is "RJ creates what the city needs". As a state-owned enterprise in X city, RJ adheres to "walking with the times and advancing with the city", supporting and developing urban construction, insisting on the starting point of where people live, constantly creating livable places, and building thousands of mansions. Taking the prosperity of the city as the foothold, RJ company explores the needs of the city and optimizes the urban space. The corporate vision is to "build a 100 billion-level, digital-led, industry-leading urban comprehensive development and operation enterprise", to be the vanguard of real estate enterprises in X City, to become the leader of urban comprehensive development and operation, to develop excellent commercial housing, to expand pan-real estate develop, to provide fine property management services, and to become a builder of urban high-end, diversified and smart life. With the spirit of "empower the city, let beauty come to fruition", RJ company regards itself as the creator and guardian of a better life in the city, shouldering the important task of "optimizing urban space, enhancing urban functions, and improving urban life". Aiming to build a better life, RJ company shares the responsibility of building home, expands the urban happiness space, and create a livable environment in the city. In addition, the company also adheres to the style of "seeking long distances, fulfilling responsibilities, doing practical things, and striving for the first" and the product concept of "projects are more than construction but creation, and services are more than attentive but dedicated".

RJ company's performance appraisal adopts the combination of qualitative and quantitative appraisals. The appraisal contents include employees' work completion, work quality, coordination, which are divided into monthly appraisal, quarterly appraisal and annual appraisal. The employee appraisal performance coefficient range is 0-1.3. Finally, according to the performance coefficient, the grades are classified into five levels: extraordinary, excellent, good, qualified and unqualified. The proportion of each level is strictly controlled.

(4) TW company

TW is a technology-based company. It was established in 2016 with a registered capital of 10 million yuan. There are nearly 300 employees in total, and it has gathered many types of high-end talents such as State Council allowance and experts of Sichuan Thousand Talents Program. The company has passed the ISO9001 quality system certification and is a national high-tech enterprise, a national leading enterprise in smart fishery, a Chengdu enterprise technology center, and a pilot enterprise for the integration of industrialization and industrialization. It has the qualifications such as safety production license. After years of technological research and development and innovation, 2 domestic leading achievements, 13 patents and 12 software copyrights have been formed. The company has participated in the “Blue Granary Science and Technology Innovation Project” of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People’s Republic of China, and is a number of provincial and municipal science and technology projects. The company was rated as “Excellent Enterprise in Internet of Things Industry”, “Sichuan E-commerce Best New Enterprise Award”, “Internet of Things Excellent Technology Award”, “Aquaculture Intelligent Outstanding Contribution Award”, “Annual Innovative Brand in China’s Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Industry”, “single top photovoltaic intelligent operation and maintenance brand. The main business includes three major sectors: fishing and light integrated intelligent operation, smart agriculture and information services, which helps customers improve resource utilization efficiency and production investment efficiency.

The main business of TW company includes three major sectors: fishing and light integrated intelligent operation, intelligent agriculture and information service. TW company provides overall information solutions for planning, design, implementation and operation, which realizes a new “intelligence+” management mode supported by information technology, dedicating to maximizing resource utilization efficiency and benefits for customers. Entering the “14th Five-Year Plan” period, the company will continue to innovate, improve resource utilization efficiency in an all-round way, and increase investment returns at multiple levels. While maximizing customer profits, it will help achieve the national emission reduction target, and strive to create “fishing and light integrated intelligent operation expert” brand image.

TW company’s performance assessment adopts monthly assessment, which is generally carried out according to the principle of assessment from the upper level to the lower level, and the assessment content is the completion of employees’ KPI. Firstly, the employees conduct self-assessment on the work of the previous month, and then the superior leaders score the monthly assessment and determine the monthly floating assessment coefficient according to

employees' completion of KPI in the previous month, evaluate the assessment results and submit them to the assessment group for review. Monthly assessment score = score from the superior * 100% * weight. Finally, the score corresponds to four levels: unqualified, to be improved, qualified and excellent.

(5) W college

Founded in 1976, WL is a university located in the eastern Sichuan Province. Since its establishment, WL has transformed from a full-time university to an undergraduate university changed its name, and set up master's degree authorized project. WL is a pilot for transformation and development. As of 2021, the school has two campuses, covering an area of more than 700,000 square meters. WL has a complete teaching system and 18 secondary schools, offering 57 undergraduate majors and 12 junior college majors, covering nine major disciplines. There are more than 1,200 faculty members, more than 15,000 full-time students and 65 international students. WL has complete teaching facilities, including more than 800,000 electronic books, more than 50,000 Chinese and foreign paper newspapers and periodicals, and 30,000 electronic journals. The teaching and scientific research equipment worth over 100 million yuan.

(6) S bank

Founded in 1986, S bank is the first-tier branch with the largest asset scale of a bank in the western region. It is also a state-owned joint-stock commercial bank with high management level, strong peer competitiveness and good social image in Y province. It has a scope of business including handling RMB deposits and loans; peer-to-peer lending business; domestic and foreign settlements; handling bill acceptance, discounting, and re-discounting; agency issuance, agency underwriting, agency redemption of government bonds; agency collection and payment business; agency securities fund clearing business (bank-securities transfer), etc. Up to now, the total assets are nearly 450 billion yuan, and there are more than 670 branches and more than 15,000 employees under the jurisdiction of provincial branch business departments and 18 secondary branches.

4.2 Measurement of the variables

Except for employee categorization criteria, the variables in this study are all measured by mature scales which have been used many times in China and shows good reliability and validity. As for the employee categorization criteria scale, we contacted Professor Jiang, the developer of the scale, to obtain the Chinese version scale. The scale was once used in a research

project of Professor Jiang, but has not been published.

4.2.1 Differential leadership

Differential leadership reflects the partial degree of supervisors, that is, the degree to which supervisors treat insiders better than outsiders. The three-dimensional differential leadership scale with 14 items developed by D Y Jiang and Zhang (2010) is adopted. In this 6-point Likert scale, the numbers 1 to 6 respectively indicate the degrees from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. All the items in the scale are filled out by comparing outsiders with insiders, so the context of the scale is set as “compared with subordinates who are outsiders, when your supervisor treats insiders”, for example, “the punishment given to insiders is lighter than others.” The structural validity and reliability of the scale have been confirmed by domestic researchers and the scale has been widely used. In the first survey, subordinates answer to this measure.

4.2.2 Affective commitment

Mowday et al. (1979) developed the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) in 1979, which measures organizational commitment from three aspects: first, employees have a strong identification with the goals and values of the organization; second, employees are very willing to contribute to the organization; third, employees are willing to stay in the organization. The most widely used and effective scale is the Organizational Commitment Scale developed in 1997, which measures organizational commitment from affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

Referring to the affective commitment sub-scale developed by Meyer et al. (1993), this study applies the translated version of the scale published in the authoritative journals. Using likert-7 points scoring method, the numbers 1 to 7 indicate the degrees from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The representative item is: “I am emotionally dependent on the company”. In the second survey, subordinates are measured.

4.2.3 Perceived justice

The measurement of subordinate perceived justice refers to Colquitt (2001)’s organizational equity scale, which mainly includes four dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice. Since the Chinese-translated items are not disclosed in the Chinese papers published in the authoritative journal, the scale was translated into Chinese by professional translators, changed to target towards the supervisor, and reviewed by the management researchers. The scale adopts Likert 5-points score, and the numbers 1 to 5 indicate the degrees from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The representative item is:

“my direct supervisor treats me politely”. In the second survey, subordinates are measured.

4.2.4 Insider/outsider

The insider/outsider scale used by Chinese researcher L. Wang (2013) is applied to measure subordinate perceived insider/outsider status from their interaction with their direct supervisors. There are seven items in the scale, which are scored by likert-5 points scoring method. The numbers 1 to 5 indicate the degrees from “completely inconsistent” to “completely consistent”. The representative item is “the supervisor cares about me and thinks of me”. In the first survey, subordinates are measured.

4.2.5 Employee categorization standard

Since the employee categorization scale is not disclosed in the published research, the employee categorization scale adopted by D Y Jiang and Zheng (2011, October 17-18) is obtained through e-mail. The scale includes five sub-dimensions: relationship, loyalty, talent, personality and sociability. In this Likert 6-point scale, number 1 to 6 indicate the degrees from “very unimportant” to “very important”. The guiding word is “what kind of subordinates are more likely to become the insiders trusted by your supervisor”, and the representative items are “working seriously, responsibility and due diligence”, “being loyal and obedient to me”, “honesty and sincerity”.

4.3 Sample overview

After two questionnaires were collected, the data was entered into SPSS software, and the characteristics of the samples were briefly analyzed, as shown in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3. It can be seen from Table 4.2 that most of the respondents are women between 26 to 35 years old. Most of the respondents are with bachelor degree and are grass-roots employees. Their time of working with supervisor shows average distribution.

Table 4.2 Sample characteristics

Items	Type	Frequency	Ratio
Gender	Male	76	38.2%
	Female	123	61.8%
Age	≤ 25	27	13.5%
	26-30	64	32.2%
	31-35	62	31.2%
	36-40	20	10.1%

From differential leadership to affective commitment

	>40	26	13.0%
	Senior high school/secondary specialized school or below	8	4%
Education	Junior college	41	20.6%
	Bachelor	104	52.3%
	Master	45	22.6%
	Doctor or above	1	0.5%
Position level	Ordinary staff	152	76.4%
	Grass-roots manager	42	21.1%
	Middle-level manager	5	2.5%
Time of working with supervisor	<1 year	53	26.6%
	1-2 years	65	32.7%
	3-4 years	42	21.1%
	≥5 years	39	19.6%

As shown in Table 4.3, in the supervisor sample, there are more males than females, but the difference is minor. Mostly between 31-50 years old, half of the supervisors have a bachelor's degree and most of the supervisors are from private-owned or private-controlled companies, and most of the company has more than 500 employees.

Table 4.3 Sample characteristics of supervisor sample

Items	Type	Frequency	Ratio
Gender	Male	29	58%
	Female	21	42%
Age	26-30	3	6%
	31-35	14	28%
	36-40	13	26%
	41-45	9	18%
	46-50	8	16%
	51-55	3	6%
	Education	Senior high school/secondary specialized school or lower	0
Junior college		10	20%
Bachelor		25	50%
Master		14	28%
Doctor or above		1	2%
Nature of the company		State-owned or state controlled	15
	Private-owned or private controlled	35	70%
	Foreign-owned or foreign-controlled	0	0
Size of the company	≤10 employees	0	0
	11-20 employees	0	0

21-50 employees	8	16%
51-100 employees	1	2%
101-200 employees	0	0
201-500 employees	8	16%
>500 employees	33	66%

4.4 Data analysis method

In this research, the data collected from the questionnaires was put into the statistical software for quantitative analysis, mainly with statistical analysis software such as AMOS20 and SPSS22. Before the formal analysis, the data was pre-processed firstly, mainly with analysis and processing of the missing values, and then was checked whether there was a common method bias; Secondly, the validity and reliability of the scale were tested; Finally, when verifying the mediation of insider/outsider and perceived justice as well as the moderation of categorization standard, the Process macro program (v3.5) developed by Hayes (2014) based on SPSS was mainly used. The program is simple to operate and the results are clear. More importantly, it transcend the traditional three steps of testing mediation and moderation, which greatly saved the user's time and improved the analysis efficiency (D. S. Chen & Wang, 2015). Specifically, the main statistical methods used in this thesis are: missing value analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, exploratory factor analysis, internal consistency reliability test, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter proposes the theoretical hypotheses and research model based on relevant theories and literature review, introduces the design of survey method, the measures, the collected sample and the data analysis strategy. In the design of survey methods, the selection of research tools, survey methods and sample collection process are described in detail. In terms of samples, the sources of the collected data and the characteristics of the data samples are explained. In terms of measures, the source of each scale is illustrated. In terms of data analysis methods, the tools and methods to be used in the data analysis process in the next chapter are introduced.

Chapter 5: Data Processing and Hypothesis Test

5.1 Data pre-processing

When collecting data via questionnaire survey, the characteristics of the data should be considered before the data analysis and hypothesis test as data determine the quality of the empirical research results. Before the formal data analysis, this study analyzed and processed the missing values and tested the common method bias.

5.1.1 Missing value processing

The missing of data is divided into systematic missing and random missing. Systematic missing refers to the missing with regularity, which does not exist in this study, while random missing has no regularities. It is generally considered that random missing accounting for no more than 10% of the total sample is acceptable. For cases with random missing, researchers usually choose to delete or replace. Deletion is to eliminate the case directly before formal analysis, which may cause severe samples lost, so researcher would not adopt deletion unless the sample is large. Therefore, it is a good choice to replace the missing value with supplementary data using methods such as mean replacement, regression replacement, and maximum expectation method.

