

## Review on Effects of Humility Leadership on Employee's Voice Behavior

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**Keywords:** Humble Leadership; Voice Behaviour; Moderator Variable; Mediator Variable

**Abstract:** Faced with a complex external environment, leaders do not have enough energy and ability to understand all the knowledge and information related to the organization. They need to give full play to the enthusiasm of employees and actively advise on organizational development. Therefore, since the concept of "bottom-up", the humble leadership concept has gradually become a hotspot in the study of leadership theory. At present, there is still little empirical research related to China and the West. Starting with the concepts of humble leadership and voice behavior, the paper summarizes the existing relevant literature, analyzes the relationship between the two, and classifies and summarizes the moderator variables and mediator variables mentioned in the literature, and discusses the humble leadership the theoretical logic behind the voice behavior. At the end of the article, it summarizes the practical significance of relevant research and future research directions.

### 1. Introduction

With the changes in economic development, the environment facing enterprises is becoming more and more complex. Therefore, if an enterprise is not to be eliminated by the environment, it must gather wisdom and let employees actively make suggestions for the development of the organization. One way to promote employee voice is that leaders need to create a workplace where employees believe voice is safe, and the other is to establish a formal system to communicate information about operational issues beyond the traditional organizational level[1]. Leaders are the main object of voice, especially when employees share their ideas about the organization or the leader, the leader plays a more important role in this process. Previous research results indicate that humble leadership usually has a positive impact. For example: humble leadership can help improve employee productivity [2]. Leadership humility is also widely recognized as one of the key factors for leadership effectiveness.

Most of the existing researches believe that humility leadership has an impact on voice behaviors, but its influence paths differ. For example, social exchange theory believes that the relationship between people follows the principle of reciprocity, and exchange rewards include not only material rewards but also psychological rewards (such as support, trust, self-esteem, prestige, etc.). Humble leaders know how to appreciate the strengths of their subordinates, and employees are very likely to give back to their superiors through the voice behavior outside the role, especially to provide some negative feedback to correct the organization's operational deviation [3]; the approach-inhibition of power is suppressed, it is believed that power distance changes the influence of individual subjective power. Employees with low power distance values often activate their system of behavior and express their opinions under the supervision of humble leadership by promoting their sense of power [4].

So, what impact does humble leadership have on voice? This article organizes and analyzes the existing literature, and discusses possible future research directions and practical implications.

### 2. The Origin and Connotation Concept of Humble Leadership Research

#### 2.1 The Origin of Humble Leadership Research

Humility originally came from the Latin Humus and Humi, which was originally meant to be on

the ground and the land [5]. The meaning of the word is that the humble person has a down-to-earth style of work, and can objectively and truthfully examine himself and others. Humility was initially regarded as a virtue and was widely used in the research of positive psychology [6]. The development of the concept of humility has generally gone through four periods, and the corresponding four viewpoints have been produced immediately.

Scholars who firmly believe in traditional ideas found that the beginning of the study of humility was the Stoic school and Buddhism in ancient Greece [7]. The teachings of each school regard humility as a virtue, which helps people to achieve excellence. But humility still lacks a certain degree of attention in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophers believe that those who are well educated should understand their limitations very well, so there is no need to always emphasize humility [8]. Eastern Buddhist teachings also believe that humility is of great significance to human excellence, but Eastern thought holds that humility transcends the understanding of personal limitations and is more like a self-transcendence [7].

The monotheistic views are mainly derived from the teachings of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and the modesty at this time is full of strong religiousism. Monotheists firmly believe that humility is humility towards God. Christians regard humility as a way to glory [9]. The perception of the traditional concept of humility in Western culture depends largely on the importance of humility in Christian teaching [8, 9, 10]. On the basis of Christian doctrine, humility at this time is considered to be a state of humility [11], which is contrary to selfish ambition and vanity.

