



RESEARCH PAPER

Amplifying the Work Engagement and Constructive Voice through the Leader Humility and Organizational Inclusion Climate

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ABSTRACT

Despite the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of organization inclusion climate that have been studied generally, leader humility as antecedent is relatively ignored in research. This paper investigated leader humility as a precursor of dehumanization and its direct and indirect impact on work engagement and constructive voice in telecommunication sector. Data was collected from 380 respondents working in telecom sector via self-administrated questionnaires at one point in time. Data was analyzed for hypothesized direct and indirect relationships through SPSS 25 and the PROCESS Macros Model 4. The results showed that leader humility increases employee work engagement and constructive voice through organization inclusion climate. Implications for research and practice in telecom are discussed.

KEYWORDS Constructive Voice, Leader Humility, Organizational Inclusion Climate, Work Engagement,

Introduction

Leadership is most crucial facet of any organization. An organization owes every success to its leader. Because of its importance, researchers have analyzed different aspects of leadership such as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, authentic leadership. In similar vein, leader humility is an important component of leadership literature and is defined as “as a personality trait, a value, an orientation, and a virtue” (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013) through which a leaders portraits modesty, empathy, and low self-esteem. Leader humility embodies positive values such as “empathy for” and “kindness to” others (Means et al., 1990). In other words, leaders with humility are kind and devoted towards their followers.

Leaders are responsible for nurturing an organization’s culture and climate, such as “inclusion climate”. If organizational leaders foster an “inclusive climate” they are more likely to ensure organizational effectiveness. An inclusive climate is defined as “overall perception of diverse team members of fair treatment, integration of differences, and inclusion in decision making in a team (Nishii, 2013)”. Inclusive culture enables employees to make positive contributions in the workplace. Similarly, the inclusive climate values suggestions and ideas of all employees. Furthermore, inclusion climate does not discriminate with employees and shuns ostracism of employees. Consequently, an organization that embraces inclusion climate is more likely of draw positive contributions from its employees.

Since employees are integral part of an organization, therefore employee related outcomes are also important area of concern for leadership along organizational climate. Although employee behaviors are multiple and diverse, two behaviors are very important to organizational success i.e. work engagement and constructive voice behavior. Work

engagement is defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Whereas constructive voice is defined as “the form of workplace behavior that requires employees to focus on positive outcomes such as engendered by approach motivation” (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014”).

Although work engagement and constructive voice behaviors have been studied in detail in previous research, it is clear that the interplay of these variables has yet to be investigated. Based on the brief literature review, a theoretical framework is presented in this research. This theoretical review implies that a research gap exists where leader humility is not examined for its implication towards inclusion climate and employee related behaviors.

Leadership is the most important facet of an organization. Leaders are responsible for making decisions for an organization and give direction to the efforts of employees. Undermining the importance of leadership role in organizational success and effectiveness is folly and can have unwarranted ramifications for an organization. The topic significance is very high, as the topic relates leadership to organizational climate and employees. All three of these are central to the survival and success of the organization.

Leadership research has grown over decades to examine many aspects of leadership construct. One such aspect of leadership is leader humility. Research interest in leader humility has been increase steadily (Maldonado, Vera, & Spangler, 2022) and the findings have documented that leader humility nurtures positive employee related outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance and job engagement. Since leader humility positively corresponds to employee related outcomes, therefore the significance of this form of leadership is very high. It must be noted that leadership is expressed in many other forms, however, the potential of leadership humility to contribute to organization work environment is huge.

Leader humility is more likely to set the stage for an atmosphere in the organization which in conducive to the development of all employees. Since, suitable organizational climate is paramount for success of the employees and organizations, therefore the nexus of leadership style and organizational climate is extremely critical. Without nurturing a climate of inclusiveness, an organization may not be able to fully realize its potential. Furthermore, it will be problematic for leaders to get positive contributions from employees in the absence of a climate of inclusiveness. Similarly, a leader’s desire to get its employees engaged in the workplace is also not fulfilled in absence of inclusive work environment.

It is also important to realize the not all leadership styles resonate well with employee engagement and their positive voice in the organization. Therefore, by focusing on leadership humility, one not only realize a positive organizational culture of inclusiveness but also increase employee engagement and positive voice behavior. Detailed research is required to understand how leadership humility flourishes organizational climate of inclusiveness and how employee engagement and positive voice behavior can be fostered.