This study uses SPSS software to analyze and process the missing values. In the differential leadership scale, 7 of the 14 items have missing values, but only 12 missing values in total. The highest missing rate of the item is only 2%, and the same case has missing values on at most two items. Among the 16 items in the organizational commitment scale, only 4 items have missing values, and each item has only 1 missing data, with the missing rate being 0.5%. Among the 20 items in the justice perception scale, only 2 items have missing values, and the missing rate of seriously missing items is 2.5%. Among the 7 items of insider/outsider scale, only 1 item has 1 data missing. There are 13 items in the employee categorization standard scale, and the most missing item is “caring for the supervisor”, but the missing rate is less than 5%.

From the above analysis, we can see that the data missing in the samples in this thesis is random. Therefore, based on the analysis of missing values, this study uses the method of E-M regression to replace missing values, and the subsequent analysis will be carried out on the basis of filling in missing values.

5.1.2 Common method bias test

Common method bias refers to the covariation between prediction variables and standard variables caused by the same data source (rater), measurement situation, project context and the characteristics of the project itself (Podsakoff et al., 2003). At present, the problem of common method bias is mainly solved from two aspects of procedure control and statistical control.

Procedure control refers to taking corresponding control measures from research design and measurement, such as selecting different objects to measure prediction variables and benchmark variables, protecting the anonymity of the tested, reducing the guess of the tested for the survey purpose, reversing scoring measurement items. We meet the respondents face to face from late February 2020 to April 2021. Since all variables involved in this study involve the self-evaluation of employees and the evaluation of employees by supervisors, in order to reduce the pressure of subjects spatially and psychologically, we try to separate the time and place when supervisors and employees participate in the survey. Specifically, if possible, the supervisors and subordinates were invited to separate conference room to fill in the questionnaire respectively, or only the supervisors in the conference room while subordinates were filling in the questionnaire elsewhere, so as to avoid the pressure on the subordinates. In addition, during the distribution of the questionnaire, the questionnaires were sealed in envelopes, which would be sealed again by the respondents and then collected. Our research didn't involve questions that are culturally acceptable or unacceptable.

Moreover, we also try to reduce the common method bias brought by the questionnaire items. The English scales were translated and reviewed by two professors and five non-surveyed administrators to ensure all items clear and easy to understand. Meanwhile, to minimize respondents' concerns about the survey, we explain that there are no correct or incorrect answers and their responses would be anonymized.

Statistical control is to test and control the common method bias through some statistical methods during data analysis. At present, Harman single factor test is a commonly used method to test whether the common method bias exists (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In SPSS software, exploratory factors are used to analyze the results of factors without rotation. Generally, it is considered that among the factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, if the accumulative variance explanation rate of the factor with the largest eigenvalue is no more than 40%, then the possibility of common method bias is very small. In this thesis, Harman single factor test is conducted for all items in the scale. There are 19 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, while the variance explanation rate of the first factor is only 19.2%, far less than 40%, which shows

that there is no obvious common method bias in this study.

5.2 Validity and reliability test

Validity test can analyze the validity of the measurement scale, that is, how representative the research variables are. Validity analysis mainly includes content validity and construct validity. Content validity reflects the comprehensiveness of the construct content and has strong subjectivity, and it is usually judged by experts. Before selecting the measurement scale, this thesis collected the scales commonly used in authoritative journals, compared them, solicited the suggestions of researchers in relevant fields, and finally selected the mature scale with high recognition. Construct validity refers to convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity reflects how effective the construct is explained, that is, the correlation between measurement items in the same dimension is high. Discriminant validity emphasizes that different dimensions should be able to distinguish, that is, the correlation between different dimensions should be low.

The construct validity of the evaluation scale is one of the important roles of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Luo & Zhang, 2006). Therefore, the validity analysis of this thesis uses AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis to verify the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the scale. When testing construct validity, it can be judged from four aspects: a. Whether there is violation of estimation. b. Whether the index for judging the goodness of fit of the model meets the standard. The fitting index is divided into absolute fitting index, relative fitting index and parsimony index. Among many absolute fitting indexes, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is an ideal absolute fitting index. RMSEA considers the influence of sample size, is sensitive to wrong models, and punishes complex models. According to Hair et al. (2019) if RMSEA is less than 0.08, it indicates good fitting although some well cited researchers accept up to .10 (L. T. Hu & Bentler, 1999). In the relative fitting index, the comparative fit index (CFI) can sensitively reflect the changes of the model. The virtual model of the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) is used as the benchmark to measure the fitting improvement of the model, and these two indexes are greater than 0.90. In the parsimony index, CMIN/DF is commonly used. The smaller CMIN/DF is, the better the covariance matrix of the hypothetical model fits the observed data, but when it is less than 1, it indicates that the model is over-fitted. Generally speaking, CMIN/DF between 2 and 5 is considered acceptable and the p-value indicates the extent to which the expected model matches the one data indicates. Chi-square statistics are sensitive to the size of sample as well as to the complexity of the models,

and therefore the p-value might be relativized. c. The convergent validity is evaluated, that is, whether each topic in the scale points to the same construct. There are three main criteria: first, the standardization factor coefficient is greater than 0.40 and less than 1; second, the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.50; third, the composite reliability (CR) is greater than 0.70. d. Discriminant validity. It mainly depends on whether the square root of the average variance extracted of the dimension is greater than the number of correlation coefficients of other dimensions, and whether it accounts for more than 1/2 of the overall comparison number (J. H. Wu, 2006). The discriminant validity of the one-dimensional scale does not need to be investigated. AVE represents the degree to which the potential variable construct can explain the variation of the index variable compared with the variation of the measurement error, as in formula (5.1). CR refers to the construction reliability of potential variables, which mainly evaluates the consistency and homogeneity of a group of potential indicators, and its calculation formula is as follows, in which n represents the number of items measured by the factor; λ_i is the standardized factor loading of item i; σ_i is the error variation of item I, as shown in formula (5.2).

$$AVE = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i^2 + \sum_{i=1}^n \sigma_i\right)} \quad (5.1)$$

$$CR = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i)^2}{[(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i)^2 + \sum_{i=1}^n \sigma_i]} \quad (5.2)$$

Note: λ is the standardized factor loading, ε is the error variation

Reliability analysis is mainly used to test the internal consistency of the measurement scale. This thesis uses Cronbach's α . It is generally believed that the Cronbach's α of the scale should be greater than 0.7, and whether an item should be deleted or not by comparing the changes of the overall Cronbach's α after deleting the item.

5.2.1 Differential leadership

Differential leadership including three dimensions: tolerance and trust, care and communication, promotion and reward, have a total of 14 items. As shown in Table 5.1, the standardized factor loadings of the items are greater than 0.5, the AVE value of each dimension is greater than 0.5, and all CR values greater than 0.7. The Cronbach's α value of the 14-item differential leadership scale is 0.88, and Cronbach's α values in all dimensions are above 0.7. Therefore, the reliability of the scale is acceptable.

As shown in Table 5.1, the CFA of the three-factor structure differential leadership showed acceptable fit indices ($X^2(72)=178.200$, $p<.001$; CFI=0.932; TLI=0.914; IFI=0.933;

RMSEA=0.086 CI90 [0.070; 0.102] PClose=0.000; SRMR=0.059), indicating a good validity.

Table 5.1 Validity and reliability of differential leadership

Items	Dimensions	Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach' s α			
More appointment for the subordinate to convey information		0.600						
More help in emergency	Care and communication	0.763	0.524	0.845	0.828			
More frequent contact and interaction		0.728						
More time in individual guiding		0.782						
More care		0.732						
Less blame from the supervisor for work mistakes		0.534						
Ignoring the mistakes made by "zijiren" subordinates	Tolerance and trust	0.712	0.503	0.798	0.795			
Not investigating the mistakes made by "zijiren" subordinates		0.848						
Giving relatively light punishment.		0.700						
Faster promotion		0.857						
More important and rewarding work	Promotion and reward	0.824	0.707	0.923	0.921			
More opportunities to get rewards		0.904						
Offer or maintain opportunities for promotion		0.897						
Greater rewards		0.707						
Fit indices								
CMIN/DF	RMSEA	LO90	HI90	PClose	CFI	TLI	IFI	SRMR
2.475	0.086	0.070	0.102	0.000	0.932	0.914	0.933	0.059

5.2.2 Affective commitment

The standardized factor loadings of affective commitment (see Table 5.2) are greater than 0.7. The AVE value of affective commitment is 0.638, the CR value is 0.913, and Cronbach' α of the scale is 0.912.

As shown in Table 5.2, the CFA of the original single-factor 6-item structure showed good fit indices ($\chi^2(8)=14.655$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.991; TLI=0.984; IFI=0.992; RMSEA=0.065 CI90 [0.000; 0.116] PClose=0.277; SRMR=0.022).

Table 5.2 Scale of validity and reliability of affective commitment

Items	Dimensions	Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
This company means a lot to me personally.		0.740			
I feel like a member of the company family.		0.764			
I feel emotionally dependent on the company.	Affective commitment	0.821	0.638	0.913	0.912
I feel I have a strong sense of belonging to the company.		0.936			
I really think the problem of the company is my own.		0.709			

I will be happy to spend the rest of my career in the company.									0.801
Fit indices									
CMIN/DF	RMSEA	LO90	HI90	PClose	TLI	CFI	IFI	SRMR	
1.832	0.065	0.000	0.116	0.277	0.984	0.991	0.992	0.022	

5.2.3 Subordinate perceived justice

The standardized factor loadings (see Table 5.3) of the four dimensions of subordinate perceived justice are greater than 0.6. The AVE values of all dimensions are above 0.5, the CR values are greater than 0.8, and Cronbach' α of each dimension is greater than 0.8.

A CFA of the original four-factor 20-item structure showed unacceptable fit indices ($\chi^2(164)=477.233$, $p<.001$; CFI=0.915; TLI=0.901; IFI=0.915; RMSEA=0.098 CI90 [0.088; 0.109] PClose=0.000; SRMR=0.069) which motivated reviewing the structure using Lagrange Multipliers. The sequential identification of cases that were harmful for the factor solution implied the removal of item IPJ 4 (My direct supervisor avoids inappropriate criticism of me), IMJ 1 (When my supervisor communicated with me, he was very candid.), and IMJ 5 (My supervisor can communicate with individual employees' questions). The resulting solution has good fit indices ($\chi^2(112)=212.155$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.967; TLI=0.960; IFI=0.967; RMSEA=0.067 CI90 [0.053; 0.081] PClose=0.023; SRMR=0.052), as shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Validity and reliability of the scale of subordinate perceived justice

Items	Dimensions	Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
I get a fair salary relative to my job performance.		0.861			
In this company, my salary can reflect my contribution to the company.	Distributive justice	0.931	0.812	0.945	0.944
In this company, my salary is consistent with the degree (quantity and quality) of my work.		0.910			
In this company, the salary I get can reflect how hard I work.		0.902			
In the process of formulating distribution policies, the company follows the prevailing ethical and moral standards in the society.		0.787			
I have the right to question and complain about the formulated distribution policy.	Procedural justice	0.713	0.541	0.891	0.891
The formulation of distribution policy is based on accurate information.		0.840			
In the process of formulating distribution policies, the company has no bias and does not target anyone.		0.755			
In the process of formulating distribution policies, the company has rules to follow and is consistent.		0.760			

I can influence my salary distribution results by participating in decision-making.										0.601			
I can express my views and feelings in the process of formulating salary policy.										0.666			
My immediate supervisor respects me.										0.940			
My direct supervisor considers my dignity.			Interpersonal							0.962	0.876	0.955	0.954
My direct supervisor treats me politely.			justice							0.905			
My supervisor will communicate the details of relevant decisions with me in due time.										0.881			
My supervisor will give me a reasonable explanation of the relevant decision-making procedures.			Informational							0.966	0.847	0.943	0.941
My supervisor will give me a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the relevant decision-making procedures.			justice							0.912			
Fit indices													
CMIN/DF	RMSEA	LO90	HI90	PClose	TLI	CFI	IFI	SRMR					
1.894	0.067	0.053	0.081	0.023	0.960	0.967	0.967	0.052					

5.2.4 Perceived insider/outsider status

As shown in Table 5.4, Cronbach's α of the scale and the CR values are greater than 0.9, AVE is 0.636. Therefore, the reliability of the current scale is good.

A CFA of the original single-factor 7-item structure showed suboptimal fit indices ($X^2(11)=26.356$, $p=.006$; CFI=.983; TLI=.968; IFI=.983; RMSEA=.084 CI90 [.043; .126] PClose=.0800; SRMR=.0261) which motivated reviewing the structure using Lagrange Multipliers. The sequential identification of cases that were harmful for the factor solution implied the removal of item 2 (When discussing a problem with him (her), he (she) will give sincere advice). The resulting solution has good fit indices ($X^2(8)=17.433$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.987; TLI=0.890; IFI=0.987; RMSEA=0.077 CI90 [0.025; 0.127] PClose=0.159; SRMR=0.023), as shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Validity and reliability of insiders/outside

Items	Dimensions	Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
When I am busy, he (she) will take the initiative to help me.		0.827			
He (she) will sacrifice his or her own interests to help me get out of difficulties of work.	Insiders/outsiders	0.858	0.636	0.913	0.910
He (she) will introduce important people who are helpful to my work to me.		0.824			
He (she) will share with me their thoughts, feelings and expectations.		0.738			

He (she) will give me suggestions to make my work more smoothly.	0.702							
He (she) will care for me and think of me.	0.824							
Fit indices								
CMIN/DF	RMSEA	LO90	HI90	PClose	TLI	CFI	IFI	SRMR
2.179	0.077	0.025	0.127	0.159	0.976	0.987	.987	0.023

5.2.5 Employee categorization standard

As shown in Table 5.5, Cronbach's α of the scale and the CR values are greater than 0.7, AVE values are greater than 0.4. Therefore, the reliability of the current scale is acceptable.

