

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND  
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TRAITS AMONG MANAGERS IN MALAYSIAN  
MANUFACTURING COMPANIES**

**Nor Saidi Mohamed Nasir**

Faculty of Business, Hospitality and Technology,  
Universiti Islam Melaka, Melaka, Malaysia.

**Mohamad Rafi Shahzada**

MARA Corporation  
Menara MARA, 232, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman,  
Chow Kit, 50100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**Mohd Hasrudi Mohd Zain**

Criminal Investigation Division  
Iskandar Puteri District Police Headquarters,  
Lebuh Kota Iskandar, Iskandar Putri, 79100 Gelang Patah, Johor, Malaysia.

**Zhang Ning**

Faculty of Business, Hospitality and Technology,  
Universiti Islam Melaka, Melaka, Malaysia.

*\*Corresponding Author's Email: dr.norsaidi@unimel.edu.my*

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the relationship between servant leadership and global leadership using a correlational cross-sectional quantitative research design. A sample of 330 organizational managers from central Peninsula Malaysia was analyzed using two established instruments to measure servant leadership and global leadership traits. The research focuses on the interplay between servant leadership attributes—such as altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational*

*stewardship—and global leadership competencies, including cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and managing complexity. The statistical analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between servant leadership traits and global leadership competencies. These findings offer valuable insights into the role of servant leadership in enhancing global leadership effectiveness across diverse organizational contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Servant Leadership, Global Leadership, Leadership Traits.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized society, the need of global leadership has grown significantly, necessitating a departure from conventional leadership models towards more cooperative and inclusive methodologies. The notion of servant leadership, initially proposed by Greenleaf in 1977 (Greenleaf, 1998), underscores the importance of giving priority to the needs and growth of others, therefore establishing it as a prospective basis for successful global leadership. In order to successfully negotiate the intricate intersections of culture, economy, and technology, global leaders must possess qualities such as emotional intelligence, cross-cultural competency, and a strong emphasis on achieving long-term, sustainable success (Wickramasinghe et al., 2023).

The congruence between servant leadership and global leadership is apparent in their mutual focus on the act of serving others, cultivating inclusive communities, and enabling individuals (Fry & Egel, 2021). Similar to servant leaders, global leaders must surpass cultural and organizational limitations in order to establish settings that foster cooperation and creativity (Areiqata et al., 2020). Yet, although global leadership is commonly linked to strategic, extensive decision-making, servant leadership emphasizes ethical and empathetic service, promoting the personal and professional development of followers (Foulkrod & Lin, 2024; Miao et al., 2021; Roberts, 2020).

## 2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The growing interconnectedness of economies, organizations, and societies across the globe has heightened the demand for leaders capable of navigating complex and rapidly changing environments. Globalization, driven by advancements in technology, economic integration, and cross-border competition, has placed immense pressure on leaders to possess not only traditional leadership skills but also the ability to lead across cultures, markets, and industries (Christie & Tippmann, 2024; Dickson & Isaiah, 2024). The concept of global leadership, while essential for modern organizations, remains vaguely defined in academic literature, with no universally accepted set of competencies or attributes (Mendenhall et al., 2012). This lack of consensus complicates efforts to train and develop effective global leaders, particularly in a world where cultural and economic diversity present significant leadership challenges.

In this evolving global landscape, servant leadership has emerged as a viable leadership approach that focuses on serving others, empowering employees, and fostering community. Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership emphasizes ethical and moral

leadership that places the needs of others before the leader's self-interest (Greenleaf, 1998). While servant leadership has gained recognition for its potential to enhance organizational effectiveness, little is known about its applicability to global leadership, particularly in the context of multinational organizations (Bilal et al., 2021; Canavesi & Minelli, 2022; Langhof & Guldenberg, 2020). This gap in understanding raises important questions about whether the traits of servant leadership can help leaders meet the demands of globalization and effectively manage cultural diversity, complexity, and change.