The period of enlightenment was a humble and tortuous stage, because many philosophers not only disagreed with the humble understanding of Christianity, they even held a defiant attitude. Enlightenment scholars believe that humility is the virtue of slaves and a manifestation of inferiority, so humans do not need humility [10]. But with the deepening of people's understanding, philosophers slowly realized some positive factors in humility. Some philosophers began to regard humility as a virtue, and believed that this virtue could make people have a clear understanding of themselves [12].

In modern times, scholars have focused on humility by focusing on their own personality traits and psychological characteristics. At this time, philosophers and sociologists felt that humility is a very complicated structure [3]. For example, the French philosopher Comte-Sponville once proposed that humility should be regarded as a science about self, because humility comes from trusting and understanding of self's advantages and disadvantages [13]. The emergence of positive psychology has brought a new perspective to the understanding and research of humility. Psychologists have begun to interpret humility from the perspective of positive psychology, thinking that humility is a stable and lasting positive personal quality of people [7].

## **2.2 Connotation Concept of Humble Leadership**

With the increase in decision-making mistakes caused by leaders' self-esteem in recent years [14], more and more academic researchers and practitioners have begun to pay attention to and call for a humble leadership style. The bottom-up leadership styles of the humble leadership style, that is, the "employee-leadership" model, some scholars have conducted fruitful explorations of its composition. In the past, many scholars have deeply studied the connotation and dimensional structure of humility leadership. For example, Morris and others believe that humility leadership includes: (1) self-awareness; (2) openness; (3) transcendence [15]. Owens and Hekman summarized the characteristics of the humble leadership style as: "look at yourself objectively", "appreciate the strengths of employees" and "willing to accept the opinions and feedback of others" [14].

Humility has always been considered a complementary construct that can make other leadership behaviors more effective, such as shared leadership, servant leadership, and participatory leadership. The leaders emphasized by these three leadership styles must have self-awareness, pay close attention to the characteristics of employees and have the same meaning as humility. This shows that humility can be used as a potential basis for shared leadership, servant leadership, and participatory leadership. However, as a new type of leadership behavior, humble leadership still has obvious differences from the above three leadership behaviors. Specific differences Table 1.

**Table 1.** Comparison of several leadership types.

<b>Components</b>	<b>Humble Leadership</b>	<b>Shared Leadership</b>	<b>Servant Leadership</b>	<b>Participative Leadership</b>
<b>Leadership behavior</b>				
Acknowledge your own shortcomings and shortcomings	X		x	
Appreciate the ability and contribution of subordinates	X		x	
Lead by example	X			
Consider the career development of subordinates				
Team design and border management		X		
<b>Leadership process</b>				
Regulate the development of subordinates	X		x	
Reduce insecurities of subordinates	X			
Change Leadership-Subordinate Role	X	x		x
Encourage advice	X	X	x	X
<b>Behavior result</b>				
Psychological freedom of subordinates	X		x	
Subordinate's work input	X	X	x	X
Organizational fluency	X	X		

Note: "X" indicates that this element is the main component included in this leadership type; "x" indicates that this element is the secondary component included in this leadership type.

### 3. Connotation Concept of Voice

The introduction of the concept of "voice" in the field of management was in 1970 [16]. It was believed that employees mainly adopted three behaviors to express their feelings about the organization. These three behaviors were resignation, advice, and loyalty, and further proposed an EVL model of employee behavior. Later, Rusbult and Farrell [17] refined the model and further added "ignore" to the model. At this point, the four-factor model of EVLN, which includes employee turnover, voice, loyalty, and disregard for employees who show dissatisfaction when they are dissatisfied with their work, is well known in the academic world.