A CFA of the original Jiang (2011) 5-factor structure showed poor fit indices ($X^2(57)=192.991$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.881; TLI=0.837; IFI=0.883; RMSEA=0.110 CI90 [0.093; 0.127] PClose=0.000; SRMR=0.096) which motivated reviewing the structure using Lagrange Multipliers. The sequential identification of cases that were harmful for the factor solution implied the fusion of F3 (Team spirit) and F4 (Integrity) and the removal of items 8 (Be humble and never strive for merit in the team) and 9 (Be honest and sincere). The resulting solution has 4 factors and acceptable fit indices ($X^2(39)=100.397$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.922; TLI=0.890; IFI=0.923; RMSEA=0.089 CI90 [0.068; 0.111] PClose=0.002; SRMR=0.067), as shown in Table 5.5. The new four-dimensional structure has been put into AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis, and the results are shown in Table 5.5. The AVE values are greater than 0.5, the CR values are greater than 0.7.

Table 5.5 Validity and reliability of employee categorization standard

Items	Dimensions	Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
Easy to communicate.		0.724			
Work hard, responsible and diligent.	Competence	0.869	0.528	0.765	0.728
Outstanding competence.		0.552			
Be loyal and obedient to the supervisor.		0.681			
Take the initiative to share the responsibility of the supervisor.	Loyalty	0.695	0.440	0.702	0.702
Have the same philosophy as the supervisor.		0.612			
Get along well with colleagues.		0.877			
Be able to consider others in the team.	Team spirit and integrity	0.849	0.624	0.830	0.812
Have integrity and do not use our company' resources for personal purposes.		0.618			
In addition to the current working relationship, have other relationships with me (e.g. family, relatives, same surname, same township, classmates, colleagues, friends with same	Guanxi	0.696	0.604	0.751	0.721

hobbies, parishioners of a church,
members of a party, comrade)
Be considerate and caring about the
supervisor.

0.851

Fit indices

CMIN/DF	RMSEA	LO90	HI90	PClose	TLI	CFI	IFI	SRMR
2.574	0.089	0.068	0.111	0.002	0.890	0.922	0.923	0.067

5.3 Statistical description and correlation analysis

5.3.1 Statistical description

After the sample is divided into five groups according to age, the mean difference in perceived justice and procedural justice among the five age groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and the score of justice perception and procedural justice of the people under the age of 25 is higher than those of the people aged 26-30, 31-35 and over 40.

After the sample is divided into three groups according to education background, the mean difference in perceived justice, distributive justice and procedural justice among the three groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and the scores of perceived justice and procedural justice of the population with a degree of junior college or below are higher than those of the other two groups, and the score of distributive justice of the population with a degree of junior college or below is higher than that of the population with master degree or above.

After the sample is divided into three groups by position, the mean difference of each variable is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$).

After the sample is divided into four groups according to the time they work with the supervisor, the mean difference in tolerance of mistakes of the four groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and the score of tolerance of mistakes of the people who work with the supervisor for 3-4 years is lower than that of the other three groups. The mean difference in continuance commitment among the four groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and the score of continuance commitment of the people who work with the supervisor for less than 1 year is lower than that of the people who work with the supervisor for 3-4 years and more than 5 years.

After the sample is divided into four groups according to working time. The mean difference in continuance commitment among the four groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and the score of continuance commitment of people with less than 1 year of working is lower than that of people with 3-4 years and more than 5 years of working.

5.3.2 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis describes the strength of the relationship between variables, which can provide an effective reference for subsequent regression analysis. In this thesis, Pearson correlation analysis is used to describe the correlation of the variables involved in the study. The results are shown in Table 5.6.

According to Pearson's correlation coefficient table, differential leadership is significantly and positively correlated with subordinate self-ascribed insider ($r=0.229, p<0.01$) and affective commitment ($r=0.179, p<0.05$), but not with the four dimensions of perceived justice to the exception of informational justice ($r=0.140, p<0.05$). Differential leadership is positively associated with the employee classification standard guanxi ($r=.0248, p<.01$) but negatively with competence ($r=-0.149, p<.05$). These correlations are of a modest magnitude. However, subordinate self-ascribed insider perception has stronger correlations, namely with distributive justice ($r=0.313, p<0.01$), procedural justice ($r=0.384, p<0.01$), interactional justice ($r=0.410, p<0.01$), and informational justice ($r=0.499, p<0.01$). It also shows a positive correlation with affective commitment ($r=0.433, p<0.01$). Its relation with the employee categorization criteria is non-existing to the exception of team-orientation ($r=0.264, p<.01$). In addition, all four dimensions of subordinate perceived justice are significantly and positively correlated with affective commitment.

Interestingly, not all the dimensions of differential leadership are equally associated with the other constructs in the conceptual model. DL_care is the one that shows higher number of significant correlations (all positive) with insider perception, justice dimensions and affective commitment. However, DL_tolerance for mistakes has no significant correlation with any of these constructs, and DL_promotion follows closely this pattern.

These associations encourage the mediational model proposed while it also raises questions about possible differential effects related to the multidimensional nature of some constructs. Still, in the mediational model we will consider the 2nd order factor for differential leadership because it is the overall construct of differential leadership that we are interested at this stage and it has been firstly proposed to be an overall construct (Jiang, 2010). In further analyses that are intended to be more granular, we will unfold the construct into the three composing dimensions as well as the ones comprehended in the employee categorization standard so to take into account these within-construct variations.

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Table 5.6 Pearson correlation coefficients of all variables and dimensions

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Gender	-	-	--																		
2. Age	3.81	1.32	-.095	--																	
3. Education	2.95	.78	.002	-.033	--																
4. Position	1.26	.49	-.234**	.275**	.099	--															
5. Org. tenure	2.95	1.16	-.102	.339**	.114	.153*	--														
6. Dyadic tenure	2.34	1.08	-.134	.308**	.056	.096	.683**	--													
7. Dif. leader.	3.63	.89	-.086	.070	.079	.041	.110	.048	--												
8. DL_Tolerance	3.28	1.11	-.029	.118	.061	.008	-.037	-.057	.614**	--											
9. DL_Care	4.06	1.10	-.089	-.061	.024	-.011	.082	.030	.810**	.290**	--										
10. DL_Promotion	3.54	1.32	-.072	.107	.092	.082	.169*	.107	.842**	.271**	.534**	--									
11. Insider percep	3.75	.86	-.100	-.212**	-.109	-.089	-.023	-.005	.229**	-.106	.421**	.163*	--								
12. DistJustice	3.39	.89	-.066	-.117	-.202**	-.012	.002	.090	.107	-.068	.189**	.095	.313**	--							
13. ProcJustice	3.26	.82	-.026	-.219**	-.244**	-.061	-.099	-.042	-.001	-.127	.119	-.015	.384**	.694**	--						
14. IntJustice	4.40	.77	-.029	-.056	-.191**	-.098	-.135	-.124	.109	-.038	.174*	.090	.410**	.345**	.343**	--					
15. InfoJustice	3.99	.94	-.090	-.104	-.188**	-.012	-.090	-.005	.140*	-.002	.247**	.066	.499**	.392**	.536**	.582**	--				
16. ACommit.	5.01	1.22	-.068	.050	-.123	-.005	.035	.104	.179*	-.067	.303**	.138	.433**	.551**	.573**	.357**	.537**	--			
17. CS_Comp	5.47	.65	.068	-.052	-.025	-.133	-.107	-.006	-.149*	-.178*	-.022	-.150*	.059	.110	.184**	.238**	.216**	.092	--		
18. CS_Loya	4.86	.87	-.086	-.027	-.044	-.049	.031	.055	.019	-.023	.146*	-.070	.074	.143*	.118	.042	.161*	.182*	.440**	--	
19. CS_team	5.08	.87	-.088	-.104	-.198**	-.104	-.099	-.081	.021	-.154*	.162*	.009	.264**	.250**	.248**	.183**	.354**	.252**	.533**	.411**	--
20. CS_gnxi	3.28	1.36	-.146*	.088	.110	-.082	.064	-.015	.248**	.247**	.196**	.149*	.008	-.033	-.076	-.035	.025	.036	.040	.402**	.077

Note: ** indicates significance at 0.01 level; * indicates significance at 0.05 level.

5.4 Mediation test

To test the mediation effect in the research model, model 81 in the Process is used for regression, taking differential leadership as the independent variable, affective commitment as the dependent variable, subordinate self-ascribed insider and the four dimensions of subordinate perceived justice (distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and informational justice) as mediators.

The regression results show that:

(1) The coefficient of differential leadership on affective commitment is 0.08, the 95% confidence interval of bootstrap is (-0.07, 0.23), which includes 0, $p > 0.1$. It shows that the direct effect of differential leadership on affective commitment is not statistically significant, and our hypothesis 1 is not supported.

(2) In the four dimensions of perceived justice, distributive justice ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.1$), procedural justice ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.1$), informational justice ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.1$) are significantly positively correlated with affective commitment, except for interactional justice ($\beta = -0.02$, $p > 0.1$). Hypothesis 2 is partly supported.

(3) The path coefficient of DifLeaf->DistJust->AC is 0.02, (95% confidence interval of bootstrap -0.07, 0.23) and it includes 0, which means that the mediating effect of distributive justice between differential leadership and affective commitment is not statistically significant. The path coefficient of DifLeaf->ProcJust->AC is -0.02 (CI95% -0.07, 0.03) and also includes 0, indicating it is not statistically significant. Similarly, the mediating effect of interactional justice between differential leadership and affective commitment (CI95% -0.02, 0.02) and the mediating effect of informational justice between differential leadership and affective commitment (CI95% -0.02, 0.06) are both non-significant. Our hypothesis 3 is not supported while hypothesis 5 is partly supported.

(4) The coefficient of differential leadership on subordinate self-ascribed insider is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$), which is consistent with our hypothesis 4.

(5) The path coefficient of DifLeaf->IO_sub->DistJust->AC is 0.02, the 95% confidence interval of bootstrap is (0.002, 0.05) and it does not include 0, which shows that subordinate self-ascribed insider and distributive justice have a significant chain mediating effect between differential leadership and affective commitment. The path coefficient of DifLeaf->IO_sub->ProcJust->AC is

0.03, the 95% confidence interval of bootstrap is (0.004, 0.07) and it does not include 0, which shows that subordinate self-ascribed insider and procedural justice have a significant chain mediating effect between differential leadership and affective commitment. Similarly, subordinate self-ascribed insider and informational justice have a significant chain mediating effect between differential leadership and affective commitment (95% confidence interval of bootstrap is (0.002, 0.09)). However, the chain mediating effect of subordinate self-ascribed insider and interactional justice between differential leadership and affective commitment is not statistically significant (95% confidence interval of bootstrap is (-0.03, 0.03)). Hypothesis 5 is partly supported.

The regression results are reported in Table 5.7.

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Table 5.7 Mediation effect regression results

Dependent variable	I/O subordinate					Distributive justice					Affective Commitment				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	4.31	.44	9.59	3.42	5.19	2.87	.56	5.09	1.76	3.98	-.78	.71	-	-2.19	.63
Differential Leadership	.22*	.07	3.31	.09	.35	.06	.06	.91	-.07	.20	.08	.07	1.09	-.07	.23
I/O subordinate						.26*	.07	3.57	.12	.41	.25*	.09	2.69	.07	.43
Distributive justice											.34*	.10	3.30	.14	.54
						Procedural justice									
						B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant						3.20	.50	6.41	2.22	4.19					
Differential Leadership						-.05	.06	-.80	-.17	.07					
I/O subordinate						.33*	.07	4.94	.20	.46					
Procedural justice											.40*	.12	3.24	.15	.64
						Interactional justice									
						B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant						3.55	.47	7.57	2.62	4.47					
Differential Leadership						.03	.06	.50	-.08	.14					
I/O subordinate						.36*	.06	5.79	.24	.48					
Interactional justice											-.02	.11	-.21	-.23	.19
						Informational justice									
						B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant						2.51	.55	4.56	1.42	3.59					
Differential Leadership						.06	.07	.79	-.08	.19					
I/O subordinate						.52*	.07	7.13	.36	.66					
Informational justice											.31*	.10	3.21	.12	.50
						Total effect DifLead->AC									
											.23*	.10	2.41	.04	.43
						Direct effect DifLead->AC									
											.08	.07	1.09	-.07	.23
						Serial mediation									
DifLead->IO_sub->AC											.05*	.03	.004	.12	
DifLead->DistJust->AC											.02	.02	-.03	.07	
DifLead->ProcJust->AC											-.02	.03	-.07	.03	
DifLead->IntJust->AC											-.01	.01	-.02	.02	
DifLeaf->InfoJust->AC											.02	.02	-.02	.06	
DifLeaf->IO_sub->DistJust->AC											.02*	.01	.002	.05	
DifLeaf->IO_sub->ProcJust->AC											.03*	.02	.004	.07	
DifLeaf->IO_sub->IntJust->AC											-.01	.01	-.03	.03	
DifLeaf->IO_sub->InfoJust->AC											.04*	.02	.002	.09	

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R²				
I/O subordinate	R² .13	F(7, 190)=4.05, p<.001		
Distributive justice			R² .15	F(8, 189)=4.33, p<.001
Procedural justice			R² .22	F(8, 189)=6.66, p<.001
Interactional justice			R² .50	F(8, 189)=6.37, p<.001
Informational justice			R² .50	F(8, 189)=9.35, p<.001
Affective commitment				R² .50 F(12, 185)=15.65, p<.001

5.5 Moderation test

Using the same sample, we have tested a moderated mediation model that targets the indirect effect of differential leadership in the perceived organizational justice via the insider-outsider employee status. The employee categorization standard (all the four dimensions: competence, loyalty, team work, guanxi) is treated as a moderator, interacting in all steps of the mediation.

