Exploring Follower Personality and Inclusive Leadership: An Empirical Investigation

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Why is This Important?

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives have become increasingly important for businesses in the past few decades. Specifically, HR departments have made D&I a strategic priority in efforts to promote their workers better and to bring in better and more diverse talent. By 2001, diversity initiatives were adopted by over 75% of Fortune 1,000 companies (Daniels, 2001). Diversity, specifically, has shown to be effective in improving a business, such that businesses with higher diversity generally have higher innovation (Hossain, Atif, Ahmed, & Mia, 2019). In order for the diversity to be acknowledged, inclusion must be present as well. For somebody to feel included, they must feel like they have a voice and what many describe to be a "seat at the table" (Philip, 2020). Thus, the term D&I are put together, because without inclusion, true diversity will not be met.

As such, the question for many organizations becomes "how do we build a more diverse and inclusive workplace?". There is strong evidence of the importance of specific initiatives or implementations in the workplace with D&I benchmarks. Most benchmarks currently set-in place pertain towards racial diversity in the workplace, but the diversity of ideas is important in sharing and distributing ideas and taking actions too (Mitchell & Vandegrift, 2014). Diversity has been proven to be a tool for success. Racial diversity is one idea of this notion but looking at tangible benefits of having diversity of ideas such as inclusiveness in LGBT populations has proven that companies with more D&I initiatives and genuine involvement in the community have given companies an edge in the market (Hossain et al., 2019). The strengths of promoting diversity can be attributed to diverse

experiences developing and allowing new ideas to formulate and allowing individuals to freely express themselves and their ideas.

Many researchers have also questioned the effects and impact of the direct HR initiatives set in place by companies. The efficacy of certain initiatives has continued to be questioned. The awareness and cognition of HR of ongoing demographic and inclusive issues from multiple spheres are important to consider. Looking at the case of age discrimination, when companies did not manage an age diversity index and specifically work on a balance of their indexing, there was shown to be more age discrimination by ignoring the issue altogether (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2013).

A 2018 study done looking at the data from the Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in the US, it looked at racial diversity numbers in the staff at business schools. The study found that more racially diverse staff was due to the efforts of the administration and staff to track and guide the diversity progress being 2.5 times more likely to have these policies set in place if they we statistically more diverse (Moshiri & Cardon, 2018). As D&I initiatives are continually being developed, it is important to not only focus domestically but internationally as well on these affairs. Thinking about the creation and implementation of many companies and further globalization happening daily, many of these systems were created without minority or disadvantaged communities in mind. Despite measures being made, there are still a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities and women in lower-level positions in companies, displaying why specific initiatives and actions are needed from HR and diversity management (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009).

On the other hand, many managerial theorists (e.g. Boekhorst, 2014; Chung, Ehrhart, Shore, Randel, Dean & Kedharnath; 2020; Irby & Brown, 1995) note that leadership is an important factor in fostering inclusion. Leadership can overcome the feelings of exclusion some populations may feel in the workplace from a top-down approach to inclusion (Boekhorst, 2014). Leadership can be broadly defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2021). In managerial theory, leadership has been a highly researched and discussed topic as new fads of leadership theory come and go.

Some previous leadership theories include – transformational leadership (Ahmed, Zhao & Faraz, 2020), leader-member exchange (Wang & Shi, 2020), and authentic leadership (Boekhorst, 2014). These all focus on different aspects of the leader and follower relationship. For example, transformational leadership is focused on the process of how leaders inspire their followers to accomplish tasks (Ahmed et al. 2020). Leaders are seen as role models and must adapt to meet the need of their subordinates. Meanwhile, a newer leadership theory is authentic leadership which emerged due to the societal demands for a genuine and trustworthy leader (Boekhorst, 2014). The primary focus of this leadership theory is on the leader as an individual.

However, with leadership theories developing with societal demands within the past couple of decades, organizations have been having a much larger focus on D&I, thus I wanted to investigate a newer theory in leadership called inclusive leadership. The development of inclusive leadership is fairly new, a definitive definition has not been fully developed. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) described leader inclusiveness as "words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for

others' contributions" and "attempts by leaders to include others in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might otherwise be absent" (p. 947). Meanwhile, Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv (2010) described inclusive leadership as leaders who exhibit openness, availability, and accessibility. Philip (2020) noted that inclusive leaders focus on creating voice space, conferring informal authority, coaching and developing employees, and their ability to build vulnerable and safe relationship. To date, studies have found inclusive leadership to be significantly related to psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020), higher organizational citizenship behaviors (Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas, Wang, Javed, & Konte, 2020; Younas, Wang, Javed, & Zaffar, 2021), and higher innovative work behaviors (Bannay, Hadi, Amanah, 2020; Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon, & Tayyeb, 2019; Mansoor, Farrukh, Wu, & Wahab, 2021; Qi, Liu, Wei, & Hu, 2019; Wang, Chen, Li. 2021). Additionally, scholars have investigated leader-member exchange being a moderator for inclusive leadership (Ali, M., Lodhi, Orangzab, Raza, & Ali, W., 2018; Nishii & Mayer, 2009) and the previously stated relationships; noting that members in the in-group more strongly show stronger outcomes to relationships such as higher feelings of psychological safety.

Outside of what the scholars have noted specifically about inclusive leadership, inclusive leadership is incredibly important to me as it has directly impacted my journey as an academic and a leader. The worst feeling in the world is feeling excluded, and there have been several times where I have felt excluded. Because of my leaders, I pursued the opportunities that I currently have and even stayed within the discipline of business. Inclusive leadership has already impacted me so much and will continue to impact me as

I continue into my career. I hope to make as much impact that the inclusive leaders in my life were able to make to me.

Extended Literature Review

Inclusive Leadership

Most of the primary research done on inclusive leadership has been completed within the last decade; resulting in many different conceptualizations and definitions of inclusive leadership. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) and Nishii and Mayer (2009) identified leader inclusiveness as how leaders can act in an inclusive way toward their followers. In general, scholars recognize that in order to foster inclusion, leaders need to exhibit both belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) within their groups (Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011). Both factors have a high importance in making an inclusive leader due to the cognition of the follower – if the leader does not make the effort for their follower to feel like they belong, inclusion will not be met – and the same principle applies to uniqueness. Both factors, in tandem, need to be facilitated by leaders in order for the leader to be seen as more inclusive (Randel, Galvin, Shore, Ehrhart, Chung, Dean, & Kedharnath, 2018).

Several follower outcomes have been linked to inclusive leadership. For example, previous studies have concluded that subordinates who identify high inclusive leadership show lower psychological distress (Ahmed, Zhao & Faraz, 2020) and generally have higher employee engagement (Rodriguez, 2018). Other research has looked more into the direct relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological safety, showing that with higher leader inclusiveness, there is higher psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020). Additional

outcomes in inclusive leadership show a positive relationship in promoting team voice (Ye, Wang, Guo, 2019). Scholars have also investigated that there is a positive relationship with inclusive leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors (Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas et al. 2020; Younas et al. 2021).

Voice Space and Informal Authority

Voice space, sometimes referred to as employee voice (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Yin, 2013) or voice behavior (e.g., Lee & Dahinten, 2021; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010; Weiss, Kolbe, Grote, Spahn, & Grande, 2018), refers to the "communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011, p. 375). Subordinates want their voice to be heard and attribute being heard from their leaders directly to their feelings of inclusion within group, or also referred to as having a seat at the table (Philip, 2020).