Regarding the concept of voice behavior, many scholars have conducted in-depth research on it. Van Dyne et al. Summarized employee voice as "challenging-enhancing" organizational citizenship behavior for the purpose of improving the environment. Employees are committed to improving the status quo of the organization and proactively put forward constructive opinions. And proposed three-dimensional voice behavior: default voice, defensive voice and pro-social voice [18]. Dan et al. believe that voice is a relatively more elaborate cognitive process, a challenging organizational citizenship behavior, committed to high standards of performance, future direction, and believes that it may improve the current organization or work situation [19]. Scholar Liang et al. considered Jianyan to be "expressing opinions, ideas and suggestions related to work content and responsibilities in order to achieve the purpose of cooperation" according to the local Chinese culture, and developed scales in the Chinese context [20]. A two-dimensional recommended behavior scale that includes promotive and prohibitive voice[21].

### 4. The Effect of Humble Leadership on Voice

#### 4.1. Theoretical Basis

The view of group engagement model believes that employees' voices and voices to the organization may be to meet the inherent needs of their group identity and status information [22]. However, each manager is likely to react differently (listening, ignoring, rejecting, etc.) due to

different opinions about employee voices (such as treating employee voices as negative complaints or positive voices) the following work attitude and behaviors have a certain influence [23]. Throughout this process, a humble leader is more likely to listen to employees' voices and respond positively [24].

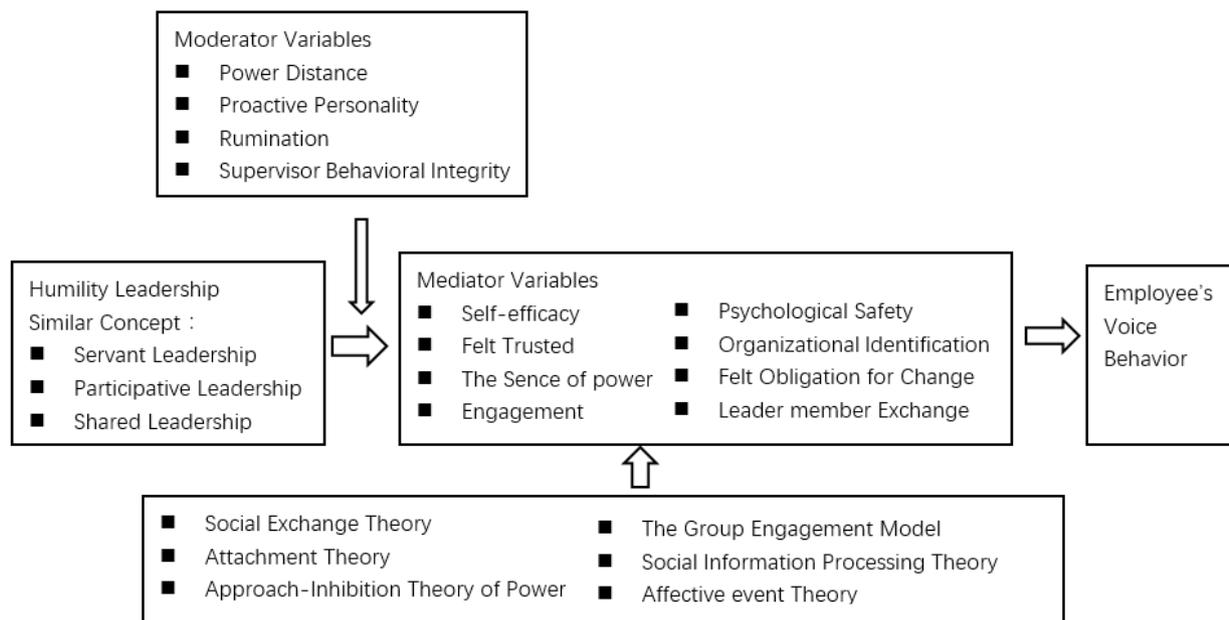
The basic assumption of social information processing theory is that team member's form their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors based on the information obtained [25]. From the perspective of employees' social information processing of leadership factors, leadership behaviors and attitudes play an important role in the process of employee socialization [26]. Employees often need to observe the leader's words and deeds, and figure out the motivation of the leader in advance, so as to decide their own expression timing and content. Therefore, when employees perceive the humble leadership of the employee's participation in the organization, employees will also put down their concerns and conforms to the leadership to make suggestions for the organization [27].