The model is designed to test boundary conditions stemming from the employee categorization standards. Because the predictor variable comprehends three dimensions and the moderator comprehends four, we opted for clarity’s sake, to show only the interaction effects that were significant. Tables 5.8 to 5.11, and the respective figures, depict findings for all the effects previewed in the conceptual model.

Table 5.8 Interaction Differential Leadership – Care * ICScomp

	I/OSub					Organizational Justice				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	1.28	.39	3.24	.50	2.06	4.49	.27	16.53	3.95	5.02
DL_F1 (Care/Comm)	-.04	.06	-.67	-.15	.07	-.03	.03	.97	-.03	.11
CS_Comp	.19	.11	1.82	-.01	.41	.27	.07	3.65	.12	.42
DL_F1 x CS_Comp	-.19	.07	-2.65	-.34	-.04 (H7a)	-.07	.05	-1.39	-.18	.03 (H6a)
I/OSub						.34	.04	7.07	.25	.44
I/OSub x CS_Comp						.11	.06	1.69	-.02	.24 (H8a)
Johnson-Neyman	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
1.34 (5.48-4.14)	.76	.31	2.44	.14	1.38					
4.03 (5.48-1.45)	.24	.12	1.97	.00	.49					
			-							
5.90 (5.48+0.42)	-.11	.06	1.97	-.23	.00					
			-							
6.00 (5.48+0.52)	-.14	.06	2.15	-.26	-.01					
Conditional indirect effect						Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
M-1SD						.02	.02		-.03	.08
(5.48-.6550=4.82)										
M (5.48)						-.01	.02		-.06	.03
M+1SD						-.06	.03		-.12	.01
(5.48+.5202=6.00)										

R².37 F(11, 186)=9.97, p<.001

Table 5.8 shows findings for the DifLead_care dimension crossed with ICS competence. It is clear that no direct effect is found between DifLead_care and both I/O and organizational justice. The moderator is also unrelated with I/O but it shows a positive relationship with organizational justice (B=.27 CI95 [.12; .42]). The interaction effect in the relationship between DifLead_care and organizational justice (H6a) as well as between I/O and organizational justice (H8a) is non-significant,

but ICS_Comp does interact with DifLead_care in explaining I/O (H7a, $B = -.19$ CI95[-.34; -.04]). Johnson-Neyman analysis shows that there are two significance regions, namely, when ICS_competence has values below 4 (there is a positive effect of DifLead_care in I/O) and when ICS_competence reaches 5.9, which reverses the effect, making it negative. Figure 5.1 shows the moderation found. The model is able to account for 37% of variance in organizational justice ($F(11, 186) = 9.97, p < .001$) and these results support H7a but reject H6a and H8a.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the interaction effect of Care dimension of differential leadership and Competence dimension of employee categorization standard on perception of insider/outsider. When a leader differentiate subordinate more by competence, the care and communication dimension of differential leadership has a negative effect on subordinate perception of insider/outsider; when a subordinate does not think his or her leader use competence as a standard to categorize insiders and outsiders, the care and communication dimension of differential leadership has a positive effect on subordinate perception of insider/outsider.

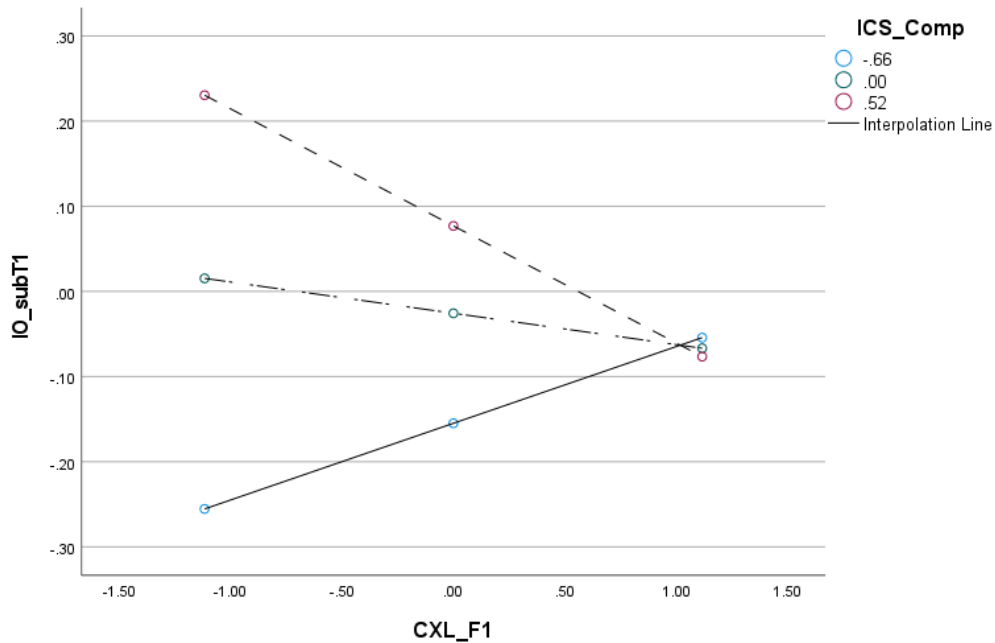


Figure 5.1 Interaction effect for DifLead_care* ICS_Comp in explaining I/O

Table 5.9 shows findings for the DifLead_care dimension crossed with ICS loyalty. Similar to the previous results, no direct effect was found between the predictor and any of the other variables. In this specific model, the moderator is unrelated with both I/O and organizational justice. The interaction effect in the relationship between DifLead_care and organizational justice (H6b) as well as between I/O and organizational justice (H8b) is non-significant, but ICS_Loyalty does interact

with DifLead_care in explaining I/O (H7b, B=-.14 CI95[-.24; -.03]). Johnson-Neyman analysis shows that when ICS_loyalty is below 2.7 there is a positive effect of DifLead_care in I/O. Figure 5.2 shows the moderation found. The model is able to account for 33% of variance in organizational justice ($F(11, 186)=8.4721, p <.001$). Similar to the previous ICS dimension, these results support H7b but reject H6b and H8b.

Table 5.9 Interaction Differential Leadership – Care * ICS_loyalty

	I/OSub					Organizational Justice				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	1.26	.40	3.18	0.48	2.05	4.42	.28	15.73	3.87	4.97
DL_F1 (Care/Comm)	-.05	.05	-.86	-.15	.06	.00	.04	.13	-.06	.08
CS_Loyal	.06	.06	.92	-.07	.19	.08	.05	1.66	-.01	.17
DL_F1 x CS_Loyal	-.14	.05	-2.67	-.24	-.03 (H7b)	.01	.04	.21	-.06	.08 (H6b)
I/OSub						.37	.05	7.38	.27	.47
I/OSub x CS_Loyal						.05	.05	.97	-.05	.14 (H8b)
Johnson-Neyman	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
	1.00 (4.87-3.87)	.48	.21	2.31	.07	.90				
	2.71 (4.87-2.16)	.25	.13	1.97	.00	.50				
	5.94 (4.87+0.07)	-.06	.05	-1.05	-.16	.05				
Conditional indirect effect						Effect	SE		BootLLCI	BootULCI
M-1SD (4.87-0.86=4.00)						.02	.03		-.03	.08
M (4.87)						-.02	.02		-.06	.03
M+1SD (4.87+0.86=5.73)						-.07	.04		-.14	.00

$R^2 .33 F(11, 186)=8.4721, p <.001$

Figure 5.2 demonstrates the interaction effect of care and communication dimension of differential leadership and loyalty dimension of employee categorization standard on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider. When a leader differentiate subordinate more by loyalty to the leader, the care and communication dimension of differential leadership has a positive effect on subordinate perception of insider/outsider; when a subordinate does not think his or her leader use loyalty as a standard to categorize insiders and outsiders, the care and communication dimension of differential leadership has a positive effect on the subordinate's perception of insider/outsider.

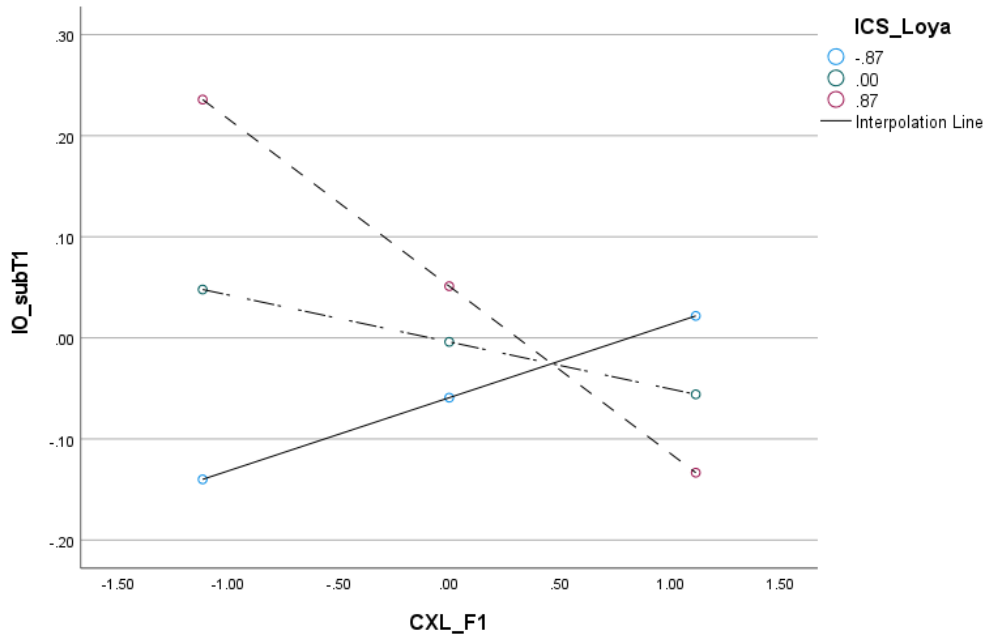


Figure 5.2 Interaction effect for DifLead_care* ICS_Loyalty in explaining I/O

Table 5.10 shows findings for the DifLead_care dimension crossed with ICS team. Similar to the previous results, no direct effect was found between the predictor and any of the other variables but the moderator is associated with both I/O and organizational justice. The interaction effect in the relationship between DifLead_care and organizational justice (H6c) as well as between I/O and organizational justice (H8c) is non-significant, but, again, ICS_team does interact with DifLead_care in explaining I/O (H7c, $B = -.21$ CI95[-.32; -.09]). Johnson-Neyman analysis shows that there are two significance regions, namely, when ICS_competence has values below 4.4 (there is a positive effect of DifLead_care in I/O) and when ICS_competence reaches 5.6, which reverses the effect, making it negative. Figure 5.3 shows the moderation found. The model is able to account for 35% of variance in organizational justice ($F(11, 186) = 9.1190, p < .001$) and these results support H7c but reject H6c and H8c.