Literature Review

In this section, previous research findings are summarized to clarify the relationship between variables of interest. This research takes support from previous research findings to propose the relationships among different variables.

Leader Humility and Work Engagement

Leaders express humility at workplace by their interpersonal character, by their willingness to view oneself correctly, by appreciation of others and by teachability (Owens et al., 2013). Humility in leaders enhances employee confidence and interpersonal trust. Liborius and Kiewitz (2022) show that leader humility enhances employee competitiveness

by capitalizing on affective trust. In other words, an employee who is working in with a leader showing humility, is willing to utilize his competitive potential to perform his job in a better way. In similar vein, leader humility engenders a stronger bond between employee and organization. It is found that leadership humility has a positive impact on organizational identity of the employees (Li, Liang, & Zhang, 2016). This finding indicates that employees experiencing leadership humility are more probable to classify with their firms and workplace.

Similarly, it is noted that employees experience leader humility engage in deep acting rather than surface acting (Zhou & Li, 2018). These findings indicate that leader humility encouraged people to strongly relate with their work and organization. It is hence proposed that leader humility will also have positive association with employee work engagement. Since, work engagement is defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010), therefore by increasing meaningfulness of work and valuing followers contributions, a humble leader can increase work engagement.

The literature review helps us to establish the relationship between leader humility and work engagement and draw following hypothesis

H1a: Leader humility positively influences work engagement

Leader Humility and Constructive Voice

The leader humility centers around few important principles such as listening to followers, respect for diversity of views, appreciating positive suggestions, openness to embrace criticism and working in teams (Maldonado et al., 2022). Leadership humility is present at all levels of the organization leadership structure and hence influence all employees equally. Previous research has shown that leadership humility has positive impact on psychological freedom among followers (Chiu, Owens, & Tesluk, 2016). These finding suggest that leaders with humility are encouraging employees to speak their mind and to present their constructive criticism.

Constructive voice is defined as “the form of workplace behavior that requires employees to focus on positive outcomes such as engendered by approach motivation” (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014)”. This kind of voice behavior can only be observed where leadership embraces employee positive contribution. Only when leaders provide psychological safety to employees, can they expect to get a constructive contribution from employees. The findings from previous research support the notion that leader humility and constructive voice are closely related to each other. Based on this relationship, we propose following hypothesis

H1b: Leader humility has positive impact on constructive voice

Leader Humility and Organizational Inclusion Climate

Leaders are responsible for nurturing organizational culture. Leaders set a tone for what is acceptable or unacceptable in an organization. Consequently, the fabric of organizational culture is woven by organizational leaders. A leader’s humility is both based on his personality and his behavior; therefore, leader can nurture organizational values by his personality traits and his actions. By behaving as modest and having strong self-awareness (Owens et al., 2013), leaders create an atmosphere of collectiveness. Leader humility is reflected via low-self focus, appreciation of others and high orientation of serving others (Ou et al., 2014). These value systems and personality traits pave the path for an organizational culture where employees can feel safe to make their contributions.

In fact an inclusive climate is defined as “overall perception of diverse team members of fair treatment, integration of differences, and inclusion in decision making in a team (Nishii, 2013)”. Since humble leaders are more inclined to allow other to participate and are willing to integrate differences among team members, therefore they are more likely to create an atmosphere conducive to inclusiveness.

Based on the understanding from literature review, following hypothesis is presented

H2: Leader humility has a positive impact on organizational inclusion climate

Organizational Inclusion Climate and Work Engagement

An inclusive climate assimilates differences among employees. These differences can spring from various factors such as demographics, religion, nationality, or life views. The base of an inclusive climate is that diverse backgrounds should be viewed as a unique source of knowledge and learning (Nishii, 2013). An inclusive climate does not consider differences as threats but considers differences as opportunities. The evidence also suggest that inclusive climate creates psychological safety for all employees (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Previous research related to organizational inclusion climate and work engagement suggest that there is an intuitive appeal for the relationship between these two variables. The logical interplay between these variables provides us with following relationship

H3a: Organizational inclusion climate has a positive impact on work engagement

Organizational Inclusion Climate and Constructive Voice

As discussed earlier, an organizational culture that promotes harmony among employees is reflective of inclusive climate. Inclusive climate not only provides psychological safety to employees (Ely & Thomas, 2001) but also enhances learning of employees in an organization (Boekhorst, 2015).