Role theory, social exchange theory, attachment theory and affective event theory are also used in the study of humility leadership [4, 23, 24], but due to the limitation of the article length, this article will not repeat them.

## 4.2 The Effect of Humble Leadership on Voice

The indirect influence of humble leadership on advocacy behavior is achieved through the role of intermediary and moderating variables. Divided into different types according to different types: individual level variables and team level variables. Among them, individual-level variables include positive emotions, psychological safety and power distance; team-level variables include leadership member exchanges.

Regarding the research on how humble leadership influences the behavior of voice, most scholars explore the influence mechanism at the individual level of variable factors.



**Figure 1.** The influence of humble leadership on advice behavior.

### 4.2.1 Mediator Variables

Scholars believe that positive emotions mediate the relationship between humble leadership and employee voice. Because of the influence of the humble leadership style, subordinates are more likely to have more positive emotional feelings, which in turn will affect employees' cognition and evaluation. These emotional experiences will affect employees' cognition and evaluation. Classify yourself into your current organization and express your suggestions more actively [22]. K. Bharanitharan, etc., through an empirical analysis of a professional staff of an information technology company in India, concluded that self-efficacy versus humble leadership Intermediate

role with employees' suggestions. Because employees can influence leaders' decisions without jeopardizing their careers, Humble leadership will make the subordinates more confident (that is, self-efficacy), and the follower's self-efficacy can further enhance the follower's motivation for advising the leader. Some scholars' survey data on the leaders and employees of 12 companies show that the sense of constructive change mediates the relationship between humble leadership and voice [24]. Humble leadership can grow together with employees; it also provides support for employees' career growth. After this, the stronger the sense of obligation they want to build an organization. In other words, humble leadership can promote employees to have a sense of constructive change. Under the drive of this sense of obligation, employees will show more voice behaviors beneficial to the development of the organization [27]. Research by Somayah Bahmannia et al. Showed that being trusted mediates the relationship between humble leadership and employee voice. Humility leadership is a less selfish leadership style, so it can cultivate the safety awareness of followers, and at the same time establish a supportive employee-leadership relationship; this model encourages subordinates to engage in more off-role behaviors [22]. Engagement will also play a mediator role. For humble leadership, researchers believe that it will rationalize the personal development of subordinates, thereby enhancing the internal motivation of subordinates to learn and master work skills--set their work goals from the original external performance standards (I.e., praise from the boss, obtaining bonuses) into internal performance standards (i.e., engagement), thereby strengthening employee voice behavior [28]. The mediate relationship between psychological safety and humble leadership and employee voice has been confirmed by several scholars. Fuxiang W is a sample of R & D personnel in 207 IT companies matched by subordinates and above. The humble leader will often encourage employees and praise employees for their work. This contribution can reduce the negative emotions of employees. This leadership style can make subordinates feel the support from the managers, so as to dispel the concerns and dare to put forward new ideas [29]. Jun-cheng Z and other employees are full-time employees of the electronic information manufacturing industry. The research results show that they often humbly appreciate and learn from the strengths of others. This is equivalent to sending employees a signal of willingness to open their doors and promise to create a safe atmosphere for employees. In turn, they are encouraged to express their opinions and suggestions bravely [30]. There are also scholars' empirical results on the matching data of the upper and lower levels of the five listed companies. It shows that the tolerance of the humble leader and the recognition of the subordinates will make employees have a higher psychological safety, which will affect the employees' voice behavior [31]. Organizational identity also has a mediator role. A high sense of organizational identification gives subordinates a strong sense of organizational honor. For the development of the organization, he will not harm his own interests. This has a positive significance for suppressing employees' silent behavior [31].