Table 5.10 Interaction Differential Leadership – Care * ICS_team

	I/Osub					Organizational Justice				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	1.10	.39	2.79	.32	1.88	4.31	.28	15.09	3.74	4.87
DL_F1 (Care/Comm)	-.01	.05	-.08	-.11	-.10	.02	.04	.53	-.05	.10
CS_Team	.25	.07	3.69	.12	.39	.16	.05	2.96	.05	.26
DL_F1 x CS_Team	-.21	.06	-3.70	-.32	-.09 (H7c)	-.01	.04	.33	-.10	.07 (H6c)
I/Osub						.34	.05	6.63	.24	.44

From differential leadership to affective commitment

From differential leadership to affective commitment										
I/OSub x CS_Team						.04	.05	.78	-.06	.13 (H8c)
Johnson-Neyman	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
2.33 (5.08-2.75)	.57	.17	3.34	.23	.91					
4.41(5.08-0.67)	.14	.07	1.97	.00	.27					
5.59 (5.08+0.51)	-.11	.06	1.97	-.22	.00					
6.00 (5.08+0.92)	-.20	.07	2.88	-.33	-.06					
						Effect	SE		BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conditional indirect effect						.06	.03		-.01	.11
M-1SD (5.08-0.8779=4.2021)						-.01	.02		-.05	.04
M (5.08)						-.07	.03		-.14	-.01
M+1SD (5.08+0.8779=5.9597)										
						R².35 F(11, 186)=9.1190, p <.001				

Figure 5.3 shows the interaction effect of one dimension of differential leadership (care and communication) and team spirit dimension of employee categorization standard on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider. When a leader differentiate subordinate more by team spirit, the care and communication dimension of differential leadership has a positive effect on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider; when a subordinate does not think his or her leader use team spirit as a standard to categorize insiders and outsiders, the care and communication dimension of differential leadership has a negative effect on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider. This indicate that subordinates under the supervision of a differential leader would more desire to be an insider when the leader does not emphasize team spirit. When a differential leader does not pay attention to subordinate team spirit, subordinate may not get the leader' attention by showing team spirit and probably will try to be an insider through any other ways. This desirability makes subordinates in such situation perceive themselves as an insider.

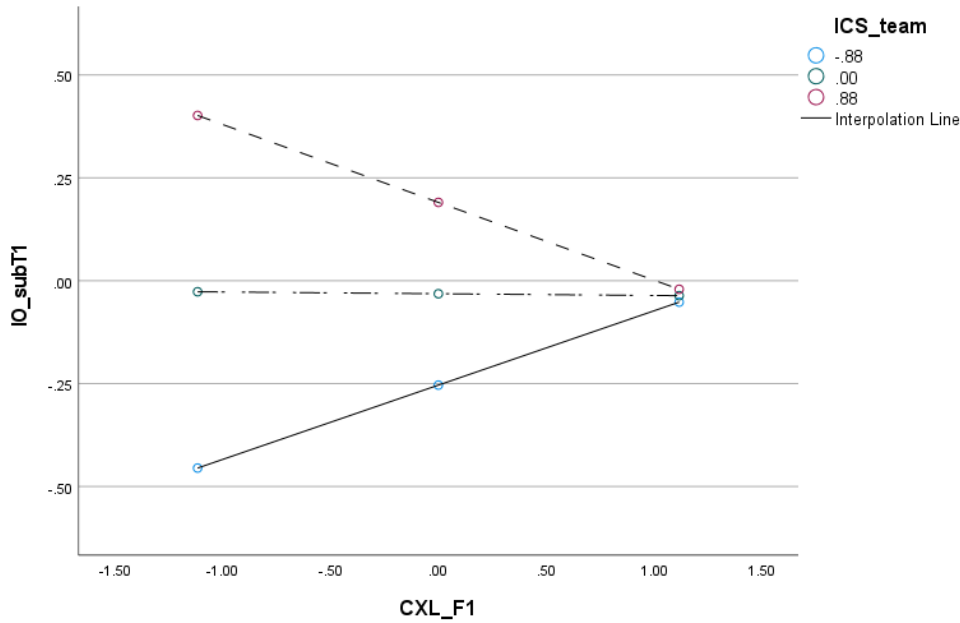


Figure 5.3 Interaction effect for DifLead_care* ICS_team in explaining I/O

Table 5.11 shows findings for the I/O crossed with ICS guanxi. No direct effect was found between the differential leadership care and any of the other variables, and the moderator is also not significantly associated with neither I/O nor organizational justice. The interaction effect in the relationship between DifLead_care and organizational justice (H6d) as well as between I/O and organizational justice (H7d) is non-significant, but ICS_guanxi does interact with I/O in explaining organizational justice (H8d, B=.07 CI95[.01; .14]). Johnson-Neyman analysis shows that there are no statistical significance transition points as the relationship between I/S and organizational justice for the lowest possible value for the moderator (ICS_guanxi = 1) is already significant (B=.19 CI95[.01; .39]). The effect between I/O and organizational justice is always positive significant but it does suffer changes in its magnitude as depicted in Figure 5.4. The model is able to account for 34% of variance in organizational justice (F(11, 186)=8.7169, p <.001) and these results support H8d but reject H6d and H7d.

Table 5.11 Interaction I/O * ICS_guanxi

	I/OSub					Organizational Justice				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	1.27	.40	3.13	.47	2.06	4.48	.28	16.12	3.92	5.02
DL F1 (Care/Comm)	-.06	.06	-1.09	-.17	.05	-.01	.04	-.31	-.08	.06
CS_Guanxi	.02	.05	.50	-.07	.12	.01	.03	.06	-.06	.06
DL_F1 x CS_Guanxi	-.01	.04	-.07	-.08	.08 (H7d)	.03	.03	1.05	-.02	.08 (H6d)
I/OSub						.36	.05	7.40	.27	.46

I/OSub x CS_ Guanxi		.07	.03	2.31	.01	.14 (H8d)					
Johnson-Neyman 1.00 (3.29-2.29) 6.00 (3.29+2.71)	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
						.19	.09	2.12	.01	.38	
						.56	.10	5.91	.38	.75	
Conditional indirect effect M-1SD (3.29-1.36=1.92) M (3.29) M+1SD (3.29+1.36=4.65)	Effect	SE		BootLLCI	BootULCI						
						-.01	.03		-.09	.03	
						-.02	.03		-.08	.02	
						-.03	.04		-.12	-.06	

$R^2 .34$ $F(11, 186)=8.7169, p < .001$

Figure 5.4 explains the interaction effect of insider/outsider perception and team spirit dimension of employee categorization standard on subordinate perceived justice. When a leader differentiates subordinates more by guanxi, subordinates' perception of insider/outsider has a stronger effect on subordinates' perception of organizational justice than when a leader does not use guanxi to categorize insiders and outsiders.

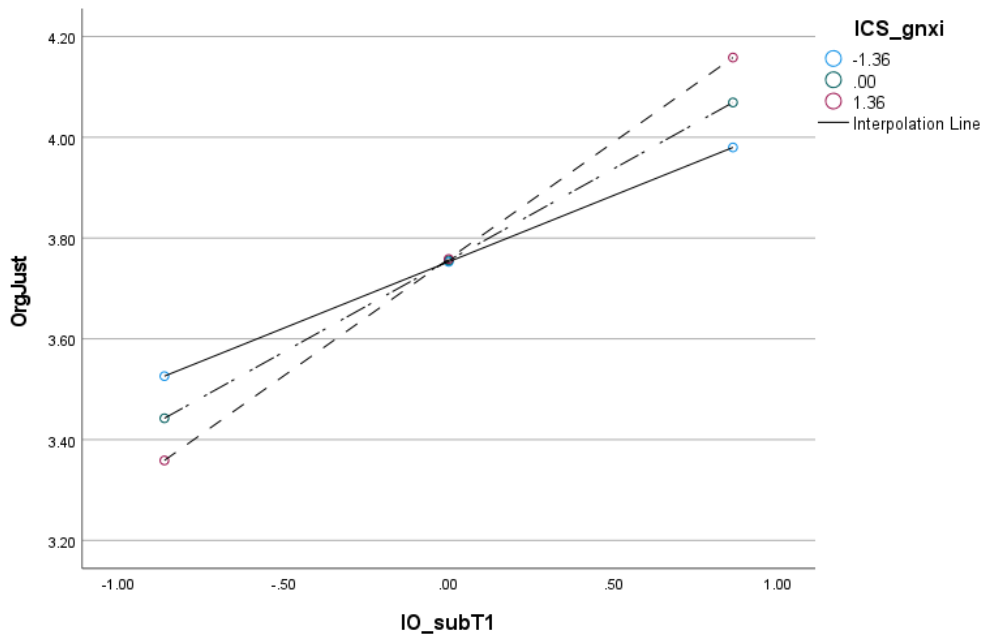


Figure 5.4 Interaction effect for DifLead_careInsider/outsider perception* ICS_team in explaining Organizational justice

This indicate that when a subordinate knows that the leader pays much attention to guanxi with subordinates, and he or she perceives himself or herself as an insider, which indicates a closer guanxi with the leader, he or she probably could benefit from being an insider. Therefore, he or she could get more rewards with the same effort as other team members do in this situation and has a higher

perception of justice.

Table 5.12 shows findings for the DifLead_tolerance dimension crossed with ICS Team. It's clear that DifLead_tolerance is positive related with I/Osub (B=.30 CI95[.20; .40]) but not related with Organizational Justice. In this specific model, the moderator is related with both I/O (B=.14 CI95[.01; .26]) and organizational justice (B=.14 CI95[.04; .24]). The interaction effect in the relationship between DifLead_tolerance and organizational justice (H6c) as well as between I/O and organizational justice (H8c) is non-significant, but ICS_tolerance does interact with DifLead_care in explaining I/O (H7c, B=-.14 CI95[-.24; -.04]). Johnson-Neyman analysis shows that there are no statistical significance transition points as the relationship between ICS and I/O for the lowest possible value for the moderator (ICS_Team=2.33) is already significant (B=.69 CI95[.39; .99]). Figure 5.5 shows the moderation found. The model is able to account for 35% of variance in organizational justice (F (11, 186) =9.2140, p <.001). Similar to the previous ICS dimension, these results support H7c but reject H6c and H8c.

Table 5.12 Interaction I/O * ICS_Team

	I/Osub					Organizational Justice				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	1.04	.37	2.82	.31	1.77	4.29	.28	15.09	3.72	4.84
DL F2 (Tolerance)	.30	.05	6.16	.20	.40	.02	.04	.43	-.06	.09
CS_Team	.14	.06	2.15	.01	.26	.14	.05	2.83	.04	.24
DifLead_F2 x CS_Team	-.14	.05	2.76	-.24	-.04	.04	.05	.80	-.05	.13
I/Osub						.34	.05	6.17	.23	.45
I/Osub x ICS_Team						.01	.06	.15	-.10	.11
Johnson-Neyman	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
2.33 (5.08-2.75)	.69	.15	4.55	.39	.99					
6.00 (5.08+0.92)	.17	.06	2.62	.04	.30					
Conditional indirect effect						Effect	SE		BootLLCI	BootULCI
M-1SD (5.08-0.8779=4.2021)						.14	.05		.06	.25
M (5.08)						.10	.03		.05	.16
M+1SD (5.08+0.8779=5.9597)						.06	.03		.01	.13

R² .35 F(11, 186)=9.2140, p <.001

Figure 5.5 addresses the interaction effect of the mistake tolerance dimension of differential leadership and team spirit dimension of employee categorization standard on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider. When a leader differentiate subordinate more by team spirit, the mistake tolerance dimension of differential leadership has a weaker positive effect on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider. when a subordinate thinks the leader care less about team spirit as a

standard to categorize insiders and outsiders, the mistake tolerance dimension of differential leadership has a stronger effect on subordinates' perception of insider/outsider. This indicate that when a differential leader pays less attention to subordinate team spirit, subordinate may not get the leader' attention by performance of team spirit and probably will try to be an insider through other ways, which enhance the motivation of subordinates to be an insider.

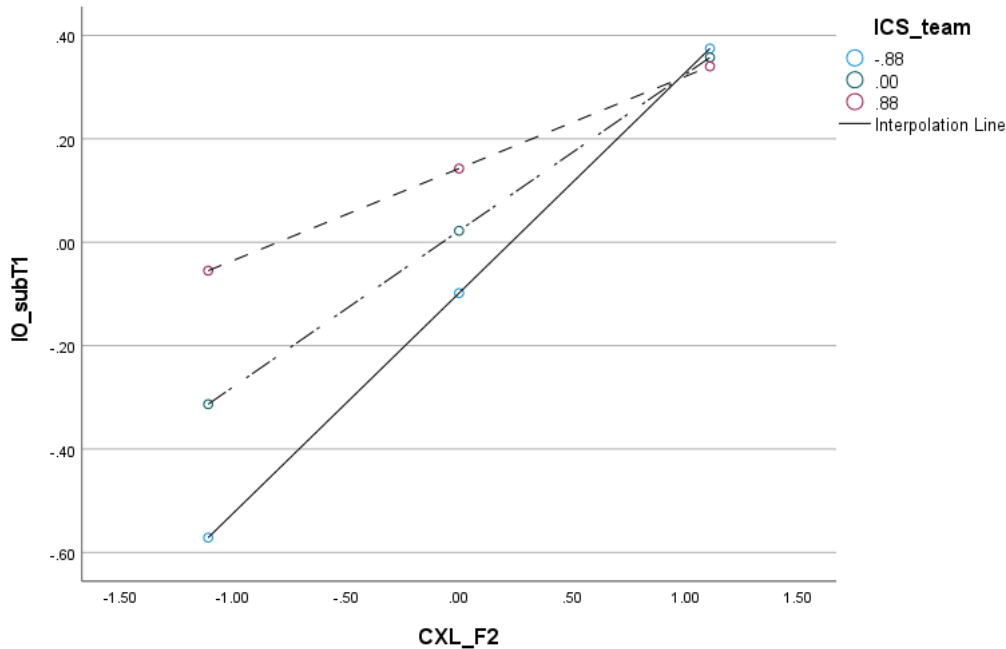


Figure 5.5 Interaction effect for DifLead_tolerance* ICS_team in explaining I/O

Table 5.13 shows findings for the DifLead_tolerance dimension crossed with ICS guanxi. It's clear that DifLead_tolerance is positive related with I/O Sub (B=.13 CI95[.03; .21]) but not related with Organizational Justice. In this specific model, the moderator is not significantly associated with neither I/O nor organizational justice. The interaction effect in the relationship between DifLead_tolerance and organizational justice (H6d) as well as between DifLead_tolerance and I/O (H7d) is non-significant, but ICS_guanxi does interact with I/O in explaining Organizational Justice (H8d, B=.07 CI95[.01; .13]). Johnson-Neyman analysis shows that there are no statistical significance transition points as the relationship between ICS and Organizational Justice for the lowest possible value for the moderator (ICS_Team=1.00) is already significant (B=.21 CI95[.02; .39]). Figure 5.6 shows the moderation found. The model is able to account for 34% of variance in organizational justice (F(11, 186)=8.8205, p <.001). Similar to the previous ICS dimension, these results support H8d but reject H6d and H7d.

