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How And When Does Leader Humility Become Effective For Organizations? A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract **Purpose**. *This paper systematically reviews and synthesizes empirical evidence on how (mechanisms) and when (boundary conditions) leader humility influences outcomes at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Unlike prior quantitative meta-analyses, this review offers a qualitative synthesis of mediating pathways, a comprehensive mapping of contingency factors across four categories, and an explicit integration of curvilinear and dark-side effects, thereby providing a more balanced and nuanced understanding of humble leadership.*
Design/methodology/approach. *Following PRISMA guidelines, this systematic literature review was conducted on the Scopus database (2012–2026). After screening, 126 empirical studies (journal articles, meta-analyses, field studies) were included. Data were extracted and thematically synthesized to map mediators, moderators, and outcomes of leader humility.*
Findings. *The review identifies six individual-level mechanisms (psychological safety, psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, work engagement, affective trust, relational energy) and four team-level mechanisms (team learning/reflexivity, team psychological capital, collective humility, team job crafting). Effectiveness is contingent on follower characteristics (e.g., power distance, proactivity), leader characteristics (e.g., competence, authenticity), team/organizational context (e.g., task interdependence, uncertainty, time pressure), and cultural factors. Curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) effects and dark-side consequences (e.g., follower entitlement, leader emotional exhaustion) are also documented.*
Originality/value. *The review advances leadership theory by identifying critical gaps, (e.g., underdeveloped antecedents, dynamic moderators, macro-level outcomes) and provides actionable guidance for practitioners on when to encourage or temper humble leadership.*

Keywords Leader humility, humble leadership, systematic literature review, boundary conditions, mechanisms, employee outcomes, team performance, organizational effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, leader humility has emerged as a distinctive and increasingly influential construct in leadership research (Owens et al., 2013; Owens & Hekman, 2012). Leader humility is a multi-dimensional leadership behavior characterized by (a) acknowledging personal limitations and mistakes, (b) recognizing followers' strengths and contributions, and (c) demonstrating teachability and openness to feedback (Owens et al., 2013). This construct is often placed in contrast to authority-centered leadership styles (Collins, 2001). A growing body of evidence suggests that humble leaders foster positive outcomes, including enhanced follower creativity (Wang et al., 2018), proactive behavior (Chen et al., 2018), ability to voice thoughts and concerns (Achmadi et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2019), organizational citizenship behavior (Ansong et al., 2024), and team performance (Owens & Hekman, 2016). As such, this style has become one of the most extensively stufied leadership topics in the last ten years (Hadmar et al., 2022).

Despite encouraging findings, two significant gaps persist in the existing research. First, the mechanisms explaining how leader humility influences outcomes remain dispersed across multiple theoretical frameworks, including social exchange theory (Nguyen et al., 2020), social learning theory (Owens & Hekman, 2016), self-determination theory (Diao et al., 2019), and conservation of resources theory (Qu et al., 2023). This theoretical fragmentation has produced a growing, but disjointed, body of knowledge, leaving the field without a cohesive understanding of the mediating pathways through which leader humility operates.

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Second, recent research has increasingly recognized that leader humility is not uniformly beneficial. Scholars have identified important boundary conditions—when leader humility becomes more or less effective—such as follower power distance orientation (Lin et al., 2019), task interdependence (Li et al., 2022), environmental uncertainty (J. Zhou et al., 2022), time pressure (Liu et al., 2025), and leader competence (Li et al., 2016). Furthermore, a growing stream of research has documented the potential "dark side" of leader humility, including curvilinear effects (Yuan et al., 2018), follower entitlement (Qin et al., 2020), and leader emotional exhaustion (Yang et al., 2019). However, these contingency factors and adverse consequences have not been systematically integrated into a coherent framework.

Given these gaps, a systematic integration of the mechanisms and boundary conditions of leader humility is urgently needed. Prior meta-analyses and comprehensive reviews (Chandler et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2020) have provided valuable quantitative syntheses of effect sizes, yet they have not fully mapped the qualitative richness of mediating pathways, nor the nuanced contextual and individual moderators that shape when leader humility is effective. Moreover, existing reviews have predominantly focused on positive outcomes, leaving the dark side and curvilinear effects largely underexplored in an integrated manner.

This systematic literature review offers three distinct contributions. First, unlike prior meta-analyses that prioritize statistical aggregation, this review provides a comprehensive qualitative synthesis of the mediating mechanisms—distinguishing between individual-level (e.g., psychological safety, empowerment, self-efficacy, engagement, trust, relational energy) and team-level (e.g., team learning, collective humility, team psychological capital) pathways. In doing so, this review offers a more nuanced understanding of how leader humility produces its effects. Second, this review systematically maps boundary conditions across four categories (follower characteristics, leader characteristics, team/organizational context, and cultural factors), providing an evidence-based contingency framework that specifies when leader humility is more or less effective, including the conditions under which it may backfire. Third, this review explicitly incorporates and synthesizes emerging evidence on curvilinear effects and dark-side consequences, challenging the prevailing consensus of uniform positivity and offering a more balanced perspective on humble leadership.

Theoretically, this review advances leadership theory by integrating fragmented mechanisms into a coherent nomological network and by identifying critical gaps—particularly the underdevelopment of antecedents, the absence of dynamic moderators, and the scarcity of macro-level outcomes, thereby charting a clear agenda for future research. Practically, this review provides actionable guidance for organizations and leaders on when to encourage or temper humble leadership, how to combine humility with competence and authenticity, and how to avoid the potential pitfalls of excessive or inauthentic humility. To achieve these objectives, this systematic literature review addresses the following research question: *How and when is leader humility effective for individuals and organizations?* Specifically, the review synthesizes empirical evidence on (a) the key mechanisms through which leader humility influences individual, team, and organizational outcomes; and (b) the boundary conditions—including follower characteristics, leader traits, team attributes, and contextual factors—that moderate these effects.

METHOD

Search Strategy

A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. The Scopus database was selected as the primary source due to its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed management, psychology, and organizational behavior journals. The search was performed in January 2026 using the following keyword string applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords: "leader humility" OR "humble leader." No date restrictions were applied initially, but the search automatically covered publications from 2012 to 2026.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) Document type: peer-reviewed journal articles (including empirical studies, meta-analyses, and theoretical reviews with empirical data); (2) Language: English; and (3) Relevance: a substantive focus on leader humility or humble leadership as a central construct, in reporting outcomes, in mechanisms, or in boundary conditions at individual, team, or organizational levels. Studies were excluded if they were: (1) non-journal publications (e.g., conference proceedings, book chapters, dissertations, editorials); or (2) published in languages other than English.

The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) summarizes the screening process. The initial database search in Scopus identified 240 records. After removing two duplicates, 238 records remained. Subsequently, 28 records were excluded based on document type (non-journal articles), and two more records were removed due to non-English language, resulting in

208 records proceeding to the full-text availability stage. At this point, 12 records were excluded because their full texts could not be accessed, leaving 196 records for the first round of screening. During this first round, a quality appraisal was conducted, leading to the exclusion of 39 records and reducing the pool to 157 records for the second round of screening. In the second round of screening, a detailed content assessment was performed; 31 records were removed due to insufficient substantive focus on leader humility or inadequate reporting of empirical findings relevant to the research question. Consequently, a total of 126 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis.

Data extraction and synthesis

For each included study, the following data were extracted: author(s), year, research design, sample characteristics, theoretical framework, measures of leader humility, mediators, moderators, and outcomes at individual, team, and organizational levels. A thematic synthesis approach was then applied. First, we coded mechanisms (mediators) into emergent categories (e.g., psychological safety, trust, self-efficacy, work engagement, relational energy). Second, we coded boundary conditions (moderators) into categories (e.g., follower characteristics, team attributes, leader traits, contextual factors). Third, we synthesized outcomes across levels. This iterative process allowed us to map *how* and *when* leader humility affects individuals and organizations.