Generally, organizations with hierarchies can hinder subordinates from speaking up and contributing (Detert & Trevino, 2010). However, if leaders are seen as open and appreciative of their subordinates, then followers are more likely to speak up (e.g. Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Liu, Tangirala, Lam, Chen, Jia, & Huang, 2015; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Inclusive language has been looked to be a factor leading to greater voice space. This can be divided into two separate ideas of inclusive language: implicit and explicit. Implicit inclusive language can be identified with using collective pronouns like "we," "us" or "our," meanwhile, explicit inclusive language can be identified by

direct invitations from the leader to participate or express their opinions within meetings, presentations, and workgroup settings (Weiss et al. 2018).

Informal authority, in regards to organizations, can be given to subordinates through various means. For example, subordinates could be given autonomy on their assignments (Baker, Gibbons, Murphy, 1999). Conferring informal authority to their subordinate establishes a sense of trust between the leader and the subordinate that the subordinate was able to complete the task, thus leading them to feel more included.

Coaching and Developing Employees

Coaching and development is another area that is seen to be important in fostering inclusion from the subordinate perspective. Within the Philip qualitative study (2020), interviewees discussed feeling excluded when their leaders were not focused on training and development. Coaching has been seen to be important for leaders to try and help build up their subordinates performance and overall organizational performance (Fournies, 1978; Utrilla, Grande, & Lorenzo, 2015). Coaching and developing can help strengthen the relationship between the follower and their leader and make the follower feel more included (Philip, 2020).

Building Vulnerable and Safe Relationships

Lastly, in Philip's (2000) qualitative interviews, followers mentioned the importance that their leader felt vulnerable which helped followers feel like they had built safer relationships with their leader. Knowing that the leader was able to make mistakes really helped the subordinates feel safer about making their own mistakes.

Variables Associated with Inclusive Leadership

Several variables have been investigated in relation to inclusive leadership. In this section I will be highlighting some variables that have been more heavily researched in the field. These variables include: psychological safety, organizational citizenship behaviors, and performance. I will be outlining what these variables mean, previous findings associated with them, and lastly their relation to inclusive leadership.

Psychological Safety and Inclusive Leadership

Psychological safety refers to the ability an individual feels that they can freely express themselves (Wang & Shi, 2020). The need for inclusion has only become a more important topic in recent years focusing more into multi-disciplinary areas of how a leader can be perceived. The first large scale studies looking into the concept of inclusive leadership looked primarily at its' relationship with psychological safety, showing a positive relationship between the two (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020). Through these studies, it primarily looked at inclusive leadership from three different dimensions: openness, availability, and accessibility from the subordinate's perspective.

In further regards to psychological safety, in order to foster the behavior that a follower can freely express themselves, there is a strong push that a leader can have a strong impact on this expression. More notably, it has been noted there is a strong mediating relationship that psychological safety can play into inclusive leadership with other variables – such that psychological safety can mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior (Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon, & Tayyeb 2019), partially mediate inclusive leadership and employee voice in the

workplace (Lee & Dahinten 2021; Yin, 2013), and mediate inclusive leadership and pro-social rule breaking (Wang, 2021).

Performance and Leadership

Job performance can be defined the "individual's work achievement after exerting required effort on the job" (Pradhan & Jena, 2017, p. 2). Performance has always been an important metric to any employee on their job, both from a subordinate and leader perspective. Leadership can have a big impact on performance within the workplace and the role of the leader can be significantly impactful for their team. For example, subordinates with inclusive leaders have shown to be more likely to have better job performance metrics (Nguyen, Le, Trinh, & Do, 2019). Additionally, voice has proven to be important in performance, with team voice mediating the relationship between inclusive leadership and performance pressure, in that inclusive leadership is effective in promoting team voice (Ye, Wang, Guo, 2019). Philip (2020) has mentioned the importance of voice in terms of subordinates deeming their leader to be inclusive. Additionally, Philip (2020) discussed that when followers felt as if their leader coached and developed them thoroughly, that they felt more included – which has been supported by scholars to an important factor for increasing work performance (Passmore, 2020).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Leadership

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) has been defined primarily by two criteria: "(1) behavior above and beyond role requirements that is (2) organizationally functional," (Graham, 1991) (p. 249). This structure and idea have shown positive effects in many areas relating to the workplace and organizations, such that with high OCBs can

lead to an improvement in job satisfaction (LePine, Hanson, Borman, & Motowidlo, 2000) or organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability (Organ, 1988).

Leadership is understood to have a key role in influencing OCBs (Lin, Li & Hsiao, 2012). Previous relationships with leadership styles have investigated the positive impact that leader-member exchange has on OCBs (Asgari, Silong, Ahmed, & Abu Samah 2008), servant leadership (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010), and transformational leadership (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Acknowledging these previous leadership relationships, scholars have also investigated that there is a positive relationship with inclusive leadership and OCBs (Carmeli et al. 2010; Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas, Wang, Javed, & Konte, 2020; Younas, Wang, Javed, & Zaffar, 2021). Employees' OCBs have been shown to be positively affected by managerial coaching (Raza, Ali, Ahmed, S., & Ahmad, J., 2018).

Additional Variables to Consider

In this section, I will be focusing on variables that have not previously linked to inclusive leadership, however, I think there are relevant to the overall conversation around inclusion. Much like the previous section, I will first define the variable, its' associated outcomes in the workplace, and lastly how it relates back to inclusion. The variables being investigated in this section include: general self-efficacy, self-esteem, and the big five personality traits.

General Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy can be defined as an individual's ability of performing an activity and how it relates to the individual's sense of competence and confidence in their performance in a field (Pajares, 2003). Meanwhile, general self-efficacy refers to an

individual's ability to deal with a wide variety of challenging demands (Luszczynska, Scholz, Schwarzer, 2005). More recently, general self-efficacy has been applied to many situations outside the traditional psychological setting including the workplace. Some of the main outcomes that we have seen from more recent studies include that high general self-efficacy can reduce challenge stressors and improve job performance (Lu, Du, Xu 2016). Additionally, it was found that if the supervisor displays training in a more positive light that the subordinate is likely to have higher general self-efficacy than if they did not (Tai, 2006).

Additional studies have also focused on general self-efficacy and the aspect of leadership surrounding it. For example, there have been positive correlations found between transformational leadership and general self-efficacy, meaning leaders with a higher sense of transformational leadership leads to higher general self-efficacy – leading to more internalized commitment to the organization and perceptions of their performance as well within their work groups (Pillai & Willaims, 2004).

With fostering relationships beginning during their training, there may be correlations with general self-efficacy and inclusive leadership. Scholars have investigated some direct links between leadership and general self-efficacy. However, no studies have looked at the direct relationship between inclusive leadership and general self-efficacy. Although, self-efficacy has been investigated in relation specifically towards inclusive education (Hofman & Kilimo, 2014; Ozokcu, 2017; Taliaferro & Harris, 2014). Through these studies it was found that teachers with low self-efficacy face problems with implementing inclusive education (Hofman & Kilimo, 2014) and that the efficacy of inclusion was higher in novice teachers rather than more experienced

teachers (Ozokcu, 2017). This could suggest that fostering inclusion could be more important for those newer in roles rather than those who have been in the same position for an extended period of time.

Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem has been a highly researched topic among the social sciences field as a measurement tool of an individual's overall evaluation of themselves (Rosenberg & Turner, 1990). This evaluation is subjective of how they view themselves and does not relate to their objective talents and abilities nor how they are evaluated by others (Orth & Robins, 2014). Regarding inclusive leadership and its relationship with self-esteem, there seems to be a gap within the research, with the only mention between their relationship being that self-esteem mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and career adaptability (Shabeer, Nasir, Rehman, 2020).