Table 5.13 Interaction I/O * ICS_guanxi

	I/OSub					Organizational Justice				
	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	B	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	1.42	.39	3.57	.63	2.20	4.49	.28	16.02	3.94	5.04
DL_F3 (Promotion)	.13	.05	2.73	.03	.21	.02	.03	.62	-.04	.08
CS_Guanxi	-.01	.04	-.02	-.09	.09	-.01	.03	-.02	-.06	.06
DL_F3x CS_Guanxi	-.04	.03	-1.24	-.10	.02	.03	.02	1.21	-.02	.07
I/OSub						.37	.05	7.27	.26	.46
I/OSubx CS_Guanxi						.07	.03	2.19	.01	.13
Johnson-Neyman	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	SE	t	BootLLCI	BootULCI
1.00 (3.29-2.29)						.21	.09	2.23	.02	.39
6.00 (3.29+2.71)						.55	.09	5.82	.36	.74
Conditional indirect effect						Effect	SE		BootLLCI	BootULCI
M-1SD (3.29-1.3620=1.9280)						.05	.03		.01	.12
M (3.29)						.05	.02		.01	.10
M+1SD (3.29+1.3620=4.6520)						.03	.04		-.04	.12

R² .34 F(11, 186)=8.8205, p < .001

Same as Figure 5.2, we also find the interaction of subordinates' insider/outsider perception and guanxi dimension of employee categorization standard on their organizational justice.

Besides these results, we also find that two dimensions of employee categorization standard, namely competence and team spirit have a positive effect on organizational justice. Unlike loyalty and guanxi are related to special personal relationship with supervisor, competence and team spirit are more related with work itself and is less possible connected in the mind with insider bias. Therefore, subordinate accept these categorization standards as fair ones.

Overall, the findings pertaining to the moderation effects can be simply depicted as in Figure 5.6.

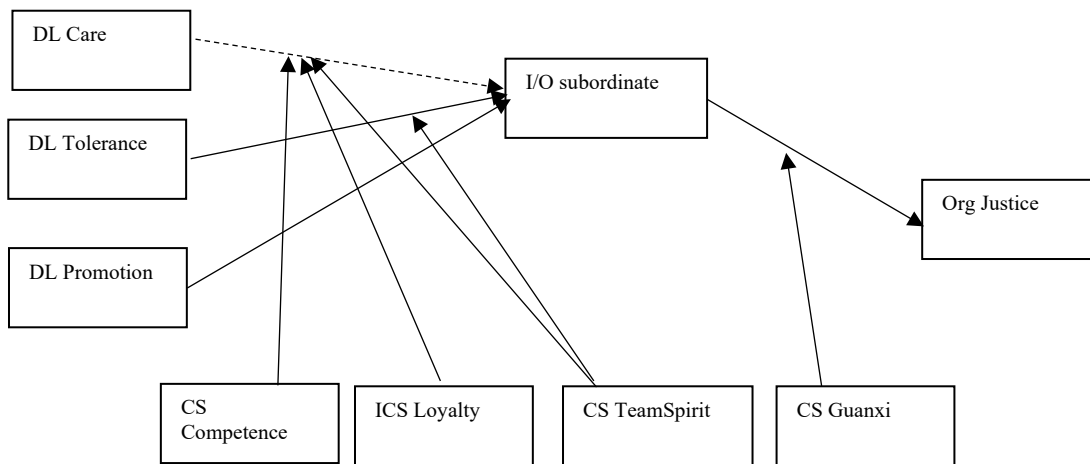


Figure 5.6 Significant interactions found

5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, we first dealt with the missing data and common method bias. Based on that, we conducted the reliability and validity test, after which statistic description analysis and correlation analysis is carried out to learn about the relationship between the variables. Then we have regression analysis on the data, examining the relationship between differential leadership and subordinate affective commitment, the mediation of insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice and the moderation of employee classification standard.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Discussion

As China's international prestige increases, Chinese management theory has attracted much academic attention in line with the emergence of indigenous management studies (Van de Ven & Jing, 2012).

Differential leadership, a leadership style widely existing in Chinese organizations (H. H. Hu et al., 2004; D Y Jiang & Zhang, 2010; W. L. Xu et al., 2002), is a leadership style which can accurately describe and summarize the psychology and behavior of Chinese leaders (L. Wang, 2013). Previous studies have suggested that there is an impact of differential leadership on organizational outcomes focusing on subordinate attitudes and behaviors, and that findings do not entirely converge into determining if this impact is positive or negative when one considers organizational justice. Likewise, the mediation mechanisms linking it to subordinate affective commitment require exploration. Therefore, this study discussed the mediating role that the perception of being an insider/outsider plays in the relationship between differential leadership and perceived justice as well as affective commitment as a distal outcome. Meanwhile, this study introduces employee categorization standard as a proposed moderating factor to explore the boundary conditions of differential leadership effects. Through empirical examination, some of the hypotheses are supported, which deepens the research on differential leadership and brings theoretical contribution and management enlightenment. Still, this research has some limitations, which can be improved in the future.

6.1 Main conclusions

6.1.1 Research result

Through a two-stage face-to-face survey, we got data from 199 dyads of supervisors and subordinates, and tested the mediating and moderating effects by Process after verification of reliability and validity of the scales. The research model and hypotheses of the thesis are tested in this thesis, and the results are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Hypothesis test

Number	Hypotheses	Result
H1	Differential leadership is positively associated with subordinate affective commitment.	Unsupported
H2a	Differential leadership is positively associated with subordinate perceived justice	Unsupported
H2b	Subordinate perceived justice is positively associated with affective commitment.	Supported
H2	Subordinate perceived justice mediates the relation between differential leadership and affective commitment.	Unsupported
H3a	Differential leadership is positively associated with insider/outsider perception.	Supported
H3b	Insider/outsider perception is positively associated with affective commitment.	Supported
H3	Insider/outsider mediates the relation between differential leadership and affective commitment.	Supported
H4	Insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice sequentially mediate the relation between differential leadership and affective commitment	Partially supported
H5	Employee categorization standards positively moderates the positive relationship between differential leadership and insider/outsider perception.	Partially supported
H6	Employee categorization standards moderate the positive relationship between differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice.	Unsupported
H7	Employee categorization standards positively moderate the positive relationship between insider/outsider perception and subordinate perceived justice.	Partially supported

As summarized in Table 6.1, the mediation of insider/outsider perception is supported. Although the mediation of subordinate justice perception is unsupported, it can still affect via insider/outsider perception. Therefore, the sequential mediation effect and the moderating effect have been partially supported. Besides the above results, we also find that the competence and team spirit dimension of employee categorization standard have a positive effect on organizational justice.

6.1.2 Discussion

6.1.2.1 The influence of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment

Through correlation analysis, we found differential leadership positively relates to subordinate affective commitment, that is, if supervisors have higher favoritism towards their subordinates, the subordinates will have stronger affective commitment and emotional belonging, so that they are more willing to regard themselves and the organization as one and actively participate in organizational activities. This is consistent with the research by A. Gao (2015) that differential leadership positively relates to affective commitment. However, in uncovering the mechanisms that explain how does differential leadership produce higher affective commitment, it is subordinate self-ascribed insider/outsider perception that plays a central role. It is promoted by differential leadership and it favors a higher sense of justice, which leverages subordinate affective commitment. In summary, there are indeed mechanisms that link differential leadership to affective commitment, as it does not truly influence affective commitment directly. Organizational justice per se is not a sufficient mediator, as findings showed. One need to consider the perceived status of being an insider / outsider to fully grasp the psychological mechanism linking differential leadership to outcomes.

6.1.2.2 Differential leadership and insider/outsider

This study found a positive association of differential leadership on insider/outsider, that is, if supervisors show higher favoritism towards their insiders, the subordinates will have higher tendency of thinking themselves as insiders. This conclusion is partly consistent with X. Q. Liu (2017) view that the supervisors' biased treatment is likely to enhance the subordinate insider identity perception, but inconsistent with J. W. Sun and Lin (2021)'s view that the perception of differential atmosphere negatively affects perceived insider status. We argue that higher differential leadership will deepen subordinate perceived insider/outsider perception for both insiders and outsiders, which can be explained from the perspective of self-serving bias. Miller and Ross (1975) called the tendency to attribute success to internal factors and failure to external factors as self-serving bias. This sort of psychological mechanism has a defensive nature which makes sense when one considers that differential leadership will distinguish subordinates into insider subordinates and outsider subordinates and treat them differently. Subordinates who are classified as insiders will be treated more favorably in terms of resource and emotion allocation, while subordinates who do not get

favoritism will feel marginalized. For subordinates, getting the favoritism of the leader will be regarded as a success, and not feeling in the insider group will be regarded as an indication of failure. Therefore, when a leader is seen as someone that tends to differentiate between subordinates (high differential leadership style) it is quite understandable that subordinates will tend to pay more attention to any behavior that gives them an insider status, even if only in their own mind.

6.1.2.3 Differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice

This research shows no relation between differential leadership and subordinate perceived justice, which explains why previous studies on the impact of differential leadership on subordinate perceived justice have inconsistent conclusions. Previous studies generally assume that differential leadership can have a direct impact on subordinate perceived justice, but the exact influence is inconsistent. H. P. Wu (2011) held that differential leadership can achieve a reasonable subordinate exchange and lead to a higher sense of fairness for both insiders and outsiders. A. Gao (2013) and Tao et al. (2016) pointed out that leaders showing more favoritism towards insiders is in line with the Chinese view of justice, so insider subordinates feel fairer and outsider subordinates will not feel unfair when faced with differential leadership. Therefore, the favoritism of differential leadership towards insiders can positively affect subordinate perceived justice. Meanwhile, Z. Y. Liu (2003) found that employee' perception of differential atmosphere negatively correlated with their perception of procedural justice. X. L. Guo (2014) confirmed the negative correlation between supervisor differential treatment and interactive justice, that is, differential leadership has a negative impact on subordinate perceived justice, which might explain our research finding that differential leadership has no significant effect on subordinate perceived justice, that is, the total effect is insignificant because some subordinates feel fair about leaders' favoritism and some do not.

6.1.2.4 Subordinate perceived justice and affective commitment

The positive correlation between subordinate perceived justice and affective commitment are partially verified, which corresponds with the research conclusions drawn by X. D. Gao et al. (2015) mentioned in previous chapters. Specifically, distributive justice, procedural justice and informational justice positively correlate with affective commitment, that is, if employees feel fairer about the distribution result, the distribution procedures, and the information obtained from leaders, then subordinates are more willing to regard themselves as a part of the organization and show higher affective commitment. However, the effect from interactional justice on affective commitment is

insignificant, which is inconsistent with the conclusions drawn by L. Wang (2013), X. F. Xu and Gao (2019) and Tian (2014) that interactive justice positively correlates with affective commitment. We think there are two possible reasons. The first reason considers that differential leadership widely exists in Chinese organizations, and it is expected to give insiders more favoritism. Therefore, subordinates can accept the phenomenon that more favoritism is given to insiders during the interaction between leaders and subordinates. The second reason considers that subordinate affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment of employees to the organization rather than to the supervisor. Although leaders are often regarded as the representative of the organization, differential leadership may affect subordinates' commitment to the leaders more, as X. Y. Zhong (2021) found in his research that when supervisors show high differential leadership, subordinates may make active changes in behavior and attitude and improve their commitment. While distributive, procedural and informational justice can be more based on rules from the organization, the interactional dimension is more within the discretionary domain of the leader's behavioral choices.

6.1.2.5 Insider/outsider and outcomes

This research found that perceiving oneself as being insider/outsider correlates with the four dimensions of perceived justice, that is, the more subordinates regard themselves as insiders, the fairer they will feel. This proves Confucian philosophy anchors perceptions of justice because it contains “guanxi”, “renqing” and obligation, thus making it reasonable in Chinese culture to equate justice as being intricate with relation. An insider subordinate feels reasonable and fair when he/she received the favoritism. Whereas, an insider subordinate will feel great injustice if he/she does not get favoritism. Within a highly socially-connected society, individuals are most likely to use social acceptance as an indication of personal worth, values, and self-esteem. This means that feeling an outsider is stressful as it is a subjective perception of one's own lack of personal worth and may trigger rationalization mechanisms of perceptual changes so to mitigate the feeling. Judging the climate as being unfair is an effective way of not thinking about oneself as having relatively less value.