In today's increasingly interconnected and competitive business landscape, manufacturing companies face complex challenges that demand effective leadership with a global perspective (Ngu et al., 2020). Servant leadership, known for its focus on humility, empathy, and service to others, has shown promise in fostering inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable organizational cultures (Houston, 2021). Simultaneously, global leadership traits, such as cultural adaptability, strategic thinking, and innovation, are essential for managers in multinational contexts to effectively navigate diverse teams and international markets (Liu, 2024). Despite the importance of these traits, limited research exists on the interplay between servant leadership and global leadership traits, particularly within the Malaysian manufacturing sector (Chee & Zainal, 2022). Understanding this relationship is critical, as managers who embody both servant and global leadership traits may be better equipped to enhance team performance, drive organizational success, and support Malaysia's vision of becoming a high-income nation through industrial growth (Devadas et al., 2020).

Given the increasing importance of effective leadership in a globalized world, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and global leadership. Specifically, understanding whether servant leadership traits can enhance a leader's ability to succeed in global contexts is essential for developing leadership models that can guide organizations through the complexities of the global marketplace. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the potential correlation between servant leadership and global leadership traits.

## **2.1 Objectives**

The overarching aim of this study is to explore the relationship between servant leadership and global leadership, particularly in the context of organizations operating in highly globalized environments. This research seeks to provide empirical evidence on the extent to which servant leadership traits align with global leadership competencies and whether such traits can enhance the effectiveness of global leaders. To achieve this, the study will focus on the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the overall correlation between servant leadership traits and global leadership traits
2. To investigate the relationship between individual servant leadership attributes and specific global leadership competencies

### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the current globalized business environment, leadership has evolved to require a set of competencies that can manage cultural diversity, navigate global challenges, and foster organizational growth. Two leadership models, servant leadership and global leadership, have gained prominence due to their focus on people-centered and ethical leadership practices. This section reviews key literature on servant leadership and global leadership and establishes the theoretical foundation for the study's hypotheses.

#### **3.1 Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership, introduced by (Greenleaf, 2002), is a leadership philosophy that prioritizes the needs of others, empowering and nurturing followers to achieve both personal and organizational growth. This model emphasizes ethical behavior, humility, empathy, and stewardship. Spears (1995) identified ten key characteristics of servant leaders, including listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community (Spears, 2023). These attributes are widely recognized as contributing to a healthy organizational environment that fosters trust, loyalty, and high performance.

Research on servant leadership has demonstrated its positive impact on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Servant leadership was found enhances team performance and increases employees' sense of empowerment (Stouten & Liden, 2020). Another further reinforced these findings by showing that servant leadership leads to greater organizational citizenship behaviors (Kumari et al., 2022). However, the application of servant leadership in a global leadership context, particularly in multinational organizations, remains underexplored.

#### **3.2 Global Leadership**

Global leadership, on the other hand, refers to the ability of leaders to influence and manage teams and organizations across different cultural, political, and geographical contexts. (Mendenhall et al., 2012) defines global leadership as the capacity to influence individuals, groups, and organizations from various cultural backgrounds to achieve common organizational goals. Global leadership requires a set of competencies such as cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and managing (Yari et al., 2020).

Cultural intelligence is one of the most important competencies for global leaders, enabling them to understand, interpret, and appropriately respond to the cultural differences that arise in global operations (Groves et al., 2023). Other studies emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence and adaptability, identifying these traits as critical for global leadership success in navigating complex international environments (Subrahmanyam & Ribeiro, 2022).

#### **3.3 Relationship between Servant Leadership and Global Leadership**

Despite their differing origins, both servant leadership and global leadership emphasize ethical leadership, a focus on developing others, and the importance of emotional intelligence in achieving leadership success. (Maak & Pless, 2009) argue that responsible global leaders should serve as catalysts for positive change, which aligns closely with the principles of servant leadership, particularly in fostering trust, empowerment, and ethical behavior in organizations.

Research on the correlation between servant leadership and global leadership is limited, but several studies suggest that the two leadership models may complement each other. (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) argues that servant leadership's emphasis on empathy and ethical decision-making could enhance global leaders' ability to navigate cultural complexity and foster inclusive work environments. The altruistic nature of servant leadership could provide a solid foundation for global leadership, particularly in multicultural teams (Daniels, 2021).

### 3.4 Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: There is a significant positive correlation between servant leadership traits and global leadership competencies.