However, scholars have looked at the relationship between inclusion and self-esteem. For example, individual's self-perception of their inclusion has been shown to have a positive relationship with self-esteem (Mahadevan., Gregg., & Sedikides, 2019). The scale used in this study looked primarily at whether or not they felt safe within their group (Huo, Binning, & Molina, 2010; Mahadevan et al. 2019).

Big Five Personality Traits

Personality can be defined as "a system of parts that is organized, develops, and is expressed in a person's actions" (Mayer, 2007, p. 1). Personality in general is a popular psychological concept looked at in a variety of contexts like leadership. As noted in the Mayer's (2007) definition of personality, there is a behavioral component to personality, such that personalities often lead to behaviors.

Studies conducted on personality and leadership are mostly from the leader perspective, not the follower perspective. Harm & Spain (2014) have made a call to action that scholars need to focus more on the follower perception of their leaders. There have been few studies looking at the personality of the followers' and their perspective of their leaders. The current studies conducted have primarily linked follower's personality and transformational leadership and how that affected their perception of leadership effectiveness (Felfe & Schyns, 2010; Soane, Butler, & Stanton, 2015) or job satisfaction (Aydogmus, Camgoz, Ergeneli, & Ekmekci, 2018).

Openness to experience, or just openness, refers to the tendency to be informed, creative, insightful, and curious (Northouse, 2021). In reference to leadership, openness typically is associated with individual's different thinking (McCrae, 1987). Most scholars researching openness have noted its strong positive correlation to creativity behaviors (Feist, 1998; McCrae & Costa, 1997).

Agreeableness refers to traits like selflessness, cooperativeness, helpfulness, tolerance, flexibility, generosity, sympathy, and courtesy (Digman, 1990). Followers with high levels of agreeableness generally have higher performance (Soane et al. 2015) and generally seek cooperation with their leaders (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). However, followers with lower scores of agreeableness can be seen as a challenge to any leadership style (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Conscientiousness can be defined as an individual's tendency to be orderly, self-controlled, hard-working, and rule abiding (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds, & Meints, 2009). One of the most studied outcomes for conscientiousness is its' positive relationship with high job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Rodell, Klinger,

Simon, & Crawford, 2013). Follower's scoring high in conscientiousness show more appreciation if their leader to has a similar goal-focused mindset as them (Soane et al. 2015).

Extraversion refers to "the tendency to be sociable, assertive, active, and to experience positive affects, such as energy and zeal" (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002, p. 767). Outcomes from Extraversion are mixed, however, one key thing to note from the research is the emphasis on interpersonal relationship that high scorers of extraversion are more keen to people perceiving others to be leaderlike (Hogan, R., Curphy, & Hogan, J., 1994). Followers high in extraversion are more likely to note high amounts of leadership effectiveness from their leader (Soane et al. 2015).

Neuroticism is defined by "the tendency to experience frequent, intense negative emotions associated with a sense of uncontrollability (the perception of inadequate coping) in response to stress" (Barlow, Ellard, Sauer-Zavala, Bullis, & Carl, 2014, p. 481). Neurotic individuals can be described as anxious, fearful, depressed, irritable, stressed, and moody (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In work, individuals who score higher in neuroticism typically experience burnout (Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005).

Research Question

We primarily looked at the previously mentioned variables because of the conversations that I had with Dr. Stoner. Initially, we wanted to investigate the antecedents of inclusive leadership and how people saw their leader to be inclusive. While inclusive is still a newer topic of leadership research, many of the antecedents have not been investigated by scholars. Randel, et al. (2018) created a conceptual model in

which showed three possible factors that would lead to inclusive leadership: pro-diversity beliefs, humility, and cognitive complexity. Randel, et al. (2018) predicted that these would increase the likelihood of individuals engaging in inclusive leadership.

Mendelsohn (2021) investigated other antecedents that will lead to a person showing inclusive behavior as a frontline manager – separating into three factors: traits & beliefs, developmental experiences, and organizational factors. Traits & beliefs looks into the individual's personality and their own diversity beliefs. Developmental experiences include their training and their mentorship. Lastly, organizational factors investigates the organizational inclusion climate and the senior leader's inclusive behavior.

However, after further research into follower personality perspectives on leadership, it was noted by scholars the gap in research in this area (Harm & Spain, 2014). Considering this, we decided to pivot our research question to investigate how inclusive leadership may possibly affect personality traits and their associated outcomes. With this, Dr. Stoner introduced the concept of trait activation theory, which explains how an individual's personality traits may be expressed differently depending on the strength of the situational cues in the environment (Tett, Simonet, Walser, & Brown, 2013). Certain scenarios can elicit or mitigate specific traits that may be innate in people. For example, an aggressive person may not show aggressive traits in religious service because the environment, or situation, does not elicit this response to occur (Tett & Guterman, 2000).

We considered inclusive leadership to be synonymous with strong situational cues because inclusive leadership can affect how people speak and show up in work settings (e.g. higher psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006)

and higher voice space (Detert & Burris, 2007; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012)). In this study, I wanted to investigate how inclusive leadership is synonymous with a strong situational cue and, as such, whether or not it acts as the trait activator to personality-outcome relationships.

Extended Methods

To test our study, we recruited students from undergraduate and graduate business courses within a large Midwest public university. In order to complete the survey, participants must have been currently working under a direct supervisor or have previously worked under a direct supervisor. The survey was sent out over the course of two semesters. A total of 209 students were contacted and 129 responded yielding a response rate of approximately 61%.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents were currently working full-time, while 42% of the respondents were not working full-time when they completed the survey. Fifty-seven of the respondents identified as male, 68 females, 1 non-binary, and 3 preferred to not identify. Additionally, respondents came from differing age ranges, 42% was 18-21, meanwhile, 38% accounted for the 22-30, and 21% was 30+. Respondents represented a wide variety of occupational positions from entry level positions to executives. 62% of the sample was in entry level positions.

In order to collect our data, we used Qualtrics over the course of 3 months (November – February). Over the course of this time, we collected data from 5 different courses over two semesters. We used several different measures in order to test the initial variables we found to be relevant with inclusive leadership: general self-efficacy (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, & Rogers, 1982), leader-member

exchange (Liden & Maslyn, 1998), psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010), work group inclusion (Chung, Ehrhart, Shore, Randel, Dean, & Kedharnath, 2020), performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991), organizational citizenship behavior (Williams & Anderson, 1991), creativity self-efficacy (Yi, Scheithauer, Lin, & Schwarzer, 2008), self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991), and the big five personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

To organize the results from Qualtrics, we used SPSS to find our regressions and analytics. Using the data, we created the story of our thesis based off the literature that was present and the results that we found. For the purpose of the manuscript, we decided to focus on the aspect of personality perspectives and leadership due to the call from previous scholars that this was an area that needed further research (Harm & Spain, 2014), thus why the other listed variables are not listed in our findings in my research.

Personal Reflection

When I initially came to Ohio University in Fall 2018, I had lots of hope and excitement about what my future here at the university was going to look like. With that excitement, I did not expect to face an extremely challenging freshmen year. The organizations that I was trying to join rejected me, and in the groups that I was in I felt like I was not respected. Comparing myself to my colleagues at the time, I felt like I was a failure. Looking back, this low point at the start of college was one of the best things that had happened to me – it made me build a foundation for how I developed myself to be the person that I am today. Because of this experience of rejection at the forefront of my college career, I had to redefine what was important to me and how I could further develop myself and make myself feel more included where I was.