The research results also suggest a positive correlation between insider/outsider and subordinate affective commitment, that is, the more subordinates regard themselves as insiders, the stronger their emotional connection with the organization, and the more willing they are to regard themselves as a part of the organization, which is consistent with our expectations and cognition.

6.1.2.6 Sequential mediation of insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice

When building the conceptual model, several mediation effects were stated intended to reach the sequential mediation effect, which was the one that put all the pieces together into a coherent whole. The lack of support given to hypothesis 2 was a negative indication that the mediation of subordinate justice perception between differential leadership and subordinate affective commitment occurred, which did not deny the sequential mediation, however, it only demonstrated that another intervening variable, like the one we were firstly proposing, might be needed to connect the constructs. The proposed construct, insider/outsider perception, is far less researched but it was logically a plausible candidate for such role.

Extant research on this construct is mostly focused on the insider perception of subordinates. Some studies used insider/outsider as a mediator, and some used insider/outsider as a moderator. Z. Y. Liu (2003) found that subordinate's perception of their relationship with the supervisor plays a mediating role between differential atmosphere and procedural justice. A. Gao (2015) found insider identity perception completely mediated differential leadership and employee voice behavior. J. W. Sun and Lin (2021) found that insider identity had a significant mediating effect between differential atmosphere perception and knowledge destruction behavior. H. P. Wu (2011) found a moderating effect of subordinates' perception of relational identity. This perception will affect the relationship between differential leadership and supervisor procedural justice and interactive justice. When subordinates tend to perceive themselves as insiders, the relationship between differential leadership and supervisor procedural justice and interactive justice is weaker, and when subordinates perceive themselves as outsiders, the relationship is the reverse. L. Wang (2013) also found the relationship between insider/outsider between authoritarian leaders and subordinate turnover intention. Compared with outsider subordinates, when supervisors show more authoritarian leadership, their subordinates' turnover intention is higher. Echoing with the research of Z. Y. Liu (2003) and A. Gao (2015), this research also takes insider/outsider as a mediator. We reason that the subjective perception of being an insider or outsider is not a contextual variable because it is a judgment about the interactions experienced with the supervisor. Therefore, it is more likely a process variable (a consequence of the leadership style) rather than a context variable (a product of factors outside the leader-subordinate relation).

The results show that insider/outsider completely mediates differential leadership and

subordinate affective commitment, that is, the impact of differential leadership on subordinate affective commitment must be achieved with the help of perceived insider/outsider perception. Leader differential leadership behavior will affect subordinate insider perception, which will further affect subordinate affective commitment to the organization. This is an important finding because on the one hand it bypasses the organizational justice explanation, but on the other hand because insider-outsider perception is associated with perceived justice, it opens door to the exact sequential mediation we firstly proposed.

Indeed, through the empirical examination, the hypothesis 5 is partially supported. Specifically, insider/outsider and distributive justice, perceived insider/outsider status and procedural justice, insider/outsider and informational justice play a significant complete sequential mediating effects between differential leadership and affective commitment. This full sequential mediation was not observed only through interactional justice for the very same reasons we highlighted when discussing the direct effect of organizational justice on affective commitment. Interaction is mostly falling within the discretionary power of leaders as individuals, while the other justice dimensions will be more dependent on organizational rules and guidelines, namely the distribution of resources and rewards, the processes followed to work and communicate, and the information that one is supposed to diffuse by the subordinates.

6.1.2.7 The moderation role of employee categorization standard

One of the possibilities that occurs when facing contradictory findings in literature, like the ones connecting differential leadership with affective commitment, is to assume such relation may not be directly occurring and that in the mediation mechanisms there might be boundary conditions, i.e., that the relations may be sensitive to other variables co-existing in the same organization. Such was the reasoning when employee categorization emerged as a possible moderator. The fundamental thinking was that the mere attribution of being an insider / outsider is not sufficient because it is important to consider why is one taken as insider / outsider. So, criteria used by the supervisor to make such attribution is important to judge firstly on the recognition itself of having an insider / outsider status, and secondly, on the fairness of such attribution.

Because the bivariate statistics indicated that not all differential leadership dimensions behaved in the same manner, and also that the employee categorization standard itself (competence, loyalty, team-spirit, guanxi) matters, we opted to test such possible moderation effects detailing such

dimensions.

The findings that attract more attention are those pertaining the relationship between differential leadership care and communication and perceived insider / outsider status. This path is the one that has the larger number of interaction effects.

The research results show that when subordinate perceive leaders to divide insider/outsider according to loyalty, the more care and communication leaders give to insider subordinates, the less likely subordinate will regard themselves as insiders. This is a rather puzzling finding.

On the one hand, loyalty is one of the key features of leadership, and being loyal to the leader will even be more critical in the case of differential leadership style. However, loyalty may or not target the leader but instead target the organization as a whole. So, social convention may think that if the leader is loyal to the organization and the subordinate is loyal to the organization, then the subordinate is by definition loyal to the leader. However, if asked directly to which extent one is loyal to his/her leader, then, the focus of the allegiance changes into what society may judge to be or not good since loyalty to the organization should prevail over loyalty to the supervisor, especially in cases where the supervisor deviates from the higher organizational interests. In fact, in this domain loyalty is essentially a private loyalty, that is, the subordinate shows absolute loyalty and unconditional obedience to the supervisors B. X. Zheng (1995) instead of to the organization. This may offer an explanation. Likewise, for subordinates, the care and communications to insiders is not in line with the social regulation and social expectations, so the subordinates may hide their own identity, leading to reporting a lower perception of having an insider/outsider status.

A more puzzling effect comes from the significant interaction found for competence as a categorization criterion. The higher the subordinate believes the supervisor uses competence as a criterion to divide between insiders and outsiders, the lower the chances of ascribing him/herself the insider status. This is obviously not because respondents tend to look at themselves as incompetent, but rather because the idea of competence itself may represent another sort of game than that of differential leadership. Once a subordinate reaches a certain level of competence, he or she does not need to strive to get favor from the leader because competence is per se sufficient to attract attention.

The research result shows that when the subordinates perceived the leaders to categorize insiders and outsiders according to team spirit, more care and communication given to the insiders by the leaders will decrease subordinates' perception of being an insider. This phenomenon might be explained from the perspective of self-service. Team spirit is regarded as positive by Chinese people,

so being regarded as leader's insider and given more favoritism because of the team spirit will be regarded as a success by the subordinates. The will to be an insider does not restrict to be a *zijiren* of the leader but also an insider of the team itself. So, if the leader is thought of as someone that values the team spirit, there might be a redundancy as regards the referent because the subordinates will only need to put the focus on the status the team gives them as being insiders of the team or working in its margins.

The employee categorization standard "team spirit" has also interacted in the relationship between differential leadership tolerance to mistakes and the perception of being an insider / outsider. This interaction followed the same pattern of the previously described as the higher the recognition that the supervisor divides employees based on their team spirit, the lowest the chances of feeling an insider when thinking about the supervisor's willingness to forgive mistakes in those he/she prefers. The explanation mentioned above also applies in this case because feeling to be a team player means that one should always be an insider both in the team and in the mind of the supervisor. The positive association in the bivariate table has sufficient magnitude to suggest such reasoning.

An interesting finding comes from the absence of interaction effects in the relationship between differential leadership promotion and perceived insider/outsider status. This means that independently of the criteria the subordinates think is used by the supervisor to identify who will be insider, the differential treatment regarding promotion opportunities will always lead to the heightened sense of being insider. In all organizations, resources are scarce and if there is one resource that fosters competition among employees is the promotion due to the intrinsic nature of being scarcer than all the other resources. By definition, a hierarchical structure has many more subordinates than supervisors, and highest the hierarchy, the lowest the number of possible positions. Therefore, differential treatment by the leader is more critical when one considers this sort of resource: position by promotion, and its main effect overrides contextual considerations.

Lastly, a single interaction was found between perceived insider/outsider and perceived justice. Employee categorization standard *guanxi*, was the only variable to interact. Findings showed that when the subordinate believes the supervisor values *guanxi* as a criterion to trust and divide the group in insiders and outsiders, the perceived justice slightly decreases in magnitude. This effect is not negative, meaning that there is no reversal in the positive association between insider/outsider perception and organizational justice. It only decreases slightly, but sufficiently to indicate sensitivity to this important *guanxi* phenomenon. A relevant finding is that *guanxi* is not really interacting in any

of the relations that link differential leadership with perceived insider / outsider status. It would be socially undesirable to admit such variable played a role into the favoritism one receives. Still, this minor interaction found between insider/outsider and perceived justice, suggests this variable plays a role in the whole process.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

This thesis has reached some research findings, which has three theoretical contributions.

For the first contribution, the thesis has enriched the research on the influence mechanisms of differential leadership on subordinate outcomes. Up to now, the influence of differential leadership on employee behavior mainly includes innovation behavior, counterproductive behavior, and job performance. Although there are studies paying attention to organizational commitment, the related research is still scarce and often regards organizational commitment as a moderator instead of an outcome variable, and no research has been found on the influence mechanism of differential leadership on organizational commitment. Therefore, taking affective commitment as an outcome variable of differential leadership adds value to extant theory. Most important, uncover a sequential mediation which highlighted the role of self-ascribed insider/outsider role and perceived justice offers valuable insights into how individuals make sense on differential leadership, and what theoretic process explains their attitudes.

Another relevant theoretic contribution lies in the exploration of the moderation effects upon differential leadership, namely the modulating capacity employee classification standard has into this process. This is entirely new compared to previous studies that mainly focus on culture related variables such as individualism/collectivism, personal modernity/tradition, and power distance. These findings, albeit somewhat puzzling, open a focus on the inner psychological mechanisms that may help understand the individuals' reasoning about how to interpret differential leadership. Still, the questions our findings pose are also a possible contribution to the theory, because they suggest more research is needed.

6.3 Management implications

For the first implication, differential leadership is a leadership style born in China's unique cultural

background, which widely exists in Chinese organizations and has an important impact on individual attitudes and behaviors. In practice, differential leadership is usually regarded as a negative leadership style (D. Zhang, 2021), but many studies have proved the positive impact of differential leadership on employees. X. W. Chen (2019) found differential leadership positively affect subordinate job well-being and negatively affect turnover intention. D. Zhang (2021) held that higher differential leadership would bring higher tendency of employee voice behavior. Y. Q. Jiang (2021) suggested that differential leadership positively related to subordinate deviant innovation behavior. Still, there is research showing the negative effect of differential leadership. For example, Y. H. Lin and Cheng (2017) found through empirical research that differential leadership would promote subordinate prosocial non-ethical behavior. In this research, we found that differential leadership can promote subordinate affective commitment through the complete mediation of insider/outsider, or through the sequential mediation of insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice, which once again gives support to the thesis that defends the positive role differential leadership plays on individuals, suggesting that organizations should pay attention to differential leadership and improve subordinate affective commitment through the use of differential leadership.

For the second implication, managers should ensure the dynamics of “quanzi” (circle) and treat the role of the “quanzi” correctly. On the one hand, quanzi should not be fixed to prevent the subordinates from being slack and cutting corners due to the biased treatment of the supervisor. On the other hand, quanzi should be mobilized to maintain the adaptability of differential leadership. In other words, the categorization between insiders and outsiders should be transparent and variable to show the opportunity of entering and leaving the insider group, which could encourage insider subordinates to maintain their identity and outsider subordinates to enter the circle through their own efforts.

For the third implication, subordinates’ perceived categorization standard will moderate the influence of differential leadership on insider/outsider and subordinate perceived justice. Therefore, managers should arrange subordinates reasonably and categorize the relationship with subordinates according to loyalty, competence, team spirit and guanxi. This implication is very much depending on how clear are such criteria in the mind of the subordinates. Our findings are not capable of clarifying is such perception is shared in teams which may be an important factor in explaining interactions.

6.4 Research limitations and prospects

There are some limitations and deficiencies in this thesis, and future research could be carried out following the research suggestions.

The first limitation is about the sample data, which can be reflected in the following aspects: (1) This research adopted two face-to-face questionnaire surveys to collect data, which increases the difficulty of questionnaire recovery due to the limitations of human resources, financial and material resources. Consequently, the effective sample size is small, which requires more research to verify and generalize the research conclusions. The advantage of this method was the guaranteed anonymity that could not be assuring in the mind of the respondents if we would have used electronic survey. (2) The sample of this thesis come from six different industries, still there are some deficiencies. Future research can select the sample from more industries and more different occupations to generalize the research results. Moreover, future research can focus on certain industry and conduct targeted research to further refine the research on differential leadership and obtain more accurate and comprehensive research results. (3) The sample age groups were restricted. The respondents of the research ranged from 26 to 35 years, accounting for 63.4%. The concentration of the age group might affect the accuracy of the research results. Future research could explore the leadership effectiveness of differential leadership by conducting stratified sampling according to demographic factors.