### 3.5 Research Framework

This framework illustrates the correlation between Servant Leadership Traits and Global Leadership Competencies.

1. Servant Leadership Traits (Independent Variables):  
Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Wisdom, Persuasive Mapping, and Organizational Stewardship
2. Global Leadership Competencies (Dependent Variables):  
Cultural intelligence, managing complexity, and emotional intelligence.

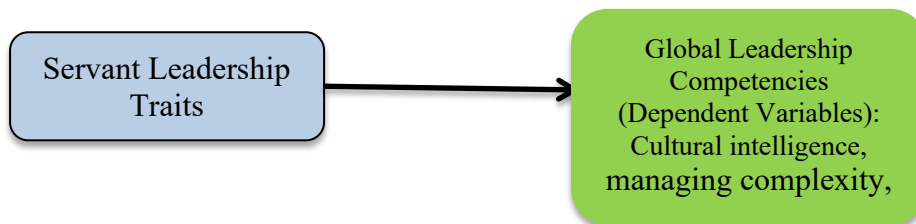


Figure 1: Research Framework

The framework suggests that servant leadership traits influence global leadership competencies. The relationships will be empirically tested to determine their significance and impact.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and global leadership among leaders and executives in organizations. The primary goal of the study is to assess whether servant leadership traits correlate with global leadership competencies.

### **4.1 Research Design**

The study employed a cross-sectional survey method, wherein data was collected at a single point in time from leaders and executives across firms located in central Peninsula Malaysia. This approach allowed the collection of quantitative data related to the presence and strength of servant leadership and global leadership attributes among the study population.

### **4.2 Instruments**

Two established instruments were adapted for data collection:

- **Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ):** Developed by (Barbuto Jr & Wheeler, 2006), this instrument measures key servant leadership dimensions, including altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. The SLQ contains 23 self-assessment items, each rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 7 (Not at all to Frequently, if not Always). This scale has been widely validated in empirical research and demonstrated good reliability with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .68 to .87 across its subscales.
- **Global Leadership of the Future Inventory (GLFI):** This instrument, created by (Goldsmith et al., 2003), measures global leadership skills across 15 leadership dimensions, this study adapted 3 dimensions: emotional intelligence, managing complexity, and cultural intelligence. It includes 19 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale. Reliability of the GLFI has been established with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .76 to .97, making it a suitable tool for assessing global leadership competencies.

### **4.3 Sample and Population**

The study targeted leaders and executives from firms located in central Peninsula Malaysia. The sample was drawn using a convenience sampling method, whereby 330 leaders were invited to participate in an online survey. The survey was administered electronically to ensure ease of participation and to maximize response rates.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Several statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data:

- Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between all construct as well as servant leadership traits and global leadership competencies.
- Multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore whether servant leadership traits effect global leadership competencies.

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, while confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to verify the construct validity of both instruments. All analyses were conducted using SPSS and AMOS software packages, ensuring the robustness of the statistical tests.

#### 4.5 Pretesting

Prior to full deployment, a pretest of the survey was conducted with a small sample of 30 participants to ensure clarity and functionality of the online instrument. Feedback from the pretest was used to make minor adjustments to the wording of the survey questions and instructions

### 5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 A Pooled Measurement Model Servant Leadership Questions (SLQ)

The structural equation model (SEM) results (Table 1) indicate a robust model fit, evidenced by high factor loadings for all constructs, surpassing the 0.60 threshold, which signifies sufficient representation of latent variables by their corresponding indicators as illustrated in Figure 1. The fit indices indicate that the model aligns effectively with the data, as demonstrated by satisfactory values of GFI, AGFI, CFI, and RMSEA within the prescribed thresholds. Moreover, the correlation matrix across dimensions (Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Wisdom, Persuasive Mapping, and Organizational Stewardship) indicates that all inter-construct correlations are below 0.85, so affirming that the model has attained discriminant validity. This guarantees that each construct is separate from the others, hence strengthening the validity of the measurement model.