Going into my sophomore year, I was purposeful in how I wanted to improve myself and make sure I felt included. One of the organizations that I happened to be rejected from during my freshmen year was Select Leaders. They offered interview feedback for anybody who requested it. So, I met with Tammy Reynolds to discuss my areas of development and how I could be a better candidate for the following year. During this discussion, I opened up about how I did not feel like I belonged in the College of Business and how most of the organizations I tried to join ended up in rejection. She set me up with a mentor that she knew would help me feel more included and went out of her way to set up monthly meetings with me to check in with how I felt my progress was going – both on my leadership journey and how I was doing individually.

During this time, I was also going through the business cluster where I was able to better find which area of business I wanted to specialize in. In my cluster groups, I was quickly deemed to be the one who kept the group cohesive. I would make sure that everybody got to work on the things that they were interested in and made sure that everybody on the team had a voice in the decisions being made. Team cohesion was very important to me, and with my previous feelings of exclusion, I made it a point to get to know everybody on an individual basis in order to help them feel more included, but this also helped me feel more included in the group as well. By the end of the first project, my team earned the best score for the entire semester and got to present our findings to (at the time) dean Sherman. Talking with my roommates at the time about this experience, they suggested that HR may be the right path for me to pursue due to my passion of team building and inclusion.

This idea stuck with me as I spent the second semester of my sophomore year abroad studying in Bangkok, Thailand at Mahidol University International College. This experience completely broadened the scope of how I viewed the world, from a cultural and individual standpoint. Culturally, it challenged my US-centric mindset, as Thai values were completely different than what I was used to. Thailand's culture was way more formal when it came to business settings. In the US business world, we are used to calling people by their first names, no matter what role they have. Meanwhile, in Thai business culture, everything was based on seniority and that was to be respected. You never mentioned somebody older than you by their first name. Individually, I was exposed to so many different types of people I never had the chance to interact with before. Being an international school, I had the opportunity to study and live with people

from almost every continent both in and outside the classroom. This experience was one of the best of my entire life and solidified the career that I wanted to pursue through the course load that I took and the people that I met.

Towards the end of sophomore year, COVID forced me and many others to end our study abroad opportunities early. Additionally, COVID canceled my summer internship which would have been my first real-world experience in HR. However, with some bad news came some good, as I was officially selected into Select Leaders at this time. During this lull period leading into my junior year, I was extremely purposeful in setting myself up to be in a position to succeed. From my past experiences of failing during my freshmen year and broadening my global perspective during my study abroad, I was finally seeing some merits of my hard work. I reapplied to Select Leaders and got in and I applied and accepted an analytics internship for for the Career Student and Success Center for the College of Business for my junior year.

In this internship, I got to work directly with Sly Mata, who, at the time, was head of Diversity and Inclusion for the College of Business. Sly was pivotal for me to investigate further into the initiatives that the college provided towards diversity and how to improve this. I decided, as a queer student myself, that I wanted to focus on the LGBTQ+ population during the duration of my internship during the 2020-2021 school year. At the time, the College of Business did not have any initiatives focused on the LGBTQ+ population at all. Sly introduced me to other students who also noticed this gap and helped us develop a specific organization for queer professional development, helping us find Ohio Pride Professionals.

During this, I was in my research methods tutorial with Dr. Gabriel Giordano. During this, I tied in my work as an intern with Sly by investigating into the sense of belonging of LGBTQ+ populations in the workplace and the positive implications that can prove to companies. This initial research sparked my passion for research into inclusion, however, it was not until Select Leaders had the opportunity to be the first students ever to participate in Korn Ferry's Inclusive Leadership Assessment where I was introduced to what inclusive leadership was. These sessions were led by Tony Marino, CHRO of Fiserv, and Michael Hyter, Chief Diversity Officer of Korn Ferry, and almost instantaneously perfectly encompassed exactly what I wanted to pursue for my senior thesis. Inclusive leadership was something that directly impacted me during my college experience and helped me feel like I belonged even during my hardest times. Tammy Reynolds was the first inclusive leader that impacted me directly during our initial meeting after I did not get into Select Leaders my freshmen year. I did some baseline research and reached out to Dr. Raymond Frost to see if he knew of any faculty who would also be interested in exploring this field with me. From this, I was introduced to Dr. Jason Stoner.

During the second semester of my junior year, Dr. Stoner and I would deep dive into some of the inclusion literature and discuss what the readings said, but also what our own feelings of inclusion met to us. Through these discussions, we were able to make clear arguments and find gaps in the research field where we could further investigate through my thesis. Additionally, we established a bond where I felt like I could be vulnerable to him about my own experiences facing exclusion and we traded ideas of how we could be better inclusive leaders in our daily lives.

At the start of my senior year, we started to create the study that we were going to conduct. We tested more variables than needed in case we had to change the main argument of my thesis, all outlined in my extended literature review. Long story short, we did change our approach upon diving further into the literature review for the manuscript. This was the most challenging time throughout the thesis process, but also showed me how ever-changing the research process can be, and the importance of collecting more data than you may necessarily need. This showed me the importance of having the ability to adapt the story you are trying to tell through data. Dr. Stoner, throughout the entire process, had continued to challenge my academic thinking and truly elevated me to be a better scholar.

With my initial feelings of exclusion during my first year at the university, I made it my mission to make sure others did not have the same feeling. I was lucky and had some mentors who were able to help me through my difficult time. I am always of the mindset to leave things better than the way you initially found them. Through my internship with the College of Business, I had helped find a diversity group – Ohio Pride Professionals, to further promote inclusion for other professional LGBTQ+ students on campus. Additionally, I used my thesis as a platform to further my understanding of the field of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

As I am heading into my first full-time role within JP Morgan Chase & Co.'s HR Analyst Development Program this summer, I feel well equipped with the preliminary knowledge I was able to obtain through my course load and my thesis work. During my previous internship with JP Morgan Chase & Co. the summer leading into senior year, I talked about the research that I was going to be conducting for my senior thesis. Many

HR leaders, especially in diversity and inclusion, were hooked due to the real-world relevance of the topic. Many of them were looking for ways that they could be promoting inclusive leaders in their work, as it was a real strategic goal that they had. The research that I conducted will be a focal point for my early career ambitions and something that I am proud of that I can point to and hope to make a tangible difference in my work.

Author Contributions

Brit Unangst. In this manuscript, I was responsible for writing the entirety of the paper. I conducted the online survey and helped analyze the data results from the responses. Arguments and conclusions offered in the manuscript were from the collaboration of both Dr. Stoner and me.

Jason Stoner, Ph.D. Dr. Stoner primarily advised me and offered guidance in writing the manuscript. Dr. Stoner provided significant help analyzing the results and significantly helped writing both the methods and results section. Lastly, he helped edit, suggest, and challenge our arguments in the manuscript.

Exploring Follower Personality and Inclusive Leadership: An Empirical Investigation

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Abstract

Inclusion efforts have become an increasingly important issue for organizations the past couple of decades and there has been a push and promotion of inclusive leaders. This paper expands on the previous literature scholars have done in the inclusive leadership area and answer the gap of more research pointing toward follower personality and how it affects their view on leadership. We propose that inclusive leadership may play as a trait activator in ongoing personality relationships related to workplace outcomes; specifically investigating if inclusive leadership exacerbates those relationships. Our findings indicate that inclusive leadership was significantly related to the outcomes of creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors, and performance. However, no significant relationships were shown to have inclusive leadership be a moderator with personality perspectives except for neuroticism. Upon closer inspection, our results indicate followers with low neuroticism with highly inclusive leads have better performance than low neurotics with less inclusive leads. However, inclusive leadership did not impact the relationship with high neurotics and performance. We discuss how these findings may be implemented by leaders in the workplace to better cater to their followers and how future researchers can add to our findings.