The second research limitation concerns measurement issues. The employee classification standard scale used in this study is designed by (2014, May 15-17) in the organizational context of Taiwan. This scale has only been used once in previous studies, so the scale is immature concerning the content structure of the questionnaire. Still, it was the only one available and we believe it was worth to use. Future research can further verify and develop this scale.

The third limitation concerns level of analysis. This study only focused on the influence of differential leadership from the individual level instead of the team level. However, it is quite reasonable to accept that leadership phenomenon operates mostly at the team level. In line with this, there are a few studies on the influence of differential leadership from the team level, which could be improved in the future. This study restricts its focus on the differential leadership effects at the individual level rather than the group level, but it would have added value to extend the analysis into the team level, especially because current research on the impact of differential leadership on the

group level is generally scarcer and has not reached a unified conclusion. Future research can further explore this aspect.

The fourth limitation concerns the common variance bias that is usually visible in most of the research conducted on this topic. To overcome this, the study has a two-stage design, as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Harman test for common method bias indicated no such problem but still, all the variables were self-reported and, in some cases (the mediation model), they were collected simultaneously.

Another limitation might have occurred when we opted to incorporate transversal measurements of employee categorization instead of collecting such data longitudinally, or to ask respondents if their own status has been like this for a long time, or if it changes. B. X. Zheng (1995) emphasized in the employee classification model that in addition to the classification standard of loyalty, competence and guanxi, another content is often ignored: the dynamics of employee classification. The employee classification standard might change according to the subordinate behavior, which is also the heterotopic of “intimate and distant, loyal and rebel, competent and normal”. Future research can study the dynamics of employee classification standard in differential leadership scenario and explore how insider subordinate become outsider subordinate or how outsider subordinate change into insider subordinate.

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Annex A: Questionnaire (supervisors)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Hello! Thank you very much for taking your precious time to participate in this research project which is under the charge of Professor Nelson Ramalho from ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon and Associate Professor Jihong Wu from School of Management and Economics of UESTC. This survey intends to investigate the influencing factors of employees' performance from the perspective of leadership style. There is no right or wrong answer and all answers are provided anonymously. The data obtained from the survey is only used for academic research, so please answer it without worry. After answering the questionnaire, please seal it and hand it to the research assistants who comes to conduct the survey. Please pay attention to the following three points when filling in the answer.

1. Please answer this questionnaire **honestly** after **careful reading**. Choose **only one answer** for each question and tick the choice you think is appropriate.

2. There is no right or wrong answer, so just **answer truthfully** and try to express **what you really think or feel**. If the answers of a question do not match your situation, please choose the closest answer. Only truthful answers will make our research meaningful, so please fill in the blanks carefully.

3. The "company" in the questionnaire refers to the company **you are working for**. The term "subordinate" refers to the employees who report directly to you.

If you want to know the results of the research, please give your Email to the research assistant who comes to you. We will send relevant research report to you after completing the data analysis, hoping that it will be beneficial to your work. We would like to express our sincere thanks for your help!

Nelson Ramalho, University Institute of Lisbon

Jihong Wu, School of Management and Economics of UESTC

Jingwei Yang, School of Management and Economics of UESTC

October, 2020

Time 1:

Part One: Management style

1. For you, how important are the following characteristics of your subordinates to increase your trust in them? Please tick the most suitable number between 1 "very unimportant" and 6 "very important". The higher the number you fill out represents that the better the performance of your subordinates on this item, the more likely they are to become 'my man' ("zijiren" in Chinese, similar to in-group member in LMX theory, refers to those subordinates who have closer relationship to the supervisor).

totally unimporta ←————→ Very important

1.1 Easy to communicate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.2 Work hard, responsible and diligent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.3 Outstanding competence	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.4 Be loyal and obedient to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.5 Take the initiative to share the responsibility of mine.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.6 Get along well with colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.7 Be able to consider others in the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.8 Be humble and never strive for merit in the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.9 Be honest and sincere.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.10 Be integrity and do not use our company' resources for personal purposes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.11 Have the same philosophy as me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.12 In addition to the current working relationship, have other relationships with me (e.g. family, relatives, same surname, same township, classmates, colleagues, friends with same hobbies, parishioners of a church, members of a party, comrade-in-arms, neighbors, teachers and students, alumni, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.13 Be considerate and caring about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Part Two: Interactive experience with subordinates

Please evaluate the interaction between the designated subordinate based on the actual situation (The subordinates in the table are randomly selected from your subordinates. The information is for academic research only and is strictly confidential. Please feel free to fill in.).

Subordinate A

(Note: supervisors were provided with a table including selected subordinates’ name and their code from A to E, they were required to answer the following questions according to their interaction with 3 to 5 subordinates respectively.)

Please check the most appropriate number based on the actual situation of your interaction with the subordinate to reflect your degree of agreement with these statements.

Totally disagree ←————→ Totally agree

1.1 I will care for him (her) and think of him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.2 When discussing a problem with him (her), he (she) will give sincere advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.3 I feel I can share my thoughts, feelings and expectations with him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.4 I will introduce important persons who are helpful to the job to him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.5 I will sacrifice my own interests to help him (her) out of the difficulty of work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.6 I will give him (her) advice to make his (her) work run more smoothly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.7 I will offer help to him (her) when he (she) is busy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part Three: Demographic information

1. Your gender: Male Female

2. Your age:

<20 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40

41-45 46-50 51-55 >55

3. What is your highest level of education?

High school or technical secondary school and below

Junior college

Bachelor

Master

Doctor and above

4. The ownership of your company/workplace is:

State-owned or state-holding enterprises

Private or private-holding enterprises

Foreign-funded or foreign-holding enterprises

5. The total number of employees in your company is:

under10 10-20 21-50 51-100 above 100

6. How many direct subordinates do you have now?

3-5 6-10 11-15 above 15

Time 2:

Part One: experience working with subordinates

Please tick an appropriate number according to your experience working with different subordinate respectively.

Subordinate A

(Note: supervisors were provided with a table including selected subordinates' name and their code from A to E, they were required to answer the following questions according to their interaction with 3 to 5 subordinates respectively.)

1. Please tick the most appropriate number based on the actual situation of your interaction with the subordinate to reflect your degree of agreement with these statements.

Totally disagree ←————→ **Totally agree**

1.1 I will care for him (her) and think of him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.2 When discussing a problem with him (her), he (she) will give sincere advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.3 I feel we can share my thoughts, feelings and expectations with him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.4 I will introduce an important person who is helpful to the job to him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.5 I will sacrifice my own interests to help him (her) out of the difficulty of work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.6 I will give him (her) advice to make his (her) work run more smoothly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.7 I will offer help to him (her) when he (she) is busy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Please evaluate whether the subordinate's behavior at work meets the following description, and select the number that best represents your opinion.

Totally disagree ←————→ **Totally agree**

2.1 He/she will help others who have been absent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.2 Willingly give his (her) time to help others who have work-related problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.3 Adjust his (her) work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.4 He/she will go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.5 He/she will show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.6 He/she will give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.7 He/she will assist others with their duties.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.8 He/she will share personal property with others to help their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.9 He/she will attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.10 He/she will keep up with developments in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.11 He/she will defend the organization when other employees criticize it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.12 He/she will show pride when representing the organization in public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.13 He/she will offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.14 He/she will express loyalty toward the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.15 He/she will take action to protect the organization from potential problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.16 He/she will demonstrate concern about the image of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.17 His/her quantity of work is higher than average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.18 His/her quality of work is much higher than average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.19 His/her efficiency is much higher than average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.20 His/her standards of work quality are higher than the formal standards for this job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.21 He/she strives for higher quality work than required.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part Two: Demographic information

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age:

<20 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40

41-45 46-50 51-55 >55

3. What is your highest level of education?

High school or technical secondary school and below

Junior college

Bachelor

Master

Doctor and above

4. How long have you worked at your current company/workplace ()

A. Less than 1 year

B. 1-2 years

C. 3-4 years

D. 5 years and above

Thank you for supporting our research and wish you a happy life!

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Annex B: Questionnaire (subordinates)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Hello! Thank you very much for taking your precious time to participate in this research project which is under the charge of Professor Nelson Ramalho from ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon and Associate Professor Jihong Wu from School of Management and Economics of UESTC. This survey intends to investigate the influencing factors of employees' performance from the perspective of leadership style. There is no right or wrong answer and all answers are provided anonymously. The data obtained from the survey is only used for academic research, so please answer it without worry. After answering the questionnaire, please seal it and hand it to the research assistants who comes to conduct the survey. Please pay attention to the following three points when filling in the answer.

1. Please answer this questionnaire **honestly** after **careful reading**. Choose **only one answer** for each question and tick the choice you think is appropriate.

2. There is no right or wrong answer, so just **answer truthfully** and try to express **what you really think or feel**. If the answers of a question do not match your situation, please choose the closest answer. Only truthful answers will make our research meaningful, so please fill in the blanks carefully.

3. The "company" in the questionnaire refers to the company **you are working for**. The term "supervisor" refers to your direct supervisor.

If you want to know the results of the research, please give your Email to the research assistant who comes to you. We will send relevant research report to you after completing the data analysis, hoping that it will be beneficial to your work. We would like to express our sincere thanks for your help!

Nelson Ramalho, University Institute of Lisbon

Jihong Wu, School of Management and Economics of UESTC

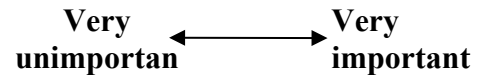
Jingwei Yang, School of Management and Economics of UESTC

October, 2020

Time 1:

Part One : Interactive experience with supervisor

1. Based on your observations, what kind of subordinates will become your supervisor's trustworthy person, and how important are the following characteristics of the subordinates? Please select the number that best represents your thoughts between 1 "very unimportant" and 6 "very important". The higher the number you fill out, the more likely it is that if there are subordinates who perform well on this item, they are more likely to become the trusted person of your supervisor.



1.1 Easy to communicate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.2 Work hard , responsible and due diligence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.3 Outstanding competence	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.4 Be loyal and obedient to the supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.5 Take the initiative to share the responsibility of the supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.6 Get along well with colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.7 Be able to consider others in the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.8 Be humble and never strive for merit in the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.9 Be honest and sincere.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.10 Be integrity and do not use our company' resources for personal purposes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.11 Have the same philosophy as the supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.12 In addition to the current working relationship, have other relationships with me (e.g. family, relatives, same surname, same township, classmates, colleagues, friends with same hobbies, parishioners of a church, members of a party, comrade-in-arms, neighbors, teachers and students, alumni, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.13 Be considerate and caring about the supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. In the workplace, some supervisors divide subordinates into “zijiren (my man)” and outsiders. The following questions describe how your supervisor might behave. Please tick the most appropriate choice based on your actual experience interacting with your direct supervisor.

Your supervisor treats “zijiren (my man)” subordinates as opposed to outsiders as follows:	Totally disagree ⇔ Totally agree					
3.1 Giving relatively light punishment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.2 Not investigating the mistakes made by “zijiren” subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.3 Ignoring the mistakes made by “zijiren” subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.4 Not blaming “zijiren” subordinates frequently due to the mistakes in workplace.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.5 Caring for the “zijiren” subordinates frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.6 Spending more time on individual instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.7 Interacting more frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.8 willing to help “zijiren” subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.9 Conveying information through “zijiren” subordinates frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.10 Giving more rewarding to “zijiren” subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.11 Giving more opportunities to “zijiren” subordinates for promotion or possible promotion.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.12 Giving more opportunities to get rewarding.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.13 Assigning work that looks important but easy to finish.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.14 Providing faster approach to promote	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. Please check the most appropriate number based on the actual situation of your interaction with your supervisor to reflect your degree of agreement with these statements.

Totally disagree ←————→ **Totally agree**

4.1 No matter how powerful his/her position is, my supervisor will be inclined to use his/her authority to help me solve problems at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.2 I can count on my supervisor to "lend me a hand" when I really need it, even at his or her own expense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.3 My supervisor understands my problems and needs at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.4 My supervisor understands my potential.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.5 My supervisor has enough confidence in me that if I am not present, he/she will defend for my decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.6 I'm always clear on where I stand when I'm with my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.7 I have a very good working relationship with my supervisor, and I work efficiently and productively.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Please check the most appropriate number based on the actual situation of your interaction with your supervisor to reflect your degree of agreement with these statements.

Totally disagree ← → **Totally agree**

5.1 He (she) will care for me and think about me.	1	2	3	4	5
5.2 When discussing issues with me, he (she) will sincerely give advice.	1	2	3	4	5
5.3 He (she) will share with me each other's thoughts, feelings and expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
5.4 He (she) will introduce to me important people who are helpful to the work.	1	2	3	4	5
5.5 He (she) will sacrifice his own interests to help me get out of work difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
5.6 He (she) will give me suggestions to make my work more smoothly.	1	2	3	4	5
5.7 When I was busy, he (she) will take the initiative to help me.	1	2	3	4	5