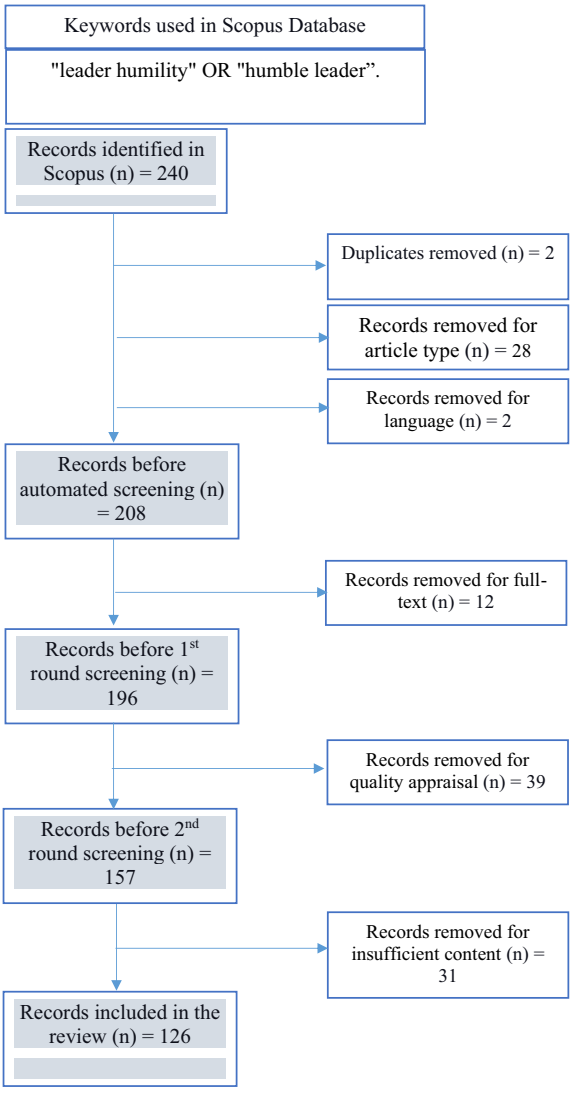


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the article search and selection process

RESULTS

Descriptive overview of included studies

This systematic review encompasses 126 empirical studies published from 2012 to 2026. The key characteristics of these studies are summarized in Table 1. Research focusing on leader humility has significantly increased over the last decade. Initial research began in the early 2000s (Collins, 2001; Owens & Hekman, 2012), but the data evaluated for this review only include studies that were published after 2012. An impressive 96.8% of these studies were released between 2016 and 2026, with a high concentration during 2021 to 2025, which accounted for 60.3%. Research from 2026 (as of January 2026) makes up 0.8% of the total, indicating continued increases in scholarly interest in this area. This pattern suggests that leader humility is increasingly recognized as an important and unique concept in leadership studies.

Research Design

Prior research is predominantly characterized by quantitative survey-based designs, which make up 89.7% of the studies. While this allows for large-scale hypothesis testing, it has three key limitations. First, common method bias remains an issue, even with efforts to gather data from multiple sources and over time. Second, qualitative studies account for only 6.3% of the research, limiting our contextual understanding of leader humility across different settings. Third, experimental and intervention studies account for only 4.0%, limiting understanding of how leader humility develops and causally affects followers. Additionally, many of these studies utilized time-lagged and multi-source data collection methods (focusing on leader-follower dyads or triads) to reduce the impact of common method bias. Qualitative research, comprising 6.3% of the studies, includes inductive interview-based approaches (Owens & Hekman, 2012; Shannonhouse et al., 2019) that have contributed to theoretical development. Additionally, experimental and vignette-based designs, although representing a smaller fraction (4.0%), are increasingly utilized to establish causal relationships and explore boundary conditions (e.g., Oc et al., 2015; Swain, 2018).

Table 1. Characteristics of Included Studies (N = 126)

Characteristic	Category	Number of Studies	Percentage (%)
Year of publication	2012–2015	4	3.2
	2016–2020	45	35.7
	2021–2025	76	60.3
	2026 (as of January 2026)	1	0.8
Research design	Quantitative (survey, time-lagged, multi-source)	113	89.7
	Qualitative (interviews, case studies)	8	6.3
	Mixed methods / Experimental	5	4.0
Geographical context	China (including Taiwan)	62	49.2
	United States	19	15.1
	Multiple countries / Cross-cultural	13	10.3
	Other Asia (South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Pakistan, India, Vietnam)	25	19.8
	Europe / Middle East / Other	7	5.6
Primary theoretical framework	Social exchange theory	25	20.0
	Social learning theory / Social cognitive theory	21	16.7
	Social information processing theory	17	13.5
	Self-determination theory	11	8.7
	Conservation of resources theory	9	7.1
	Implicit leadership theory	7	5.6
	Attribution theory / Expectation states theory	6	4.8
	Other (e.g., role identity, affective events, regulatory focus)	29	23.0

Geographical Context

Nearly half of the research studies (49.2%) were carried out in China, including Taiwan, reflecting a cultural tendency towards humility aligned with Confucian principles (Kim, 2023; Shun, 2021). The United States accounts for 15.1%, while other Asian countries—such as South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Pakistan, India, and Vietnam—together make up 19.8%. Studies examining leader humility across various cultures or nations constitute 10.3% of the total research (e.g., Kim et al., 2023; Oc et al., 2015). Due to research being concentrated in China and the United States, there is a bias to overlook regions such as Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. While some cross-cultural studies (10.3%) exist, many still primarily compare China and the United States.

This geographic distribution suggests that while leader humility is a worldwide issue, the interest in the research field may be shaped by particular cultural settings. The focus on China and the United States raises concerns about the generalizability of findings across cultures with distinct power dynamics and values. For example, the relationship between Islamic work ethics and leader humility remains largely unexplored, with Suryani et al. (2023) being a rare exception.

Theoretical Foundations

The existing body of research utilizes a range of theoretical frameworks. The most prevalent are social exchange theory (20.0%) and social learning theory (16.7%), which center on mutual benefits and behavior modeling. A smaller percentage of the research uses social information processing theory (13.5%), which elucidates how followers interpret humble actions from leaders as signals of psychological safety and support. Additional frameworks, including self-determination theory (8.7%) and conservation of resources theory (7.1%), are used to investigate motivational aspects and resource dynamics. Implicit leadership theory (5.6%) and attribution theory (4.8%) are employed to examine factors that affect followers' views on leader authenticity and competence. Notably, 23.0% of the studies incorporate multiple theories or introduce new frameworks, such as affective events theory and regulatory focus theory.

Accordingly, since 2016, research on leader humility has grown rapidly, with 96.8% of studies published in the last ten years. While this indicates that the field is developing, it also suggests that leader humility is still a relatively nascent research concept compared to established ideas like transformational or ethical leadership. There is a significant lack of long-term studies on the effects of leader humility, as most current research focuses on short-term periods.

Researchers predominantly use existing theories to examine leader humility, rather than developing new frameworks. Therefore, there is a significant need for a comprehensive, multilevel theory of humble leadership that addresses its unique features, such as the paradox of power and the evolving dynamics of leader–follower relationships.

How leader humility works: Mechanisms of effectiveness

There are three main ways in which leader humility leads to positive outcomes: through psychological mechanisms, social exchange/relational aspects, and behavioral/team-level factors.

Psychological safety mechanisms

The key psychological mechanisms are summarized in Table 2, which includes their definitions and relevant research. Psychological safety enables voice and creativity by reducing fear of risk-taking (Hu et al., 2018; Qian et al., 2022; Gonçalves & Brandão, 2017). Psychological empowerment fosters proactive behavior and job performance through enhanced meaning and self-determination (Chen et al., 2018; Jeung & Yoon, 2016; Noboa & Pino, 2025). Self-efficacy boosts task performance,

Table 2. Psychological mechanisms linking leader humility to outcomes

Mechanism	Definition	Key Outcomes	Representative Studies
Psychological safety	Belief that the workplace is safe for risk-taking	Voice, creativity, learning, reduced silence	Hu et al. (2018); Qian et al. (2022); Gonçalves & Brandão (2017)
Psychological empowerment	Sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact	Proactive behavior, job performance	Chen et al. (2018); Jeung & Yoon (2016); Noboa & Pino (2025)
Self-efficacy	Belief in one's capability to execute tasks	Task performance, creativity, career proactivity	Asghar et al. (2022); Mao et al. (2019); Zhong et al. (2024)
Work engagement	Vigor, dedication, and absorption in work	Creative performance, OCB, innovative behavior	Ansong et al. (2024); Wang et al. (2022); Yang et al. (2019)

creativity, and career proactivity by strengthening followers' belief in their capabilities (Asghar et al., 2022; Mao et al., 2019; Zhong et al., 2024). Work engagement drives creative performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and innovative behavior through increased vigor and dedication (Ansong et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019).

Social exchange and relational mechanisms

Table 3 presents the relational mechanisms through which leader humility builds trust and energizes followers. Affective trust—emotional confidence in the leader's benevolence—promotes knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and reduced turnover (Liborius & Kiewitz, 2022; Mertens et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2020). Relational energy, or vitality from leader interactions, drives bootlegging, constructive voice, and task performance (Ma et al., 2020; Qu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2018). Leader–member exchange enhances prosocial and innovative behavior (Carnevale et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Relational identification—defining oneself through one's relationship with a leader—encourages voice and OCB (Li et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2023).