Introduction

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives have gained considerable interest in the business world the past couple of decades. In 2001, diversity initiatives were adopted by over 75% of Fortune 1,000 companies (Daniels, 2001). This push for more inclusivity in the workplace has pressured other companies to follow suit, finding more ways that their company can remain competitive. For example, Fortune 500 companies that offer more diversity policies towards the LGBTQ+ population were more likely to be innovative and, thus, have a higher chance for a competitive advantage in their industry (Hossain, Atif, Ahmed, & Mia, 2019). Diversity endeavors can lead to feelings of inclusion amongst individuals (Sabharwal, 2015).

As such, the question for many organizations becomes "how do we build a more diverse and inclusive workplace?". Many managerial theorists (e.g. Boekhorst, 2014; Chung, Ehrhart, Shore, Randel, Dean & Kedharnath; 2020; Irby & Brown, 1995) note that leadership is an important factor in fostering inclusion. Leadership can overcome the feelings of exclusion some populations may feel in the workplace from a top-down approach to inclusion (Boekhorst, 2014).

A newer leadership theory looks more closely at the intersection of the area of leadership and inclusion: inclusive leadership. Because the development of inclusive leadership is fairly new, a definitive definition has not been fully developed. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) described leader inclusiveness as "words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions" and "attempts by leaders to include others in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might otherwise be absent" (p. 947). Meanwhile, Carmeli, Reiter-

Palmon, & Ziv (2010) described inclusive leadership as leaders who exhibit openness, availability, and accessibility. Philip (2020) noted that inclusive leaders focus on creating voice space, conferring informal authority, coaching and developing employees, and their ability to build vulnerable and safe relationship. To date, studies have found inclusive leadership to be significantly related to psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020), higher organizational citizenship behaviors (Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas, Wang, Javed, & Konte, 2020; Younas, Wang, Javed, & Zaffar, 2021), and higher innovative work behaviors (Bannay, Hadi, Amanah, 2020; Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon, & Tayyeb, 2019; Mansoor, Farrukh, Wu, & Wahab, 2021; Qi, Liu, Wei, & Hu, 2019; Wang, Chen, Li. 2021). Additionally, scholars have investigated leader-member exchange being a moderator for inclusive leadership (Ali, M., Lodhi, Orangzab, Raza, & Ali, W., 2018; Nishii & Mayer, 2009) and the previously stated relationships; noting that members in the in-group more strongly show stronger outcomes to relationships such as higher feelings of psychological safety.

The purpose of this paper is to empirically add to our understanding of inclusive leadership's effects on the subordinate. Based off previous research and trait activation theory (e.g., Tett, Simonet, Walser, & Brown, 2013), we present several hypotheses with regard to the moderating effect of inclusive leadership on the relationship between follower personality and various workplace outcomes. First, we will review inclusive leadership. Second, we will define personality and how personality traits relate to leadership, trait activation theory, and the implications that occur due to these

relationships. Following, the methods and results will be discussed. Concluding the paper will be a discussion on the results as well as suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Inclusive Leadership

Most of the primary research done on inclusive leadership has been completed within the last decade; resulting in many different conceptualizations and definitions of inclusive leadership. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) and Nishii and Mayer (2009) identified leader inclusiveness as how leaders can act in an inclusive way toward their followers. In general, scholars recognize that in order to foster inclusion, leaders need to exhibit both belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) within their groups (Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011). Both factors have a high importance in making an inclusive leader due to the cognition of the follower – if the leader does not make the effort for their follower to feel like they belong, inclusion will not be met – and the same principle applies to uniqueness. Both factors, in tandem, need to be facilitated by leaders in order for the leader to be seen as more inclusive (Randel, Galvin, Shore, Ehrhart, Chung, Dean, & Kedharnath, 2018).

Leader Language on providing Voice Space & Informal Authority

Voice space, sometimes referred to as employee voice (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Yin, 2013) or voice behavior (e.g., Lee & Dahinten, 2021; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010; Weiss, Kolbe, Grote, Spahn, & Grande, 2018), refers to the "communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011, p. 375). Subordinates want their voice to be heard and attribute being heard from

their leaders directly to their feelings of inclusion within group, or also referred to as having a seat at the table (Philip, 2020).

Generally, organizations with hierarchies can hinder subordinates from speaking up and contributing (Detert & Trevino, 2010). However, if leaders are seen as open and appreciative of their subordinates, then followers are more likely to speak up (e.g. Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Liu, Tangirala, Lam, Chen, Jia, & Huang, 2015; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Inclusive language has been looked to be a factor leading to greater voice space. This can be divided into two separate ideas of inclusive language: implicit and explicit. Implicit inclusive language can be identified with using collective pronouns like “we,” “us” or “our,” meanwhile, explicit inclusive language can be identified by direct invitations from the leader to participate or express their opinions within meetings, presentations, and workgroup settings (Weiss et al. 2018).

Informal authority, in regards to organizations, can be given to subordinates through various means. For example, subordinates could be given autonomy on their assignments (Baker, Gibbons, Murphy, 1999). Conferring informal authority to their subordinate establishes a sense of trust between the leader and the subordinate that the subordinate was able to complete the task, thus leading them to feel more included.

Coaching & Developing Employees

Coaching and development is another area that is seen to be important in fostering inclusion from the subordinate perspective. Within Philip qualitative study (2020), interviewees discussed feeling excluded when their leaders were not focused on training and development. Coaching has been seen to be important for leaders to try and help

build up their subordinates performance and overall organizational performance (Fournies, 1978; Utrilla, Grande, & Lorenzo, 2015). Coaching and developing can help strengthen the relationship between the follower and their leader and make the follower feel more included (Philip, 2020).

Building Vulnerable and Safe Relationships

Lastly, in Philip's (2000) qualitative interviews, followers mentioned the importance that their leader felt vulnerable which helped followers feel like they had built safer relationships with their leader. Knowing that the leader was able to make mistakes really helped the subordinates feel safer about making their own mistakes.

Inclusive Leadership Outcomes

Several follower outcomes have been linked to inclusive leadership. For example, previous studies have concluded that subordinates who identify high inclusive leadership show lower psychological distress (Ahmed, Zhao & Faraz, 2020) and generally have higher employee engagement (Rodriguez, 2018). Other research has looked more into the direct relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological safety, showing that with higher leader inclusiveness, there is higher psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020). Additional outcomes in inclusive leadership show a positive relationship in promoting team voice (Ye, Wang, Guo, 2019). Scholars have also investigated that there is a positive relationship with inclusive leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors (Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas et al. 2020; Younas et al. 2021).

Personality in leadership

Personality can be defined as “a system of parts that is organized, develops, and is expressed in a person’s actions” (Mayer, 2007, p. 1). Personality in general is a popular psychological concept looked at in a variety of contexts like leadership. As noted in the Mayer’s (2007) definition of personality, there is a behavioral component to personality, such that personalities often lead to behaviors.