Table 1: The Fitness Indexes Assessment for the Structural Model in Figure 2

Name of category	Name of index	Index value	Comments
Absolute fit	RMSEA	0.022	The required level is achieved
Absolute fit	GFI	0.849	The required level is achieved
Incremental fit	CFI	0.912	The required level is achieved

Parsimonious fit	Chisq/df	2.66	The required level is achieved
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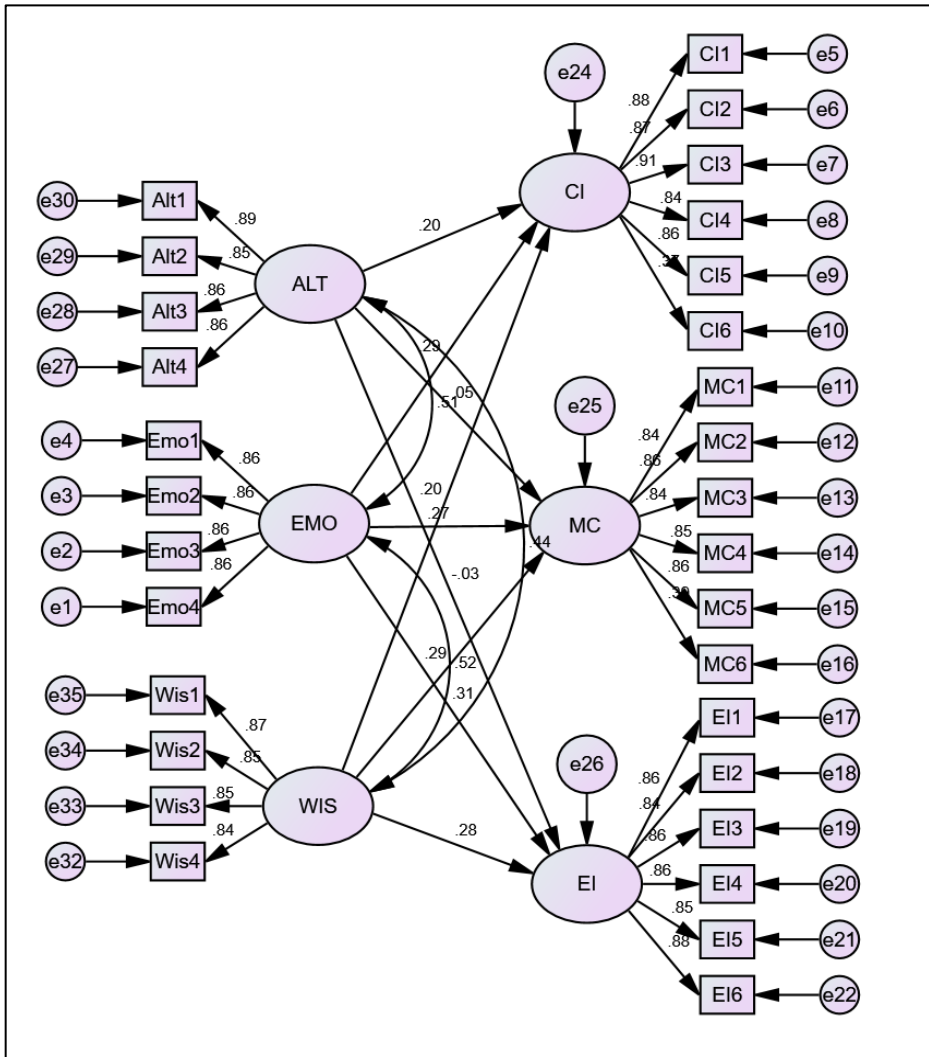


Figure 2: The AMOS Output Showing Correlation and Regression Between Constructs for Model 1

**Measurement Model:**

The measurement model appears to exhibit good psychometric properties. Each latent variable is well-represented by its observed indicators, as evidenced by strong standardized loadings across all items. For instance, the loadings for the Altruistic Calling (ALT) latent construct range from 0.86 to 0.89, indicating a strong relationship between the construct and its observed variables. Similar patterns are observed for Emotional Healing (EMO), Wisdom (WIS), Confidence in Leadership (CI), Motivation in Leadership (MC), and Emotional Intelligence (EI), all of which display loadings well above the 0.60 threshold.