Team-level mechanisms

Table 4 presents four mechanisms at the team level through which a leader's humility can enhance overall team performance. Firstly, team learning and reflexivity—encompassing collective reflection and adaptation—foster creativity and innovation among team members (Chen et al., 2021; Leblanc et al., 2022; Owens & Hekman, 2016). Secondly, team psychological capital (PsyCap), which involves a shared sense of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, improves both performance and the distribution of tasks within the team (Rego et al., 2017, 2019). Thirdly, collective humility—characterized by team members demonstrating mutual humble behaviors—helps maintain a focus on the progress and success of the whole team (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Lastly, team job crafting, which refers to the collaborative restructuring of tasks and relationships, enhances the creativity of the team (Chen et al., 2021).

When leader humility works: Boundary conditions

Table 5 summarizes boundary conditions organized into four distinct categories. The first category is follower traits, characteristics such as a low power distance orientation, high levels of humility, a proactive attitude, and a focus on learning objectives, which are shown to improve the effectiveness of leader humility. Conversely, a competitive attitude among followers may reduce effectiveness (Diao et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2018; Liborius & Kiewitz, 2022). Second, leaders' traits are crucial; qualities such as competence, authenticity, and political acumen lead to better outcomes. Studies show that

Table 3. Social exchange and relational mechanisms

Mechanism	Definition	Key Outcomes	Representative Studies
Affective trust	Emotional confidence in leader's benevolence	Knowledge sharing, OCB, reduced turnover	Nguyen et al. (2020); Liborius & Kiewitz (2022); Mertens et al. (2025)
Relational energy	Vitality and positive arousal from leader interactions	Bootlegging, constructive voice, task performance	Ma et al. (2020); Qu et al. (2023); Wang et al. (2018)
Leader-member exchange	Quality of dyadic exchange relationship	Prosocial behavior, innovative behavior	Carnevale et al. (2019); Wang et al. (2021)
Relational identification	Follower's self-definition based on relationship with leader	Voice (speaking up), OCB	Li et al. (2018); Zheng et al. (2023)

Table 4. Team-level mechanisms

Mechanism	Definition	Key Outcomes	Representative Studies
Team learning & reflexivity	Collective reflection and adaptation	Team creativity, team innovation	Chen et al. (2021); Leblanc et al. (2022); Owens & Hekman (2016)
Team psychological capital (PsyCap)	Collective hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism	Team performance, task allocation	Rego et al. (2017); Rego et al. (2019)
Collective humility	Shared humble behaviors among team members	Team promotion focus, team performance	Owens & Hekman (2016)
Team job crafting	Collective redesign of tasks and relationships	Team creativity	Chen et al. (2021); Luu (2021a)

Table 5. Boundary conditions of leader humility effectiveness

Moderator Category	Specific Moderator	Direction of Effect	Key Studies
Follower characteristics	Power distance orientation	Negative (stronger when low)	Hu et al. (2018); Lin et al. (2019)
	Follower humility	Positive (congruence amplifies)	Diao et al. (2019); Zhong et al. (2023)
	Proactive personality	Positive (amplifies)	Asghar et al. (2022); Leblanc et al. (2022); Wu & Zhou (2023)
	Learning goal orientation	Positive (amplifies)	Wang et al. (2022); Wang et al. (2025)
	Competitiveness	Negative (weakens)	Liborius & Kiewitz (2022)
Leader characteristics	Leader competence	Positive (amplifies)	Li et al. (2016); Tariq et al. (2023); Yuan et al. (2018)
	Leader authenticity	Positive (genuine humility works; hypocrisy backfires)	Bharanitharan et al. (2021); Oc et al. (2020)
	Leader political skill	Positive (amplifies)	Wang et al. (2019); Zhou & Wu (2018)
	Leader sex	Male leaders benefit more	Noboa & Pino (2025); Swain & Korenman (2018)
Team/organizational context	Task interdependence	Negative (stronger when low)	Li et al. (2022); Liu et al. (2017); Ye et al. (2020)
	Competitive climate	Positive (amplifies)	Achmadi et al. (2022); Ye et al. (2020)
	Environmental uncertainty	Negative (weakens)	Xu et al. (2022); Zhou et al. (2022)
	Time pressure	Negative (humility seen as indecisive)	Liu et al. (2025)
	Bureaucratic culture	Negative (weakens)	Hadmar et al. (2022)
Cultural factors	Power distance (cultural)	Negative (stronger in low PDI cultures)	Wang et al. (2023); Zou & Chen (2022)

Table 6. Curvilinear and dark-side effects of leader humility

Type of Effect	Specific Finding	Key Studies
Curvilinear (inverted U-shaped)	Moderate humility optimal; too much reduces performance, creativity, OCB	Bin et al. (2021); Yuan et al. (2018); Chen et al. (2024)
	Inverted U between humility and unethical pro-organizational behavior	Song et al. (2025)
Dark side for followers	Humility attributed to self-serving motives increases entitlement and deviance	Qin et al. (2020)
	Humility triggers sense of power; under Machiavellianism leads to self-interested behavior	Chen et al. (2022)
	Humility simultaneously reduces UPB via insider status but increases UPB via guanxi	Shaw et al. (2025)
Dark side for leaders	Expressing humility depletes emotional resources → exhaustion, turnover, work-family conflict	K. Yang et al. (2019)
	Leader humility and narcissism jointly affect project outcomes; humility can have mixed effects	Cavazotte et al. (2023)
	Moral licensing: humble leaders may subsequently engage in unethical behavior	Bharanitharan et al. (2019)

male leaders tend to benefit more from these qualities (Bharanitharan et al., 2021; Li et al., 2016; Noboa & Pino, 2025). Third, team and organizational dynamics are vital. Settings with lower task interdependence and a competitive nature usually boost effectiveness, whereas elements such as uncertainty, time constraints, and bureaucratic cultures can hinder progress (Hadmar et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025). The last category is cultural factors, which are particularly influential in societies with low power distance, emphasizing the significance of cultural context in determining the effectiveness of leadership (Wang et al., 2023).

The double-edged sword

Although leader humility is frequently regarded as advantageous, studies show that it can also negatively affect both individual and group dynamics (described in Table 6). The commonly referenced concept of curvilinear relationships is represented as an inverted U-shaped curve. This curve indicates that a moderate degree of humility in leaders is the most effective for enhancing performance. Conversely, excessive humility may lead to negative consequences, such as increased feelings of entitlement among team members (Bin et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2024). Recent research suggests that leader humility

might result in detrimental employee behaviors, especially if team members perceive the leader's humility as a disguise for self-serving intentions (Qin et al., 2020). Additionally, from the standpoint of leaders, possessing humility can contribute to emotional fatigue, a reduced sense of control, and moral licensing—where leaders justify unethical decisions based on their humble nature. Multiple studies underscore these negative consequences and highlight the complex role humility plays in organizational settings (Bharanitharan et al., 2019; K. Yang et al., 2019; Cavazotte et al., 2023).

Integrative framework: antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes of leader humility

Research integration has brought to light six critical factors that profoundly shape interactions within organizations. These factors include psychological safety, which refers to the belief that one will not be penalized or humiliated for speaking up; psychological empowerment, which fosters a sense of control and ownership over one's work; self-efficacy, reflecting an individual's confidence in their ability to accomplish tasks; work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's job; affective trust, encompassing emotional bonds and confidence between team members; and relational energy, which signifies the positive energy and enthusiasm that individuals contribute to their interactions.

In addition to these influential factors, four essential dynamics within teams have been identified in the literature as significant contributors to enhanced performance and collaboration. These are team learning and reflexivity, team PsyCap, collective humility, and team job crafting.

Despite the insights provided by existing literature, three notable gaps have been identified. First, many studies tend to investigate leader humilty mechanisms in isolation, neglecting to explore how they might interact in competing or sequential ways. This signals an urgent need for future research to delve into the relative impacts and interplay of these mechanisms within organizational contexts (Liu et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2020). Second, while the literature often highlights the positive dimensions of these mechanisms, it frequently overlooks potential negative outcomes, such as the risk of followers being exploited, or the phenomenon of leader burnout associated with the practice of leader humility. Finally, there is often a lack of clarity between mechanisms and moderators in the existing research; for instance, psychological safety can function as both a mediator and a moderator in various contexts. This ambiguity underscores the need for more precise conceptual definitions in future investigations to better advance our understanding of these dynamics. Table 7 presents an integrative framework that outlines the interconnected aspects of leader humility, categorized into four main groups: antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes.