Studies conducted on personality and leadership are mostly from the leader perspective, not the follower perspective. Harm & Spain (2014) have made a call to action that scholars need to focus more on the follower perception of their leaders. There have been few studies looking at the personality of the followers’ and their perspective of their leaders. The current studies conducted have primarily linked follower’s personality and transformational leadership and how that affected their perception of leadership effectiveness (Felfe & Schyns, 2010; Soane, Butler, & Stanton, 2015) or job satisfaction (Aydogmus, Camgoz, Ergeneli, & Ekmekci, 2018).

Current Study

The purpose of this study is to further the understanding of subordinate perspectives on inclusive leadership. The current study investigates how inclusive leadership may play a moderating role, acting as a trait activator, on the existing relationships between personality and outcomes; specifically, openness to experience and creativity, conscientiousness and performance, agreeableness and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and neuroticism and performance.

Trait Activation Theory

Trait activation theory has three basic notions all rooted in interactional psychology (Murray, 1938). The basic notions of trait activation theory include “(1)

personality traits are latent propensities to behave in certain ways, (2) traits are expressed as responses to trait-relevant situational cues (e.g. nurturance in responding to a call for help), and (3) intrinsic satisfaction is gained from expressing one's traits (much as eating satisfies hunger)" (Tett et al., 2013, p. 71). Trait activation theory explains how an individual's personality traits may be expressed differently depending on the strength of the situational cues in the environmental. Certain scenarios can elicit or mitigate specific traits that may be innate in people. For example, an aggressive person may not show aggressive traits in religious service because the environment, or situation, does not elicit this response to occur (Tett & Guterman, 2000). However, situational cues, when strong, can activate personality traits that may be dormant within certain environments.

We believe inclusive leadership to be a strong situational cue due to the characteristics that inclusive leadership provides to subordinates. Followers with inclusive leaders feel more room to speak what they believe in work scenarios (Detert & Burris, 2007; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012) and generally feel safer to be themselves, displaying higher psychological safety (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020). Thus, we believe inclusive leadership to be synonymous with strong situational cues because it effects how people speak and show up in work settings. In this study, we propose inclusive leadership is synonymous with a strong situational cue and, as such, acting as the trait activator to personality-outcome relationships.

Openness to Experience & Creativity

Openness to experience, or just openness, refers to the tendency to be informed, creative, insightful, and curious (Northouse, 2021). In reference to leadership, openness

typically is associated with individual's different thinking (McCrae, 1987). Most scholars researching openness have noted its strong positive correlation to creativity behaviors (Feist, 1998; McCrae & Costa, 1997).

We already know the existing relationship that openness has on creativity (Feist, 1998; McCrae & Costa, 1997), in general. Additionally, there is strong evidence that inclusive leadership can impact innovative work behaviors (Bannay et al. 2020; Javed et al. 2019; Mansoor et al. 2021; Nguyen, Le, Trinh, Do, 2019; Qi et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2021). When inclusive leadership is present to followers, subordinates feel like they have a seat at the table and are able to freely express themselves (Philip, 2020). With previous scholars noting how inclusive leadership positively impacts voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012), we believe that inclusive leadership will further activate openness when present for followers. Creativity and innovation are very similar concepts in their own rights and because the relationship between openness to experience and creativity already exists. Thus, we hypothesize inclusive leadership will have act as a trait activator on the existing relationship of openness and creativity.

Hypothesis 1: Inclusive leadership will moderate the relationship between openness to experience and creativity such inclusive leadership will exacerbate the positive relationship between openness to experience and creativity.

Agreeableness & Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Agreeableness refers to traits like selflessness, cooperativeness, helpfulness, tolerance, flexibility, generosity, sympathy, and courtesy (Digman, 1990). Followers with high levels of agreeableness generally have higher performance (Soane et al. 2015) and

generally seek cooperation with their leaders (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). However, followers with lower scores of agreeableness can be seen as a challenge to any leadership style (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) have been defined primarily by two criteria: "(1) behavior above and beyond role requirements that is (2) organizationally functional," (Graham, 1991, p. 249). This structure and idea has shown positive effects in many areas relating to the workplace and organizations. For example, previous research has shown that high OCBs improve job satisfaction (LePine, Hanson, Borman, & Motowidlo, 2000) organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability (Organ, 1988).

Agreeableness has been shown to have a positive relationship with OCBs. (Sibajene, 2009). However, we want to further investigate the relationship between follower's agreeableness and their OCBs. Lin, Li, and Hsiao (2012) found leadership influenced OCBs. Servant leadership can have a positive impact on OCBs (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010); as well as transformational leadership (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, Fetter, 1990). Scholars have also investigated that there is a positive relationship with inclusive leadership and OCBs (Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas et al. 2020; Younas et al. 2021).

Because there is evidence with both relationships between agreeableness & OCBs, as well as inclusive leadership and OCBs, we propose inclusive leadership may moderate the existing relationship between agreeableness and OCBs. If a follower is high in agreeableness, then they are more likely to perform OCBs (Sibajene, 2009). Inclusive leadership will act as a trait activator for agreeableness because inclusive leadership

positively affects team voice (Weiss et al. 2018) aligning agreeableness's trait association with cooperation. With inclusive leadership present, we suggest it may more positively impact someone's agreeableness. Additionally, OCBs will be higher for followers high in agreeableness who also have inclusive leaders, than for followers high in agreeableness without inclusive leaders. As such, we hypothesize inclusive leadership will act as a trait activator.

Hypothesis 2: Inclusive leadership will moderate the relationship between agreeableness and organizational citizenship behaviors such inclusive leadership will exacerbate the positive relationship between agreeableness and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Conscientiousness & Performance

Conscientiousness can be defined as an individual's tendency to be orderly, self-controlled, hard-working, and rule abiding (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds, & Meints, 2009). One of the most studied outcomes for conscientiousness is its' positive relationship with high job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, & Crawford, 2013). Follower's scoring high in conscientiousness show more appreciation if their leader to has a similar goal-focused mindset as them (Soane et al. 2015). Job performance can be defined as the "individual's work achievement after exerting required effort on the job" (Pradhan & Jena, 2017, p. 2). Performance has always been an important metric to any employee on their job, both from a subordinate and leader perspective.

We believe that inclusive leadership may act as a trait activator for conscientiousness in this instance since scholars have consistently found a positive

relationship between conscientiousness and performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al. 2013). Inclusive leadership has shown to be a moderator to performance previously – in relation to person-job fit, well-being, and innovative behavior (Nguyen et al. 2019).

Hypothesis 3: Inclusive leadership will moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and performance such inclusive leadership will exacerbate the positive relationship between conscientiousness and performance.

Neuroticism & Performance

Neuroticism is defined by "the tendency to experience frequent, intense negative emotions associated with a sense of uncontrollability (the perception of inadequate coping) in response to stress" (Barlow, Ellard, Sauer-Zavala, Bullis, & Carl, 2014, p. 481). Neurotic individuals can be described as anxious, fearful, depressed, irritable, stressed, and moody (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In work, individuals who score higher in neuroticism typically experience burnout (Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005). An additional outcome of high neuroticism is lower performance when threat appraisals are present (Schneider, 2004).

The main aspects that encompass inclusive leadership is a leader who fosters belongingness and uniqueness with their follower (Randel et al. 2018), we would assume that neurotic individuals more possibly feel like they do not experience this relationship. High neurotic responses are typically elicited by stress, and inclusive leadership has been significant for decreasing psychological distress (Ahmed et al. 2020). Additionally, we already know that followers with high neuroticism have typically viewed their leader negatively (Soane et al. 2015). Thus, we believe that in this case, with high inclusive leadership, this will mitigate stress for the employee, lowering one's neuroticism. As

noted previously, high neuroticism can negatively impact performance (Schneider, 2004). In this situation, we hypothesize that inclusive leadership will act as a trait activator between neuroticism and performance.