The summary of previous research work on organizational inclusion climate and constructive voice helps us draw following hypothesis.

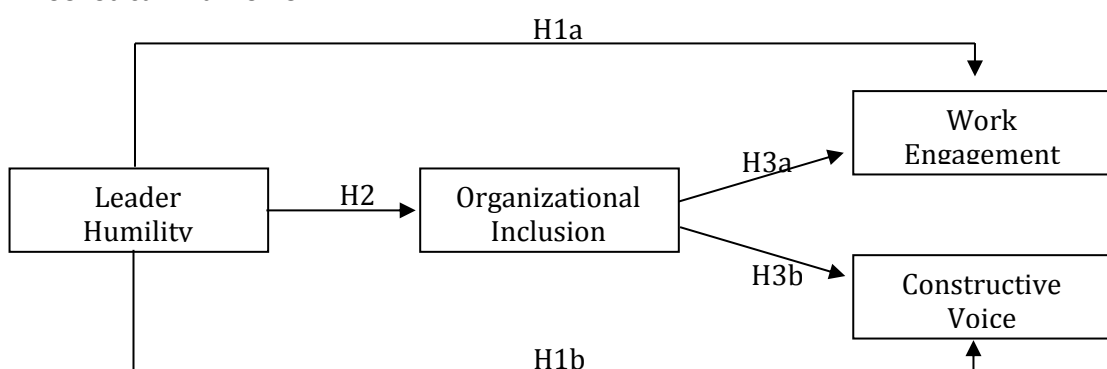
H3b: Organizational inclusion climate has a positive impact on constructive voice

H3c: Organization inclusion climate mediates the relationship in between the leader humility and work engagement

H3d: Organization inclusion climate mediates the relationship in between the leader humility and constructive voice.

The theoretical relationships proposed in above hypotheses are supported from previous research work and have logical consistency. These relationships are represented in following theoretical framework

Theoretical Framework



Material and Methods

Data collection method represents import decision for a researcher. Since this research is using positivism research philosophy, therefore, the data collection decision is going to be guided by positivism. It is observed that surveys, experiments and quasi-experiments are the most frequently used data collection techniques in positivism (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Moreover, it is observed that an examination of social inquiry through research most frequently uses positivism research paradigm while utilizing quantitative techniques (Mertens, 2014). Current research also utilized these understandings to conduct an examination of the impact of leader humility on organizational inclusive climate, work engagement and constructive voice. The current study employs a deductive methodology and a positive epistemology. The survey method was used for data collection. The target population for the study was selected from among employees, including management and operational personnel, who are engaged in research and development or innovation. Telecommunication industry was chosen as sample for this study.

Sampling Techniques and Sample size

To choose the appropriate sample from the population, the purposive sampling method was employed. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that takes place when the researcher chooses the essentials for the sample based on their expert opinion.

500 sample size was chosen and data was collected through self-reported questionnaire. Out of total sample size 413 questionnaires were returned. After discarding the unengaged responses and missing values, total 380 responses were used for further analysis with response rate of 76%. The demographic analysis shows that the gathered responses have 31% females and 69% males. In terms of education 61% was possessing masters and above degree and 39% had the bachelor's degree. In terms of age 3% were between 21-25, 15% were 26-30 years, 35% were between 31-35 years and 47% were 36 and above years. 69% of respondents had 6-10 years of experience.