The review highlighted four distinct categories of moderators, or boundary conditions, that influence the relationship between leader humility and various outcomes. These categories encompass follower characteristics, leader characteristics, team or organizational context, and cultural factors. Follower characteristics include aspects such as power distance, humility, and proactivity. Leader characteristics include traits such as competence and authenticity, as well as demographic factors such as sex. The context within teams or organizations includes elements such as task interdependence—how much team members

Table 7. Integrative Framework of Leader Humility

Domain	Key Constructs	Representative Studies
Antecedents	Leader growth mindset, relational identity, significant-other activation, personality (Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness), feedback-seeking behavior	Wang et al. (2018); Owens & Hekman (2012); Hassan et al. (2023); Deng et al. (2019)
Mediators (How)	*Individual-level*: Psychological safety, psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, work engagement, affective trust, relational energy	Hu et al. (2018); Chen et al. (2018); Mao et al. (2019); Nguyen et al. (2020); Ma et al. (2020)
	Team-level: Team learning/reflexivity, team PsyCap, collective humility, team job crafting	Leblanc et al. (2022); Rego et al. (2019); Owens & Hekman (2016); Chen et al. (2021)
Moderators (When)	*Follower*: Power distance, humility, proactivity, learning orientation, competitiveness	Hu et al. (2018); Diao et al. (2019); Asghar et al. (2022); Liborius & Kiewitz (2022)
	Leader: Competence, authenticity, political skill, sex	Li et al. (2016); Oc et al. (2020); Zhou & Wu (2018); Noboa & Pino (2025)
	Context: Task interdependence, competitive climate, uncertainty, time pressure, bureaucratic culture	Li et al. (2022); Ye et al. (2020); Xu et al. (2022); Liu et al. (2025); Hadmar et al. (2022)
Outcomes	*Individual*: Creativity, voice, performance, OCB, well-being, reduced turnover	Wang et al. (2018); Lin et al. (2019); Cho et al. (2021); Ansong et al. (2024)
	Team: Team creativity, team learning, team performance, innovation	Owens & Hekman (2016); Leblanc et al. (2022); Rego et al. (2019)
	Organizational: Project success, service recovery, inter-firm collaboration	Ali et al. (2021); Elhadidy et al. (2025); Zhou et al. (2022)

rely on one another to achieve goals, uncertainty in the workplace, and time constraints. Additionally, cultural factors play a significant role in shaping leader humility dynamics.

While these categories provide a thorough overview of the moderators at play, several gaps remain. Firstly, there is a notable lack of exploration into how these various boundary conditions interact. For instance, how might a leader's competence affect the relationship between their humility and the follower's power distance? This interplay is yet to be thoroughly examined. Moreover, many of the identified moderators are static, referring to individual differences or fixed contextual features that do not change over time. However, dynamic moderators, such as a team's mood or fluctuations in daily workload, are seldom the focus of research.

Another significant gap lies in the role of technology and virtual work environments as potential boundary conditions. Despite the widespread shift towards remote and hybrid working arrangements, there is a lack of research on how leader humility is conveyed through digital communication platforms such as email, Slack, or video calls. Furthermore, it remains uncertain whether leader humility retains its effectiveness when applied in virtual teams compared to traditional settings. Lastly, the concept of dark-side moderators—specific conditions under which leader humility may become harmful—is just beginning to receive attention. Factors such as time pressure and follower competitiveness could potentially undermine the positive effects of leader humility. There remains a pressing need for research to identify scenarios where leader humility should be moderated or even avoided altogether.

Based on the synthesis, Figure 2 and Table 7 present an integrative framework summarizing the nomological network of leader humility. The framework organizes the literature into four interconnected domains. Despite extensive research on consequences, the antecedents of leader humility remain severely underdeveloped. Therefore, it is important to ask what organizational or personal factors *cause* leaders to become more or less humble?

Research mainly focuses on leader traits, such as honesty–humility and mindsets. However, it often overlooks how situations—such as failure experiences, feedback received, and the overall organizational culture—affect leadership. This existing view downplays the role of negative or unexpected factors, raising concerns that leader humility could sometimes lead to follower complacency or less effort. Additionally, current studies ignore changing factors, such as daily mood swings and task urgency, which could greatly influence leader–follower relationships. There is also a gap in understanding how team climate impacts individual behavior. Finally, while most research focuses on individual or team outcomes, there is little attention to organizational outcomes such as financial performance, innovative practices, and overall reputation. This lack of research leaves us unsure about the wider effects of leadership and organizational dynamics.

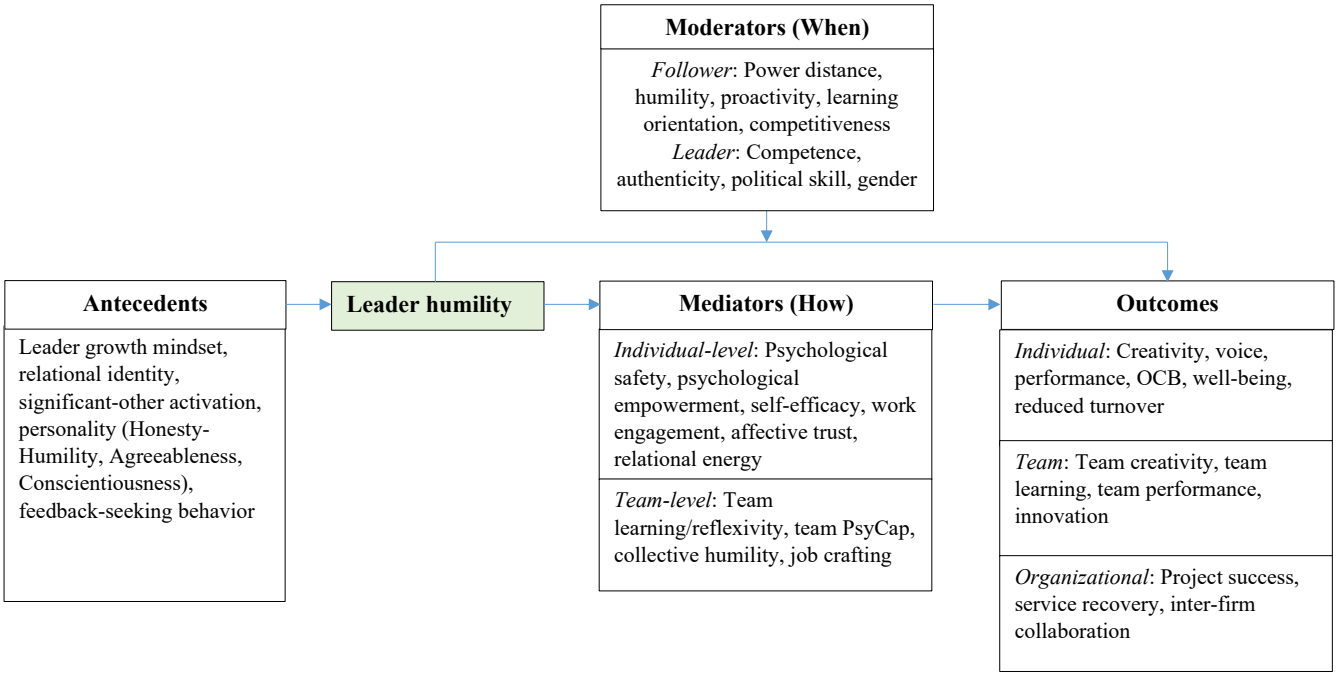


Figure 2. Integrative framework of leader humility

DISCUSSION

This systematic review illustrates that leader humility can increase effectiveness at various levels, when demonstrated authentically, in moderation, and when paired with appropriate follower traits and situational factors. However, the effectiveness of leader humility is inherently linked to how it operates—through psychological and/or relational processes—and the specific contexts in which it is exhibited (particularly within supportive boundary conditions). We synthesized 126 studies into a cohesive framework that establishes a foundation for future research to address current gaps, especially regarding antecedents, dynamic moderators, cross-cultural consistency, and macro-level outcomes.

This review provides multiple theoretical insights into the literature on leader humility. Although previous research has relied on social exchange theory, social learning theory, social information processing theory, self-determination theory, and conservation of resources theory in isolation, our results indicate that these views are complementary rather than adversarial. For example, psychological safety (from social information processing) and affective trust (from social exchange) often function concurrently to clarify voice behavior. Hence, we suggest future theoretical advancements should adopt multi-mechanism models that encompass the simultaneous cognitive, affective, and relational channels through which leader humility functions.