Hypothesis 4: Inclusive leadership will moderate the relationship between neuroticism and performance such inclusive leadership will mitigate the negative relationship between neuroticism and performance.

Method

Sample and Procedure

To test our hypothesis, we recruited students from undergraduate and graduate business courses within a large Midwest public university. In order to complete the survey, participants must have been currently working under a direct supervisor or have previously worked under a direct supervisor. The survey was sent out over the course of two semesters. A total of 209 students were contacted and 129 responded yielding a response rate of approximately 61%.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents were currently working full-time, while 42% of the respondents were not working full-time when they completed the survey. Fifty-seven of the respondents identified as male, 68 females, 1 non-binary, and 3 preferred to not identify. Additionally, respondents came from differing age ranges, 42% was 18-21, meanwhile, 38% accounted for the 22-30, and 21% was 30+. Respondents represented a wide variety of occupational positions from entry level positions to executives. 62% of the sample was in entry level positions.

Measures

Personality. Agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience were measured using Costa & McCrae's (1992) NEO five factor/personality inventory. On a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = Very Inaccurate, 5 = Very Accurate) respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed to given statements about themselves. Sample items for agreeableness are "Have a good word for everyone" and "Believe that others have good intentions." Coefficient alpha reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for agreeableness was 0.73. Sample items for conscientiousness are "Am always prepared" and "Pay attention to details." Coefficient alpha reliability for conscientiousness was 0.80. Sample items for extraversion are "Feel comfortable around people" and "Make friends easily." Coefficient alpha reliability for extraversion was 0.88. Sample items for neuroticism are "Often feel blue" and "Have frequent mood swings." Coefficient alpha reliability for neuroticism was 0.90. Sampled items for openness to experience are "Have a vivid imagination" and "Enjoy hearing new ideas." Coefficient alpha reliability for openness to experience was 0.69.

Inclusive Leadership. Inclusive leadership was measured with a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) which asked respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with statements regarding their supervisor. Items were developed by adapting Philip's (2020) qualitative research findings. Coefficient alpha reliability for inclusive leadership was 0.92. Full scale is listed in Appendix A.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) was measured with Williams and Anderson's (1991) 7-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Respondents were asked to think about their

current or most recent work behaviors and the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements. Sample items for OCBs are “Assists supervisor with his/her work (when not asked)” and “Goes out of way to help new employees.” Coefficient alpha reliability for OCB was 0.81.

Performance. Performance was measured with Williams and Anderson’s (1991) 7-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Respondents were asked to think about their current or most recent work behaviors and the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements. Sample items for performance are “Adequately completes assigned duties” and “Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.” Coefficient alpha reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha) for performance was 0.86.

Creativity. Creativity Self-Efficacy was measured using Yi, Scheithauer, Lin, & Schwarzer’s (2008) 4-point Likert-scale (1 = Not at all true, 4 = Exactly true). Respondents were asked the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements about themselves. Sample items for creativity self-efficacy are “I am certain that I can produce novel and appropriate ideas” and “I am confident that I could tactfully deal with unexpected events.” Coefficient alpha reliability for creativity self-efficacy was 0.80.

Data Analysis/Method of Analysis

We used hierarchical moderated regression (cf. Cohen & Cohen, 1983) to analyze the hypotheses. In step one, we entered control variables (i.e., age, gender, and occupational level). In step two, main effects of personality were entered. In step three, the moderating variable (i.e., inclusive leadership) was entered into the equation. Following the independent variables and the moderator were centered to create the interactive variable. Lastly, the interactive term (i.e. personality X inclusive leadership)

was entered into the equation. In order for support to be provided for our hypotheses, in the final step the interactive term must be statistically significant and provide additional variance explained beyond the main effects of the independent variables and the moderating variable.

Results

Correlations and means of the study variables are reported in Table 1. Results for the regression analysis used to test our hypotheses are reported in Table 2. For Hypothesis 1, the final step in the hierarchical regression analysis showed the interactive term of openness to experience X IL was not statistically significant (β=0.057, *p-value*=0.473). That is, there was not support for the hypothesis that inclusive leadership moderated (exacerbated) the positive relationship between openness to experience and creativity beyond the main effects (openness to experience: β=0.216, *p-value*=0.006; inclusive leadership: β=0.389, *p-value*<0.001).

For Hypothesis 2, the final step in the hierarchical regression analysis showed the interactive term of agreeableness X IL was not statistically significant (β=-0.083, *p-value*=0.291). That is, there was not support for the hypothesis that IL moderated (exacerbated) the positive relationship between agreeableness and organizational citizenship behavior beyond the main effects (agreeableness: β=0.294, *p-value*<0.001; inclusive leadership: β=0.342, *p-value*<0.001).

For Hypothesis 3, the final step in the hierarchical regression analysis showed the interactive term of conscientiousness X IL was not statistically significant (β=-0.131, *p-value*=0.127). That is, there was not support for the hypothesis that inclusive leadership moderated (exacerbated) the positive relationship between conscientiousness and

performance beyond the main effects (conscientiousness: β=0.103, *p-value*=0.259; inclusive leadership: β=0.349, *p-value*<0.001).

For Hypothesis 4, the final step in the hierarchical regression analysis showed the interactive term of neuroticism X IL was statistically significant (β=-0.172, *p-value*=0.037). That is, from the hierarchical moderated regression, there is evidence of support for the hypothesis that inclusive leadership moderated the negative relationship between neuroticism and performance beyond the main effects (neuroticism: β=-0.042, *p-value*=0.613; inclusive leadership: β=0.421, *p-value*<0.001).

To further explore the nature of the interactive relationship, we split the data into sub-groups (high=greater than the mean; low=less than the mean) based on neuroticism and regressed inclusive leadership on performance. The main effect of inclusive leadership was not statistically significant for the high neurotic sub-group (β=0.236, *p-value*=0.112, ΔR^2=0.046) but it was statistically significant for the low neurotic sub-group (β=0.551, *p-value*<0.001, ΔR^2=0.276). Thus, we conclude from the current data that performance increased as inclusive leadership increased for individuals who are low in neuroticism but not for individuals high in neuroticism; suggesting there is partial support for Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

In the current study we examined the moderating role of inclusive leadership between personality (i.e., openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism) and several outcome variables (i.e., creativity, organizational citizenship behavior, and performance), hypothesizing that inclusive leadership would act as a trait activator of personality. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Bannay et al. 2020;

Nguyen et al. 2019; Tran & Choi, 2019), inclusive leadership was a statistically significant predictor of all three outcome variables: creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors, and performance. However, our results indicate that inclusive leadership did not moderate the relationships between openness and creativity, agreeableness and OCBs, and conscientiousness and performance. We did find support for the hypothesis that inclusive leadership moderated the relationship between neuroticism and performance such that individuals low in neuroticism experienced an increase in performance as a result of inclusive leadership while individuals high in neuroticism did not have the same positive performance effects as a result of inclusive leadership.