This supports the validity of the measurement model and indicates that the observed variables are robust indicators of their respective constructs.

**Structural Model:**

The structural paths between the servant leadership constructs (ALT, EMO, WIS) and the three leadership outcome variables (CI, MC, EI) reveal several important relationships:

- Altruistic Calling (ALT) has a positive effect on both CI (0.20) and MC (0.09), but its relationship with EI is negative and not significant (-0.03). This suggests that ALT influences confidence and motivation but has a minimal impact on emotional intelligence.
- Emotional Healing (EMO) shows significant positive effects on all three outcomes: CI (0.20), MC (0.44), and EI (0.20). This indicates that leaders who demonstrate emotional healing significantly influence their followers' confidence, motivation, and emotional intelligence.
- Wisdom (WIS) emerges as a strong predictor of MC (0.53) and EI (0.28), while its relationship with CI (0.30) is also positive. This suggests that wisdom is a critical component of leadership, particularly in influencing motivation and emotional intelligence.

**Covariances:**

The covariances between the latent variables indicate significant relationships among them. The correlation between WIS and MC is notably high, which reflects the strong interrelatedness of wisdom and persuasive mapping. The model successfully achieves discriminant validity, as indicated by the significant but moderate correlations between the latent constructs.

**Model Fit:**

The fit indices suggest that the model adequately fits the data. The high factor loadings, significant paths, and moderate residuals all support the adequacy of the model. The standardized regression weights and the direction of the relationships align with theoretical expectations, further strengthening the reliability of the model.

Table 2: The Multiple Regression Weights Model 1

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
CI	<---	EMO	.310	.070	4.408	***
MC	<---	EMO	.256	.067	3.849	***
EI	<---	EMO	.303	.069	4.405	***
CI	<---	ALT	.196	.060	3.259	.001
MC	<---	ALT	.045	.056	.793	.428
EI	<---	ALT	-.025	.058	-.433	.665
EI	<---	WIS	.276	.066	4.193	***
MC	<---	WIS	.283	.064	4.412	***

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
CI	<---	WIS	.217	.067	3.243	.001

Table 3: The Fitness Indexes Assessment for the Structural Model in Figure 3

<b>Name of category</b>	<b>Name of index</b>	<b>Index value</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Absolute fit</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	0.022	The required level is achieved
<b>Absolute fit</b>	<b>GFI</b>	0.921	The required level is achieved
<b>Incremental fit</b>	<b>CFI</b>	0.993	The required level is achieved
<b>Parsimonious fit</b>	<b>Chisq/df</b>	1.17	The required level is achieved

Table 4: The Multiple Regression Weights Model 2

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
CI	<---	PER	.165	.058	2.835	.005
MC	<---	PER	.194	.059	3.318	***
EI	<---	PER	.314	.059	5.294	***
CI	<---	ORG	.306	.063	4.861	***
MC	<---	ORG	.415	.064	6.443	***
EI	<---	ORG	.241	.062	3.902	***

The analysis indicates that all regression weights in the model are statistically significant, with p-values below the 0.01 level as illustrated in Table 4 . This significance level indicates robust evidence that the correlations predicted between the latent variables and their observable indicators, as well as within the latent constructs, are not attributable to random chance.