The review indicates that the benefits of leader humility are not consistent across all situations, and at certain levels, these effects can be curvilinear and even detrimental. This finding calls for an expansion of existing theories—most of which assume straightforward, positive relationships—to incorporate non-linear and conditional impacts. For instance, conservation of resources theory can demonstrate how excessive humility depletes leaders' resources (Yang et al., 2019), while attribution theory can help explain how followers perceive humility and its consequences (Qin et al., 2020). Therefore, combining both attributional and resource-oriented perspectives offers a more thorough theoretical insight into when humility might negatively affect the individual or the team.

Moreover, the review points out a significant disparity in the nomological network: the precursors of leader humility are substantially less theorized and researched than its outcomes. Most studies use theories that explain consequences (such as social exchange) but overlook origins. Future theoretical research should incorporate insights from developmental psychology, personality theory, and situational strength theory to understand why some leaders exhibit more humility than others. For example, leader humility could be viewed as a dynamic state shaped by organizational feedback mechanisms, error management cultures, and significant life experiences.

The review further emphasizes cultural limitations of existing research. The review notes that leader humility is more successful in low power distance cultures than in high power distance cultures. This highlights the need to develop an indigenous theory that integrates culturally specific interpretations of humility (for example, the Confucian concept of *qianxun* or the Islamic idea of *tawadu*). In addition, future researchers need to consider cross-cultural adaptations of social exchange and social learning theories, and how cultural differences shape how humility conveys benevolence and competence.

Lastly, the review enriches leadership theory more broadly by situating leader humility as a unique construct that complements, rather than supplants, existing leadership models. Unlike transformational leadership (which focuses on idealized influence) or servant leadership (which emphasizes serving others), leader humility uniquely highlights self-awareness of limitations, respect for others, and the leader's willingness to learn. Therefore, distinctiveness indicates that humility should be integrated into broader leadership frameworks, such as the full-range leadership model, as a unique facet of effective leadership, especially in contexts that demand learning and adaptability.

Suggestions for future research

Future research should focus on several interconnected avenues. First, scholars need to explore the organizational and situational factors that either foster or hinder leader humility. This includes examining elements such as feedback systems, error management climates, leader developmental experiences, and organizational culture. Utilizing longitudinal designs that monitor leaders throughout their career transitions will provide valuable insights into these dynamics.

Second, to deepen our understanding of the functioning of leader humility, future research should directly compare the explanatory power of competing mechanisms. For example, studies could investigate the roles of psychological safety and relational energy, employing techniques such as relative weight or dominance analysis to assess their effects. Furthermore, structural models should be tested that account for serial and moderated mediation, allowing for the simultaneous integration of multiple pathways and providing a more comprehensive view of how these factors interact and influence outcomes.

Third, geographical expansion is essential for research efforts. It should encompass regions such as Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Moving beyond mere comparisons between China and the United States will allow for the inclusion of a variety of cultural contexts and indigenous understandings of humility. This broader focus will enrich and deepen the research findings.

Fourth, the swift transition to virtual work necessitates an examination of the expression and perception of leader humility in digital settings. It is important to explore whether humble communication through digital platforms, such as email or Slack, yields the same outcomes as in-person interactions. Additionally, understanding how virtual teams are influenced by leader humilty can provide valuable insights for effective management in a remote work environment.

The fifth point highlights the need for a deeper investigation into the complexities of leader humility. This exploration should encompass the various circumstances in which humility may be detrimental. Additionally, it is crucial to conduct cross-cultural studies to determine what constitutes optimal humility levels versus those deemed excessive, thereby providing a clearer understanding of how humility manifests across diverse cultural contexts.

Sixth, intervention and training studies should develop and test humility cultivation methods—such as feedback-seeking exercises, perspective-taking training, and significant-other activation (Wang et al., 2024)—using randomized field experiments to establish causality. Seventh, macro-level outcomes remain underexplored; future research should examine the impact of leader humility on organizational-level variables, employing multilevel modeling to link CEO humility to firm performance.

Finally, there is an urgent need for a nuanced theoretical framework that specifically addresses the complexities surrounding humility in leadership. This involves exploring the intriguing paradoxes that arise when leaders demonstrate humility while also achieving effectiveness in their roles. It is crucial to understand how power and humility can coexist in a leader's approach, and how the dynamics of humility evolve in relationships between leaders and their followers. Such a theory would provide deeper insights into the interplay of these elements, ultimately enhancing our understanding of effective leadership practices.

CONCLUSIONS

This systematic literature review of 126 empirical studies provides a comprehensive answer to the question of *how* and *when* leader humility is effective for individuals and organizations. The review yields three overarching conclusions. First, leader humility enhances positive outcomes through six individual-level mechanisms (psychological safety, psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, work engagement, affective trust, and relational energy) and four team-level mechanisms (team learning and reflexivity, team psychological capital, collective humility, and team job crafting). These mechanisms collectively explain *how* humble leaders foster creativity, voice, performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and well-being among followers, as well as team innovation and organizational effectiveness.

Second, the effectiveness of leader humility is highly contingent on a range of boundary conditions. Leader humility works better under the following conditions: when followers exhibit low power distance orientation, high proactive personality, and high learning goal orientation; when leaders themselves are competent and authentic; when team task interdependence is low; and when the competitive climate is high rather than uncertain. Conversely, high environmental uncertainty, time pressure, and bureaucratic cultures weaken the positive effects of leader humility.

Third, leader humility is not uniformly beneficial. Curvilinear relationships indicate that moderate levels are optimal, while excessive humility diminishes performance and increases follower entitlement. Furthermore, there is a dark side to leader humility. When followers attribute humility to self-serving motives, it can increase psychological entitlement and deviance. For leaders, expressing humility may lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced agentic perceptions, and moral licensing effects.

Limitations

This systematic review has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting its findings. First, the search was limited to the Scopus database and included only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English, which may have excluded relevant studies from other databases (e.g., Web of Science, PsycINFO, Google Scholar), non-English publications, conference proceedings, book chapters, and unpublished dissertations. These exclusinos potentially introduced publication and language bias. Second, despite the use of a comprehensive search string, the keyword combination ("leader humility" OR "humble leader") may have missed studies using related but distinct terms such as "expressed humility," "leader expressed humility," or "humble leadership behavior," although efforts were made to capture these through manual screening of references.

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APPENDIX

No	Authors	Title	Journal	Description
1	Lin et al. (2024)	How do humble leaders unleash followers' leadership potential? The roles of workplace status and individualistic orientation	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Leader humility elevates followers' workplace status and leadership potential, especially when individualism is high.
2	Ansong et al. (2024)	Leader humility and organisational citizenship behaviour: the mediating roles of job satisfaction and employee engagement	Cogent Business and Management	Leader humility positively affects OCB through job satisfaction and employee engagement (partial mediation).
3	Chen et al. (2018)	Can leader "humility" spark employee "proactivity"? The mediating role of psychological empowerment	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	Leader humility enhances proactive behavior via psychological empowerment, moderated by identification with leader.
4	Wu & Zhou (2023)	Do 'humble' leaders help employees to perform better? Evidence from the Chinese public sector	Australian Journal of Public Administration	Leader humility boosts performance through intrinsic motivation, stronger for proactive employees.
5	Li et al. (2022)	Leader humility and team creativity: The role of team creative efficacy and task interdependence	Journal of General Management	Leader humility promotes team creativity via team creative efficacy, especially when task interdependence is low.
6	Lin et al. (2019)	Why and When Employees Like to Speak up More Under Humble Leaders? The Roles of Personal Sense of Power and Power Distance	Journal of Business Ethics	Leader humility encourages voice via personal sense of power, stronger when power distance is low.
7	Mao et al. (2019)	Growing Followers: Exploring the Effects of Leader Humility on Follower Self-Expansion, Self-Efficacy, and Performance	Journal of Management Studies	Leader humility triggers self-expansion, enhancing self-efficacy and performance, moderated by age/gender similarity.
8	Liu et al. (2017)	Leader humility and team innovation: Investigating the substituting role of task interdependence and the mediating role of team voice climate	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility enhances team innovation via team voice climate; task interdependence substitutes the effect.
9	Liu et al. (2024)	Leader humility and employees' creative performance: the role of intrinsic motivation and work engagement	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility boosts creative performance through intrinsic motivation and work engagement sequentially.
10	Wang et al. (2022)	An implicit leadership theory lens on leader humility and employee outcomes: Examining individual and organizational contingencies	Tourism Management	Leader humility perceived as benevolent when followers have learning orientation and informational justice, increasing commitment.
11	Zhou et al. (2022)	Leader humility and inter-firm collaboration: the moderating role of firm status and environmental uncertainty	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	CEO humility enhances inter-firm collaboration, moderated positively by firm status and negatively by uncertainty.
12	Maldonado et al. (2022)	Unpacking humility: Leader humility, leader personality, and why they matter	Business Horizons	Leader humility relates to Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness; can be developed through coaching.
13	Liu et al. (2022)	Humble Leader Behavior and Its Effects on Performance at the Team and Individual Level: A Multi-Perspective Study	Group and Organization Management	Leader humility improves individual performance via self-esteem and team performance via team potency, moderated by cognitive diversity.
14	Peng et al. (2020)	Can Humble Leaders Get Results? The Indirect and Contextual Influences of Skip-Level Leaders	Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	Skip-level leader humility trickles down to team leaders, enhancing team performance, especially in centralized organizations.
15	Cao et al. (2023)	Team leader humility and team proactive customer service behavior: A regulatory focus perspective	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Leader humility promotes team proactive customer service via team promotion focus, moderated by CSR.