Instrumentation

S#	Variable	Reference
1	Leader Humility	Owens et al., 2013
2	Organizational inclusion climate	Nishii, 2013
3	Work engagement	Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007
4	Constructive voice	Maynes and Podsakoff, 2014

Results and Discussion

Estimation of convergent and discriminant validity specifies the validation of measurement model. Conferring from (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) convergent validity comprises the following:

- All factor loading should exceed than 0.65
- Composite reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.80
- AVE for each construct should surpass 0.50

Convergent validity has been achieved after analysis measurement model. Table 1 shows the correlations between the variables and all the values are significant and less than 0.70 which means that condition for discriminant validity has been achieved (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 1 shows the mean values, standard deviation, factor loadings and reliability values. 5-point likert scale was used in the current study therefore, the mean values ranges in between 1 and 5.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis and descriptive statistics (N=380)

	Constructs	CR	AVE	Factor loadings	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1	Leader Humility	0.94	0.71	0.67-0.78	2.21 (1.05)	0.84				
2	Org Inclusion Climate	0.96	0.70	0.64-0.81	2.49 (1.13)	0.67**	0.83			
3	Work Engagement	0.93	0.67	0.70-0.88	3.98 (0.95)	0.58**	0.68**	0.81		
4	Constructive Voice	0.85	0.72	0.73-0.81	4.11 (1.07)	0.56**	0.66**	---	0.85	

The diagonal elements (in bold) in the correlation matrix are the square roots of the AVE of the five constructs, Off-diagonal elements are Pearson Correlation Measure between constructs, AVE= Average Variance Extracted, CR= Composite Reliability, ** p<0.01.

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS 23 to test the construct validity of the variables (Hu & Bentler, 1999) leader humility, Organization inclusion climate, work engagement and Constructive voice. The Cronbach alpha value for all variables is greater than its threshold value of 0.70.

Descriptive statistics and correlation

Table 2
Measurement Model Fit Indices

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	SRMR	RSMEA	TLI
4 Factor Model	2.34	0.93	0.04	0.06	0.93
3 Factor Model	2.04	0.92	0.03	0.06	0.94

Results of direct and indirect effects

Multiple regression analysis was used to compare the predictive capacity of computed direct and indirect effects of Process Macro by Hayes model 4, Table 3 displays the results of multiple regression and the results of mediation analysis.

Table 3
Direct and indirect effects

Direct Effects		β	SE	T	p
Leader Humility	→ Org Inclusion Climate	0.73	0.04	17.86	0.00
Leader Humility	→ Work Engagement	0.53	0.04	13.95	0.00
Leader Humility	→ Constructive Voice	0.56	0.03	15.86	0.00
Org Inclusion Climate	→ Work Engagement	0.57	0.03	17.98	0.00
Org Inclusion Climate	→ Constructive Voice	0.59	0.04	17.12	0.00
Bootstrap results of indirect effects		Effects	Boot SE	LLCI (95%)	ULCI (95%)
Leadership Humility	→ Org Inclusion Climate → Work Engagement	0.32	0.05	0.25	0.40
Leadership Humility	→ Org Inclusion Climate → Constructive Voice	0.34	0.04	0.26	0.44

Note: N = 380. *p < .05, **p < .01. β are unstandardized coefficients. Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; LL, lower limit; SE, standard error; UL, upper limit.

Leader humility directly related to organization inclusion climate, ($\beta = 0.73, p < .01$) verified H2. The results in Table 3 supported H1a and H1b, as indicated by the regression coefficients and associated significance level ($\beta = 0.53, p < .01$) and ($\beta = 0.56, p < .01$).

Furthermore, organizational inclusion climate was positively associated with employees' work engagement ($\beta = 0.57, p < .01$), and constructive voice ($\beta = 0.59, p < .01$), therefore H3a and H3b were proved. Moreover, the results for the indirect effects confirm the significant mediating role of organization inclusion climate in the relationship between leader humility and work engagement (Indirect effect = 0.32, 95% CI with LL = 0.25 and UL = 0.40) and organization inclusion climate also significantly mediates the relationship in between leader humility and constructive voice. Similarly H3c and H4d were approved.

Conclusion

An important implication of this research is that humble leaders may encourage productive employee feedback. This is so because modest leaders are receptive to fresh perspectives and criticism, celebrate followers' accomplishments, and value their helpful suggestions and demonstrate a desire to gain knowledge from their unique contribution. Therefore, we advise organizational managers to choose their leaders wisely. In particular, humility is a trait that can be changed and "improve drastically with practice" (Owens et al., 2015). Therefore, organizational managers are urged to exhibit more modest behavior in their leading procedure in order to deal with the fast-altering market environment.

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