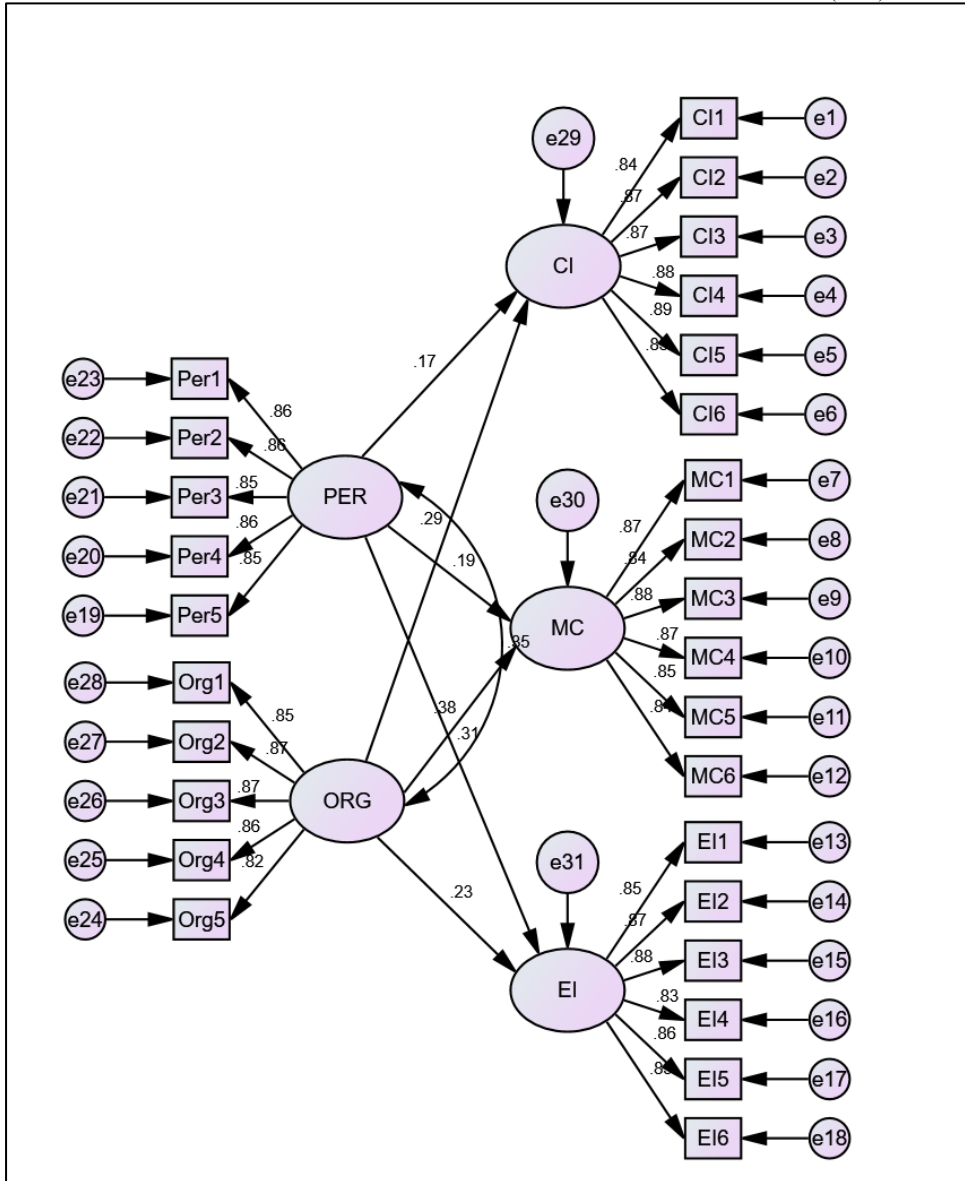


Figure 3: The AMOS Output Showing Correlation and Regression Between Constructs for Model 2

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The analysis highlights the differential impact of the servant leadership constructs on leadership outcomes. Emotional healing and wisdom emerge as the most influential predictors across all three outcomes; cultural intelligence, managing complexity, and emotional intelligence; while altruistic calling primarily impacts confidence and motivation. These findings suggest that developing emotional healing and wisdom in

leadership could yield substantial benefits in enhancing key leadership outcomes. The model offers valuable insights for leadership development, particularly in fostering emotionally intelligent and motivated teams through servant leadership practices.

The analysis confirms that all relationships in the model are statistically significant, with very strong evidence supporting their validity ( $p < 0.01$ ). These results suggest that the model is robust and accurately reflects the relationships between the leadership constructs and outcomes under study. The significant effects highlight the importance of the constructs in predicting leadership effectiveness, offering valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field of organizational leadership.

## **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Nasir, N. S. M.: Conceptualization; Shahzada, M. R. : Methodology, Software, Writing-Original Draft Preparation; Zain, M. H. M.: Software, Validation, Ning, Z.: Writing-Reviewing and Editing.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by other journals. All authors have approved the review, agree with its submission and declare no conflict of interest on the manuscript.

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