No	Authors	Title	Journal	Description
16	Davis et al. (2023)	The multilevel correlates, contributions, and consequences of leader humility in humanitarian aid work	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility fosters positive attributions, job satisfaction, team performance, and well-being in humanitarian aid.
17	Leblanc et al. (2022)	Leader humility and team innovation: The role of team reflexivity and team proactive personality	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Leader humility enhances team innovation via team reflexivity, stronger when team proactive personality is high.
18	Qian et al. (2022)	Leader humility as a predictor of employees' feedback-seeking behavior: The intervening role of psychological safety and job insecurity	Current Psychology	Leader humility promotes feedback-seeking through psychological safety, stronger under high job insecurity.
19	Zhu et al. (2022)	How Does Leader Humility Influence Team Creativity? The Roles of Team Behavioral Integration and Leader Performance	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility boosts team creativity via team behavioral integration, moderated by leader performance.
20	Wang et al. (2020)	Antecedents and Consequences of Creativity in Teams: When and How Leader Humility Promotes Performance via Team Creativity	Journal of Creative Behavior	Leader humility promotes team creativity through team creative efficacy, moderated by leader conscientiousness.
21	Ye et al. (2020)	Leader humility, team humility and employee creative performance: The moderating roles of task dependence and competitive climate	Tourism Management	Leader humility influences employee creativity via team humility, moderated by task dependence and competitive climate.
22	Rigolizzo et al. (2022)	Leader humility, leader authenticity and informal learning: how humble team leaders model everyday workplace learning	Journal of Workplace Learning	Leader humility positively affects informal learning, partially mediated by leader authenticity.
23	Qu et al. (2023)	Does Leader Humility Foster Employee Bootlegging? Examining the Mediating Role of Relational Energy and the Moderating Role of Work Unit Structure	Journal of Business and Psychology	Leader humility fosters bootlegging via relational energy, moderated by organic work unit structure.
24	Wang et al. (2022)	Stay Humble and Fly High: The Roles of Subordinate Voice and Competitive Work Context in the Linkage Between Leader Humility and Career Success	Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	Humble leaders gain career success via centrality in voice networks, especially in competitive contexts.
25	Carnevale et al. (2019)	LMX-differentiation strengthens the prosocial consequences of leader humility: An identification and social exchange perspective	Journal of Business Research	Leader humility promotes helping via identification with leader, moderated positively by LMX-differentiation.
26	Howard-Baptiste & Baptiste (2013)	Echoes of a not so distant summer: Scholar-servant as humble leaders	Advances in Educational Administration	Scholar-servant as humble leaders, demystifying traditional leadership assumptions and addressing oppression.
27	Chen et al. (2021)	Leader humility, team job crafting and team creativity: The moderating role of leader–leader exchange	Human Resource Management Journal	Leader humility affects team creativity via team job crafting, moderated by leader-leader exchange (LLX).
28	Wang et al. (2017)	Understanding How Leader Humility Enhances Employee Creativity: The Roles of Perspective Taking and Cognitive Reappraisal	Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	Leader humility enhances creativity via perspective taking, moderated by cognitive reappraisal (emergency context).
29	Achmadi et al. (2022)	How can a leader's humility enhance civility climate and employee voice in a competitive environment?	Journal of Management Development	Leader humility improves civility climate and voice, moderated by competitive climate (stronger effect).
30	Mertens et al. (2025)	Leader Humility and Affective Commitment: A Cross-Sectional Study Among Hospital Nursing Teams	Journal of Advanced Nursing	Head nurse humility builds psychological safety, trust, participative communication, and nurse affective commitment.
31	Kim (2025)	Leader humility as a form of love: Building trust and cooperative culture in Japanese organizations	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	Leader humility as love promotes OCB via trust and cooperative culture in Japanese organizations.

No	Authors	Title	Journal	Description
32	Chandler et al. (2023)	A meta-analysis of humble leadership: Reviewing individual, team, and organizational outcomes of leader humility	Leadership Quarterly	Meta-analysis: humble leadership predicts follower satisfaction and participative decision-making, but not leader own performance.
33	Li et al. (2019)	Shaping the shared mental model: How leader humility helps teams to learn	Journal of Management and Organization	Leader humility enhances team learning via shared mental models, stronger with collective promotion focus.
34	Lu & Li (2024)	Do humble leaders build more flexible teams?	Social Behavior and Personality	Leader humility promotes team flexibility directly and indirectly through team reflexivity.
35	Qian et al. (2020)	Leader humility, and subordinates' organizational citizenship behavior and withdrawal behavior: Exploring the mediating mechanisms of subordinates' psychological capital	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	Leader humility increases OCB and reduces withdrawal via psychological capital.
36	Mallén et al. (2020)	Does leader humility matter? Effects on altruism and innovation	Management Decision	Leader humility fosters firm innovativeness through altruism.
37	Chen & Liu (2023)	Stop high-flyers from flying away: Interaction effect of perceived overqualification and leader humility on turnover intention	Current Psychology	Perceived overqualification and leader humility interact to affect turnover via relative LMX.
38	Yuan et al. (2018)	When a leader is seen as too humble: A curvilinear mediation model linking leader humility to employee creative process engagement	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	Curvilinear relationship between leader humility and creativity, mediated by POS, moderated by leader competence.
39	Zhong et al. (2020)	Can leader humility enhance employee wellbeing? The mediating role of employee humility	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	Leader humility improves well-being via employee humility, moderated by perceived leader effectiveness.
40	Qin et al. (2020)	The double-edged sword of leader humility: Investigating when and why leader humility promotes versus inhibits subordinate deviance	Journal of Applied Psychology	Leader humility can increase deviance via entitlement or decrease via LMX, depending on attributions.
41	K. B et al. (2022)	A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Exploring the Relationship Between Leader Humility and Unethical Behavior	Journal of Management	Leader humility leads to unethical behavior via moral licensing, moderated by relational accountability.
42	Zhang & Liu (2019)	Leader Humility and Taking Charge: The Role of OBSE and Leader Prototypicality	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility promotes taking charge via OBSE, moderated by leader prototypicality.
43	Rego et al. (2018)	The Perceived Impact of Leaders' Humility on Team Effectiveness: an Empirical Study	Journal of Business Ethics	Leader humility (other-reported) indirectly relates to team effectiveness via balanced processing.
44	Aarons et al. (2017)	The humble leader: Association of discrepancies in leader and follower ratings of implementation leadership with organizational climate in mental health	Psychiatric Services	Discrepancy (leader low, follower high) humility associates with positive organizational climate.
45	Zhong et al. (2023)	Antecedents and consequences of follower moqi: leader humility, follower humility, and knowledge hiding	Current Psychology	Leader humility promotes follower moqi, reducing knowledge hiding, moderated by follower humility.
46	Fu et al. (2019)	Leader humility and employee voice: the role of employees' regulatory focus and voice-role conception	Social Behavior and Personality	Leader humility enhances voice via voice-role conception, moderated by regulatory focus.
47	Hu et al. (2018)	Leader humility and team creativity: The role of team information sharing, psychological safety, and power distance	Journal of Applied Psychology	Leader humility affects team creativity via information sharing and psychological safety, moderated by power distance.
48	Tuan et al. (2021)	Nurturing service-oriented organizational citizenship behavior among tourism employees through leader humility	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	Leader humility promotes service-oriented OCB via job crafting, moderated by socially responsible HR practices.