#### **4.2.2 Moderator Variables**

The regulatory effect of power distance has also been confirmed. For example: Tse H H M and other studies have shown that power distance can adjust the mediating effect of individual power on the relationship between humble leadership and employee advice. Because employees with low power distance values promote their personal sense of power, they often activate their behavioral systems and express their opinions under the supervision of humble leaders [4]. The humble leader believes that he and his subordinates are equal and can treat their subordinates fairly and objectively. Those subordinates with a low sense of power distance are more able to receive such positive information and are more willing to make suggestions for the development and operation of the organization [24]. Some scholars believe that personal traits play a regulatory role. When the humble leader shows acceptance of suggestions, employees with strong initiative personality can not only seize the opportunity quickly and accurately to make more suggestions, which in turn prompts employees to believe that such suggestions are safe and will not treat them. Constitute injury and further strengthen its voice behavior [33]. The willingness to make speeches inspired by humble leadership may not lead to the final speech behavior, or the positive effect of the humble

leadership on speech behavior will be weakened; correspondingly, employees with less reflective cognitive behavior will not pay too much attention to speech behavior. The negative results, so once the willingness to make comments, employees will produce more advocacy behavior [28]. Consistent leadership words and deeds regulate the relationship between humble leadership and employee voice. If employees' perceptions of consensus are high, humble leaders have more trust in their followers, and employees also want to meet leadership expectations and make more suggestions [31].

Very few variables at the team level, leader-member exchange theory believes that in order to improve work efficiency, leaders will tend to spend more time and energy on employees who he deserves to be worth. Such people are classified as "inner people"; otherwise, they are "outside people" [32]. Empirical research shows that humble leadership can improve the quality of the leadership-member exchange relationship, so that employees can develop into "inner people", thus willing to contribute their own wisdom for the better development of the organization [33].

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Conclusions**

This article summarizes and analyzes the previous literature research on the relationship between humility leadership and advocacy behavior. On the one hand, it shows that humility leadership has a significant positive correlation with advocacy behavior. For the organization, humble leadership is more tolerant and open than other style leaders, which is conducive to employees expressing their views on the development of the organization to the leader, and also allows subordinates to have confidence in their ideas, thereby promoting employees' suggested behavior. On the other hand, individuals and teams and variables at two levels effectively mediate and regulate the relationship between humble leadership and advocacy behavior. The humble leader can recognize his own shortcomings, and his current position can reduce the distance of rights with his subordinates, thereby promoting the employee's advocacy behavior. This series of actions can not be separated from such as self-efficacy, engagement, organizational identity, and power distance. The role of intermediary variables and moderating variables.

### **5.2. Practical Implications**

On the one hand, humble leadership influences employees' voice in various ways. Therefore, organizations should encourage leaders to be more humble and not too arrogant. On the other hand, the organization can conduct more relevant human resources practices, such as training programs, to let managers understand that the humility of leaders is a very effective leader behavior, and encourage managers to be more humble to their subordinates.

### **5.3. Future Research Directions**

#### **5.3.1 Further Exploration of the Situational Factors of Humble Leadership's Behavior on Voice**

Most of the existing research focuses on the positive aspects of humble leadership on voice behavior, but everything has two sides. In the future, we can explore when and under what circumstances the humble leadership's negative impact on voice behavior can also be explored. The double-edged sword effect of behavior. In some situations, employees may make suggestions to protect their own interests (for example, seeking help and defensive suggestions) rather than contribute to the organization; therefore, future research should explore the influence of leader humility on employees' purposeful voice.

#### **5.3.2. Improvement of Research Methods**

In recent years, more and more scholars have studied the behavior of humility leadership on employees' voice, but most of them are quantitative research, and there are relatively few literatures using case studies, scene studies, meta-analysis and other research methods. In addition, there are

mostly static studies in existing research, and few studies dynamically reflect the relationship between humble leadership and voice behavior. In order to avoid the two-way relationship between variables, it is recommended to use a dynamic tracking research method to explore the dynamic mechanism of humility leadership's influence on voice behavior.

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