In other words, people who tested higher in emotional stability had higher performance when inclusive leadership was present; but the presence of inclusive leadership did not have an effect (positive or negative) on performance for individuals high in neuroticism. This is an interesting result that aligns with what previous researchers have already noted about neuroticism and leadership. For instance, highly neurotic people are more likely to view their leaders in a negative way (Soane et al. 2015), thus it is unlikely that they would respond positively to inclusive leadership. High emotional stability has been linked directly with high performance (Oriarewo, Ofobruku, Agbaezee, & Tor, 2018) and inclusive leadership accentuating this relationship. Aligning with what other researchers have noted about inclusive leadership, this may be because stress for more emotionally stable followers is mitigated even more due to the openness (Carmeli et al. 2010) or voice space (Philip, 2020) that an inclusive leader is able to provide to allow their follower to feel safer in their environment (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Rodriguez, 2018; Wang & Shi, 2020).

Research Implications and Future Research

This study adds to the existing literature by confirming previous relationships already found about inclusive leadership; such as increases in creativity (Bannay et al. 2020; Javed et al. 2019; Mansoor et al. 2021; Nguyen et al. 2019; Qi et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2021), OCBs (Tran & Choi, 2019; Younas et al. 2020; Younas et al. 2021), and performance (Nguyen et al. 2019). Although we did not find general support of inclusive leadership acting as a trait activator that exacerbates the relationship between personality and outcomes, we suggest the hypothesized relationships should be tested with different populations such as a full-time working staff rather than a student sample size as student samples have been sometimes not aligned with results from the general public (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014).

Second, our measure of inclusive leadership was adapted from Philip's (2020) qualitative study rather than using Carmeli et al.'s (2010) measure. Carmeli et al.'s (2010) measure, which most inclusive leadership uses as their measure, is based on three dimensions (openness, availability, accessibility). Philip's (2020) qualitative study found four dimensions (voice space, informal authority, coaching and developing, building vulnerable and safe relationships) of inclusive leadership. As such, we developed items based on the four dimensions outlined by Philip (2020). From our results, we cannot confirm that there are four dimensions like the qualitative interviews from the Philip (2020) study suggested, however, this may be an area for further investigation to empirically verify these dimensions.

Third, it is interesting to note that, some of our findings did not align with what previous scholars have found, most notably that there was not a statistically significant

relationship between conscientiousness and performance (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge et al. 2013). We are unsure of why this relationship failed to be significant despite scholars have proven its' relationship previously. Replication of this study with different populations (e.g. working full-time, only entry-level employees, etc.) may show interesting results in comparison.

Lastly, we limited our research to four of the big five personality traits as our main variables of interest. It interesting to study other personality traits to further investigate the trait activating nature of inclusive leadership. For example, positive core self-evaluations have a significant relationship high performance (Erez & Judge, 2001) and future research could investigate whether inclusive leadership exacerbates this relationship. Investigating on how inclusive leadership may moderates the relationship between other personality-outcome relationships would add to our knowledge of the impact of inclusive leadership.

Managerial Implications

Inclusive leadership is increasingly important in the workplace as belongingness and uniqueness have been more focal points within organizations in the past few decades (Carmeli et al. 2010). However, our research findings suggest that inclusive leadership does not have a positive impact on highly neurotic individuals. This finding suggests that although inclusive leadership had positive impacts in general, there may be certain types of individuals or groups of individuals that may not positively respond to inclusive leadership. From our research, it suggests that more emotionally stable employees perform better with inclusive leaders, but more neurotic people's performance is not impacted by inclusive leadership. Previous research has suggested that neurotic

individuals view their leadership poorly, meaning they do not respect the decisions of their leaders (Soane et al. 2015). Leadership may or may not impact high neurotics, generally. With highly neurotic employees, perhaps leaders should use other leadership styles beyond inclusivity.

Organizations are looking for ways to promote or grow inclusive leaders within their organizations. In order to grow inclusive leaders, one important factor that several scholars have pointed to is a leader's degree of openness (Carmeli et al. 2010; Nembehard & Edmondson, 2006; Philip, 2020). This includes actions such as asking their follower questions, inviting their follower to have a seat at the table, and further developing them based off their own interests (Philip, 2020). Accessibility and availability are just as important for leaders to foster for their followers (Carmeli et al. 2010). Polishing up leaders skills in these areas will lead to higher inclusive leadership within organizations.

Conclusion

In this study, we answered the previous call for more research to focus on the follower perception of their leaders (Harm & Spain, 2014). We used the big five personality traits and looked at some relationships that had been previously researched (e.g., openness to experience and creativity) and investigated how inclusive leadership may act as a trait activator in those instances. Results from this study indicate that the inclusive leadership is not a moderator of the relationship between openness and creativity, agreeableness and OCBs, and conscientiousness and performance. However, inclusive leadership did moderate the relationship between neuroticism and performance such that followers low in neuroticism did increase their performance when high

inclusive leadership was present while followers high in neuroticism did not have a change in performance as a result of increased inclusive leadership.

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Appendix A

Inclusive Leadership Scale Adapted from Philip (2020)

For this section, please think about your current supervisor (if you are currently working) or your most recent supervisor (if you are not currently employed). Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below using the scale provided.

1 = strongly disagree

3 = neutral

5 = strongly agree.

1. My leader listens and invites questions
2. My leader involves me in their decision-making processes
3. My leader recognizes the ideas of the team
4. I find my leader to be genuine with their intentions
5. My leader admits not knowing all of the answers
6. My leader stands behind you in your decision-making
7. My leader trusts me in how I do my work.
8. My leader is open to challenge
9. My leader is collaborative with the team
10. My leader provides me opportunities to develop
11. My leader is not overly critical in judging my failures
12. My leader appreciates the strengths of the team

Table 1: Means and Correlations of Variables of Interest

	Mean	A	C	N	IL	Creativity	OCB	Performance
Openness to Experience (OE)	3.49	0.192*	0.022	0.284**				
Agreeableness (A)	4.09	1	0.431**	-0.146	.0359**	0.353**	0.479**	0.271**
Conscientiousness ©	3.8		1	-0.317**	0.427**	0.403**	0.400**	0.295**
Neuroticism (N)	2.14			1	-0.155	-0.243**	-0.179	-0.13
Inclusive Leadership (IL)	3.97				1	0.428**	0.517**	0.467**
Creativity Efficacy	3.36					1	0.467**	0.395**
Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB)	5.27						1	0.584**
Performance	5.94							1

N=129, *p-value>0.05, **p-value>0.01, ***p-value>0.001

Table 2

			Creativity		OCB		Performance	
			ß	ΔR^2	ß	ΔR^2	ß	ΔR^2
H1	Step 1	Age	0.12					
		Gender	-0.199*					
		Occupation Level	0.139					
				0.081*				
	Step 2	Openness	0.216*					
				0.081***				
	Step 3	IL	0.389***					
				0.137***				
	Step 4	Openness X IL	0.057					
				0.003				
H2	Step 1	Age			0.033			
		Gender			0.078			
		Occupational Level			0.089			
						0.048		
	Step 2	Agreeableness			0.294***			
						0.178***		
	Step 3	IL			0.342***			
						0.111***		
	Step 4	Agreeableness X IL			-0.083			
						0.006		
H3	Step 1	Age					-0.016	
		Gender					0.041	
		Occupational Level					0.165+	
								0.052+
	Step 2	Conscientiousness					0.103	
								0.05**
	Step 3	IL					0.349***	
								0.131***
	Step 4	Conscientiousness X IL					-0.131	
								0.015
H4	Step 1	Age					-0.034	
		Gender					0.108	
		Occupational Level					0.13	
								0.052+
	Step 2	Neuroticism					-0.042	
								0.014
	Step 3	IL					0.421***	
								0.165***
	Step 4	Neuroticism X IL					-0.172*	
								0.027*

N=129, +p-value>0.1, *p-value>0.05, **p-value>0.01, ***p-value>0.001