No	Authors	Title	Journal	Description
49	Diao et al. (2019)	Being passionate to perform: The joint effect of leader humility and follower humility	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility enhances performance via harmonious passion, moderated by follower humility.
50	Luu (2021)	Knowledge sharing in the hospitality context: The roles of leader humility, job crafting, and promotion focus	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Leader humility activates knowledge sharing via job crafting, moderated by promotion focus.
51	Li et al. (2018)	Leader humility and constructive voice behavior in China: a dual process model	International Journal of Manpower	Leader humility promotes voice via relational and organizational identification.
52	Oc et al. (2015)	Leader humility in Singapore	Leadership Quarterly	Identifies nine dimensions of leader humility, five unique to Singapore.
53	Van Tongeren et al. (2024)	The trust signaling hypothesis of humility: how humble leaders elicit greater monetary contributions	Journal of Positive Psychology	Humble leaders elicit favorable ratings and financial contributions via trust, even when competence low.
54	Song et al. (2025)	The influence of organizational identification on the curvilinear relationship between leader humility and follower unethical pro-organizational behavior	Journal of Management and Organization	Curvilinear (inverted U) relationship between leader humility and UPB, moderated by organizational identification.
55	Chen et al. (2021)	Humble leader behavior and team creativity: the team learning perspective	Journal of Managerial Psychology	Leader humility promotes team creativity via team learning, strengthened by leader effectiveness.
56	Hadmar et al. (2022)	Leader Humility, Sense of Power, and Interpersonal Deviance Relationship Model in the Bureaucratic Culture	Frontiers in Sociology	Leader humility increases sense of power leading to deviance, moderated by bureaucratic culture.
57	Li et al. (2021)	Linking leader humility to employee creative performance: Work engagement as a mediator	Social Behavior and Personality	Leader humility enhances creative performance directly and via work engagement (partial mediation).
58	Rego et al. (2019)	Leader Humility and Team Performance: Exploring the Mediating Mechanisms of Team PsyCap and Task Allocation Effectiveness	Journal of Management	Leader humility improves team performance via team PsyCap and task allocation effectiveness (serial mediation).
59	Tariq et al. (2023)	Humility breeds creativity: the moderated mediation model of leader humility and subordinates' creative service performance in hospitality	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Leader humility boosts creative service performance via thriving at work, moderated by leader competency.
60	Liu et al. (2025)	Not the Time to be Humble! When and Why Leader Humility Enhances and Deteriorates Evaluations on Leader Effectiveness and Satisfaction with Leader	Journal of Management Studies	Leader humility is valued under low time pressure but seen as indecisive under high time pressure.
61	Silard et al. (2024)	Watching you descend, I help others rise: the influence of leader humility on prosocial motivation	Journal of Management and Organization	Leader humility enhances prosocial motivation through work meaningfulness, moderated by relational vitality.
62	Oc et al. (2020)	Humility breeds authenticity: How authentic leader humility shapes follower vulnerability and felt authenticity	Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	Authentic leader humility reduces follower vulnerability and increases felt authenticity.
63	Swain (2018)	Effects of Leader Humility on the Performance of Virtual Groups	Journal of Leadership Studies	Leader humility increases psychological safety and liking, but not actual performance in virtual groups.
64	Zhou & Chen (2024)	Exploring the impact of leader humility on different types of voice: The role of employee other-oriented motivations	Journal of Management and Organization	Leader humility promotes prosocial and organizational concern motivations, leading to supportive and challenging voice.
65	Cheung et al. (2020)	Does being mindful make people more creative at work? The role of creative process engagement and perceived leader humility	Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	Mindfulness enhances creativity via creative process engagement, strengthened by perceived leader humility.

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66	Jia et al. (2024)	Leader humility and follower prosocial behaviours: Integrating three theoretical perspectives	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	Leader humility affects prosocial behaviors via self-efficacy, affective trust, and perceived insider status (social exchange strongest).
67	Bahadur & Ali (2023)	Linking leader humility with service performance: the role of service climate and customer mistreatment	Asian Business and Management	Leader humility improves service performance via service climate, moderated by customer mistreatment.
68	Upadhyay et al. (2025)	Influence of leader humility on subordinates' knowledge-sharing: exploring the boundary conditions	Journal of Knowledge Management	Leader humility promotes knowledge sharing via psychological safety, moderated by leader competence and OSE.
69	Jeung & Yoon (2016)	Leader humility and psychological empowerment: investigating contingencies	Journal of Managerial Psychology	Leader humility predicts empowerment, moderated by power distance and hierarchical distance (three-way interaction).
70	Wang et al. (2022)	Top-down and bottom-up: Examining reciprocal relationships between leader humility and team helping behavior	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Reciprocal relationship: leader humility and team helping reinforce each other, predicting performance and lower turnover.
71	Bharanitharan et al. (2021)	Seeing is not believing: Leader humility, hypocrisy, and their impact on followers' behaviors	Leadership Quarterly	Leader humility combined with impression management increases perceived hypocrisy, but mediation not supported.
72	Cavazotte et al. (2023)	Beyond the paradox: Understanding how project leader humility and narcissism affect project outcomes	International Journal of Project Management	Leader humility improves project outcomes via empowerment; narcissism affects outcomes differently.
73	Chiu et al. (2016)	Initiating and utilizing shared leadership in teams: The role of leader humility, team proactive personality, and team performance capability	Journal of Applied Psychology	Leader humility fosters shared leadership, moderated by team proactive personality and team competence.
74	Chan et al. (2024)	An examination of whether and how leader humility enhances leader personal career success	Human Resource Management	Humble leaders gain career success through mentoring behavior, status, and promotability.
75	Chen et al. (2022)	Leader Humility and Machiavellianism: Investigating the Effects on Followers' Self-Interested and Prosocial Behaviors	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility triggers sense of power; follower Machiavellianism moderates self-interested vs prosocial behavior.
76	Upadhyay & Singh (2024)	Linking leader humility, reverse mentoring and subordinate turnover intentions: empirical evidence from the Indian information technology industry	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	Leader humility reduces turnover via reverse mentoring, moderated by leader competence.
77	Owens et al. (2015)	Leader narcissism and follower outcomes: The counterbalancing effect of leader humility	Journal of Applied Psychology	Leader narcissism can be positive when tempered by humility, affecting effectiveness and follower engagement.
78	Othman et al. (2025)	Leader's Humility: Unveiling the Mediating Effect of Decent Work on the Relation Between Humble Leadership and Nurses' Grit	Journal of Nursing Management	Decent work mediates the relationship between humble leadership and nurses' grit.
79	Peng et al. (2023)	How and when does leader humility promote followers' proactive customer service performance?	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Leader humility boosts proactive customer service via relational energy, moderated by person-supervisor fit.
80	Chen et al. (2025)	Leader humility and employee proactivity: sequential affective mediation and the moderating effect of role breadth self-efficacy	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility enhances proactivity via positive mood and affective commitment, moderated by role breadth self-efficacy.
81	Naseer et al. (2020)	Understanding how leaders' humility promotes followers' emotions and ethical behaviors: Workplace spirituality as a mediator	Journal of Positive Psychology	Leader humility predicts empathy, gratitude, ethical behavior via workplace spirituality.

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82	D'Errico & Poggi (2019)	Tracking a leader's humility and its emotions from body, face and voice	Web Intelligence	Multimodal analysis of humble politicians' nonverbal cues and expressed emotions.
83	Chiu et al. (2022)	Shaping positive and negative ties to improve team effectiveness: The roles of leader humility and team helping norms	Human Relations	Leader humility reduces hindrance ties, promotes helping norms and team effectiveness.
84	Nguyen et al. (2020)	Leader Humility and Knowledge Sharing Intention: A Serial Mediation Model	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility affects knowledge sharing via affective trust, work engagement, and OCB-I (serial mediation).
85	Noboa & Pino (2025)	Gender moderating role in the relationship between leader humility and employee psychological empowerment	International Journal of Management Practice	Gender moderates leader humility-empowerment relationship; strongest for male subordinates.
86	Son & Lee (2023)	When Humble Leaders Enhance Employee Job Crafting: The Role of Gender and Trust in Leaders	SAGE Open	Leader humility influences job crafting, moderated by trust and gender (three-way interaction).
87	Owens & Hekman (2012)	Modeling how to grow: An inductive examination of humble leader behaviors, contingencies, and outcomes	Academy of Management Journal	Inductive study develops model of humble leader behaviors, outcomes, and contingencies.
88	Lei et al. (2023)	Investigating the effect of leader humility on subordinates' service creativity: a moderated dual path model	Current Psychology	Leader humility affects service creativity via role modeling and LMX, moderated by team relationship conflict.
89	Yang & Xu (2022)	The indirect effect of leader humility on employee creativity through a growth mindset for creativity	Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology	Leader humility enhances creativity via growth creative mindset, stronger in R&D teams.
90	Liborius & Kiewitz (2022)	When leader humility meets follower competitiveness: Relationships with follower affective trust, intended and voluntary turnover	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Follower competitiveness weakens leader humility's effect on trust and turnover.
91	Yang et al. (2019)	The dark side of expressed humility for non-humble leaders: A conservation of resources perspective	Frontiers in Psychology	Expressed humility depletes leaders' resources (exhaustion) when Honesty-Humility is low.
92	Shannonhouse et al. (2019)	The Behaviors, Benefits, and Barriers of Humanitarian Aid Leader Humility	Journal of Psychology and Theology	Qualitative study on humility in faith-based humanitarian aid leadership.
93	Abbas & Wu (2019)	The moderating role of intrapreneurial personality in relation between leader humility and innovative behavior	Human Systems Management	Intrapreneurial personality moderates the relationship between leader humility and innovative behavior.
94	Mrayyan & Al-Rjoub (2024)	Does nursing leaders' humility leadership associate with nursing team members' psychological safety? A cross-sectional online survey	Journal of Advanced Nursing	No significant association found between nursing leader humility and team psychological safety.
95	Gonçalves & Brandão (2017)	The relation between leader's humility and team creativity: The mediating effect of psychological safety and psychological capital	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	Leader humility predicts team creativity via psychological safety and psychological capital.
96	Wang et al. (2018)	Exploring the affective impact, boundary conditions, and antecedents of leader humility	Journal of Applied Psychology	Leader humility enhances performance via relational energy and reduces exhaustion; antecedents: growth mindset, relational identity.
97	Chen et al. (2021)	Why and when do employees become more proactive under humble leaders? The roles of psychological need satisfaction and Chinese traditionality	Journal of Organizational Change Management	Leader humility promotes proactivity via psychological need satisfaction, moderated by Chinese traditionality.
98	Zhong et al. (2024)	Humble leader, successful follower: Linking leader humility with follower career outcomes via leader competence from an implicit leadership theory perspective	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Leader humility leads to career outcomes via perceived competence, moderated by follower narcissism and power distance climate.

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99	Qiuyun et al. (2020)	Leader humility and employee organizational deviance: the role of sense of power and organizational identification	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	Leader humility increases deviance via sense of power, moderated by organizational identification.
100	Deng et al. (2019)	The Effects of Dynamic Work Environments on Entrepreneurs' Humble Leader Behaviors: Based on Uncertainty Reduction Theory	Frontiers in Psychology	Dynamic work environment fosters leader humility via feedback-seeking, moderated by intolerance of uncertainty.
101	Li et al. (2016)	The effect of humble leader behavior, leader expertise, and organizational identification on employee turnover intention	Journal of Applied Business Research	Leader humility reduces turnover via organizational identification, moderated by leader expertise.
102	Zhang et al. (2025)	When leaders "stoop": dual-path mechanisms and social connection reconstruction of humble leader behavior to dispel occupational stigma consciousness	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility reduces occupational stigma via social isolation and professional identification, moderated by relational identification.
103	Tu & Huang (2022)	Leader humility and employee voice behavior: The mediating effects of work engagement and cognitive emotion regulation strategies	Human Systems Management	Leader humility promotes prohibitive voice via work engagement and emotion regulation strategies.
104	Hassan et al. (2023)	Personality and Humbleness: The Role of the HEXACO Model of Personality in Development of Humble Leaders	SAGE Open	HEXACO traits predict humble leadership; humble leadership affects engagement via felt obligation.
105	Bahmannia et al. (2023)	Even Nectar is Poisonous in Excess: The Impact of Leader Humility on Pride, Entitlement, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	Leader humility has diminishing returns; high levels increase pride and entitlement, reducing OCB.
106	Owens & Hekman (2016)	How does leader humility influence team performance? Exploring the mechanisms of contagion and collective promotion focus	Academy of Management Journal	Leader humility spreads via contagion, creating collective humility and promotion focus, enhancing team performance.
107	Yao & Hao (2023)	Influence of Paternalistic Leadership on Employee Innovation Behavior and New Venture Performance: The Moderating Role of Leader Humility	Sustainability (Switzerland)	Paternalistic leadership dimensions affect innovation; leader humility moderates these effects positively.
108	Ali et al. (2021)	Can leaders' humility enhance project management effectiveness? Interactive effect of top management support	Sustainability (Switzerland)	Humble leadership enhances project effectiveness via employee creativity, moderated by top management support.
109	Chen et al. (2024)	Why is leader humility related to OCBs? A psychological entitlement explanation of the curvilinear moderated relations	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	Curvilinear relationship between leader humility and OCB via psychological entitlement, moderated by perspective taking.
110	Sheikh (2022)	Leader humility and team effectiveness: a moderated mediation model of leader-member exchange and employee satisfaction	Evidence-based HRM	Leader humility affects team effectiveness via LMX, moderated by employee satisfaction.
111	Luu (2021)	Can humble leaders nurture employee well-being? The roles of job crafting and public service motivation	Personnel Review	Leader humility enhances well-being via job crafting, moderated by public service motivation.
112	Kim et al. (2025)	The relationships among leader humility, learning agility, positive psychological capital and change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior	Journal of Workplace Learning	Leader humility and learning agility influence change-oriented OCB via positive psychological capital.
113	Chiu & Hung (2022)	Impacts of Leader Humility Between Authority and Trustworthiness on Compliance: Tests of Three-Way Interaction	Psychological Reports	High humility with high trust and authority leads to highest follower compliance.

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114	Asghar et al. (2022)	Eminence of Leader Humility for Follower Creativity During COVID-19: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Proactive Personality	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility fosters creativity via self-efficacy, moderated by proactive personality.
115	Wang et al. (2021)	Leader Sex and Employee Power Distance Orientation as Boundary Conditions of the Relationship between Leader Humility and Leader-Member Exchange	Human Performance	Leader humility-LMX relationship stronger for male leaders and low power distance employees.
116	Ma et al. (2020)	Effects of perceived overqualification on career distress and career planning: Mediating role of career identity and moderating role of leader humility	Human Resource Management	Perceived overqualification leads to career identity and planning, moderated by leader humility.
117	Ma et al. (2020)	Why and when leader humility promotes constructive voice: a crossover of energy perspective	Personnel Review	Leader humility boosts constructive voice via relational energy, moderated by apparent sincerity.
118	Liborius et al. (2025)	Up Close and Powerful: Leaders' Personal Sense of Power and Psychological Closeness to Their Team as Antecedents of Leader Humility, Subordinate Job Engagement and Trust	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Leader's sense of power and psychological closeness predict humility, affecting follower engagement and trust.
119	Bharanitharan et al. (2019)	Is Leader Humility a Friend or Foe, or Both? An Attachment Theory Lens on Leader Humility and Its Contradictory Outcomes	Journal of Business Ethics	Leader humility can induce challenging and defensive voice via feeling trusted and self-efficacy.
120	Son & Yang (2023)	How leader humility influences team reflexivity: a team level analysis	Team Performance Management	Leader humility enhances team reflexivity via shared leadership, moderated by affect-based trust.
121	Zhang et al. (2026)	Influence of leader humility on bootlegging innovative behavior—a serial mediation model of work attention and thriving at work	Frontiers in Psychology	Leader humility promotes bootlegging via work attention and thriving at work sequentially.
122	Maan & Srivastava (2023)	Examining the role of team climate, transactive memory system, and team leader humility in teams: an empirical study of Indian generational cohorts	Benchmarking	Generational differences: GenZ higher on team climate, GenY higher on leader humility.
123	Shaw et al. (2025)	The Double-Edged Sword Effect of Leader Humility on Follower Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior: Based on Social Identity Theory	Journal of Chinese Human Resources Management	Leader humility reduces UPB via insider status but increases via guanxi, moderated by trust.
124	Zhou & Li (2018)	The Role of Leader's Humility in Facilitating Frontline Employees' Deep Acting and Turnover: The Moderating Role of Perceived Customer-Oriented Climate	Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	Leader humility facilitates deep acting and reduces turnover, moderated by customer-oriented climate.
125	Zheng et al. (2023)	Linking leader humility with follower performance: A perspective of multi-foci relational identification	Current Psychology	Leader humility promotes performance via multi-foci relational identification, moderated by leader status.
126	Rego et al. (2017)	How leader humility helps teams to be humbler, psychologically stronger, and more effective: A moderated mediation model	Leadership Quarterly	Leader humility predicts team performance via team humility and team PsyCap, moderated by strength of constructs.