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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

IS HUMILITY ENOUGH? THE IMPACT OF LEADER HUMILITY ON FOLLOWER
MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of South Alabama
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration
in
Management

by
Kelly G. Manix
B.S., Middle Tennessee State University, 2007
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Although dissertations are written by a single individual, it is clear to me now that they are the product of many minds and hearts pulling together to support human achievement and expand knowledge. I could not have accomplished this on my own. In that spirit I would like to thank my committee – Dr. Mickey Smith, Dr. Joe Hair, Dr. Matt Howard, and Dr. Kristie Abston. Thank you to my chair, Dr. Mickey Smith, for always telling me the truth, setting standards high, and not allowing me to settle for work that is less than my best. Dr. Joe Hair, you are one of a kind. Thank you for supporting me along this journey and answering all those emails! Your expertise and kindness are unmatched. To Dr. Matt Howard, being your student for a year straight was a delight. I love your candor, your unique approach to research, and your work ethic is an inspiration. To Dr. Kristie Abston, who has become like family to me, I could not have done this without your guidance and encouragement. Thank you for all the times you allowed me to cry, and vent, and cry some more when I didn't think I could keep going. I'd also like to thank Dr. Micki Kacmar. Your ethics seminar helped me grasp the entire research process from beginning to end and further validated my interest in ethics. Thank you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CB-SEM	Covariance Based Structural Equation Modeling
CCA	Confirmatory Composite Analysis
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CMV	Common Method Variance
CR	Composite Reliability
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
IRB	Institutional Review Board
N	Total Sample Size
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
RMSE	Root Mean Square Error
SD	Standard Deviation
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual
USA	University of South Alabama
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

ABSTRACT

Manix, Kelly G Ph.D., University of South Alabama, May 2022. Is Humility Enough? The Impact of Leader Humility on Follower Moral Disengagement and Unethical Behavior. Chair of Committee: Mickey Smith, Ph.D.

The study examines the impact of leader humility on follower moral disengagement, workplace deviance, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding and explores attributions of ingratiation as a potential boundary condition from a social exchange theory perspective. Using a cross-sectional survey design (N=130), the study finds that leader humility is negatively related to moral disengagement, workplace deviance, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding. The results also suggest follower attributions of ingratiation moderates the negative relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement such that the relationship is weakened. However, the mediating role of moral disengagement was not significant in each relationship. Broadly, the results suggest that leader humility may serve as a deterrent to follower moral disengagement and unethical behaviors, but the presence of leader humility alone may not be enough. If followers also perceive ingratiation from their leaders, the impact of leader humility on follower moral disengagement can diminish. Additionally, there may be other underlying mechanisms beyond moral disengagement that facilitate the negative relationship between leader humility and follower unethical behaviors. Implications of the findings and directions for future research are provided.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, Americans have consistently ranked business executives, salespeople, and members of Congress as having the lowest ethical standards of any profession (Gallup, Inc. & Saad, 2021). Consequently, the field of business ethics research has blossomed in the last 30 years (for reviews see Holland & Albrecht, 2013; Liu et al., 2019; Petrick et al., 2011). Great interest has been paid toward understanding the process of leading and influencing others toward normative behavior, greater ethical awareness, and improved ethical decision-making (Bedi et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2012). At the same time, there has been burgeoning interest in leader humility and its effects on followers and organizations. Scholars postulate the increased interest in humility may be due to the growing complexity of societal problems and the tendency for humble individuals to be others-oriented, display a strong learning orientation, and be willing to listen to and incorporate the ideas of others (Nielsen & Marrone, 2018); all qualities which may be crucial to leading others through complex and ambiguous situations.

Within business ethics research, humility has often been considered a vital trait for virtuous leadership (Argandona, 2015; Frostenson, 2016; Qin et al., 2021). *Leader humility* is characterized by accurately assessing and accepting personal limitations

(Davis et al., 2011; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Owens & Hekman, 2012), being open to feedback and feeling less threatened by the strengths of others (Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Owens & Hekman, 2012; Owens et al., 2013), and maintaining a self-transcendent view of one's place in the world (Morris et al., 2005; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Ou et al., 2014). Humble leaders are more self-aware and conscious of the impact their behaviors have on others (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998), support the development of an others-focused climate (Wang et al., 2020), and display more prosocial behaviors (Jankowski et al., 2013; Owens et al., 2013; Tangney, 2009). Research has found that higher levels of humility is often associated with greater integrity and improved ethical outcomes (De Vries et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2005; Marcus et al., 2007; Nguyen et al., 2020; Ou et al., 2014; Ścigala et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2019), yet less is known about the impact of leader humility on follower ethics (Naseer et al., 2020; Owens et al., 2019).

Workplace deviance, a common term for unethical employee behavior can have heavy consequences for organizations. Defined as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556), it is estimated that 95% of all organizations have reported some form of deviant behavior (Henle et al., 2005) costing billions in lost revenue (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Bennett et al., 2019). Similarly, *knowledge hiding* is thought to cost Fortune 500 companies billions in revenue per year (Babcock, 2004; Pan et al., 2018). Defined as “an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person” (Connelly et al., 2012, p. 65), knowledge hiding can reduce knowledge sharing and transfer which can also undermine organizational objectives and productivity (He et al.,

2019; Martinsons et al., 2017). The two phenomena can have a complementary and reinforcing relationship (Singh, 2019). Employees may engage in deviant behavior while also hiding knowledge about such behavior (their own or others), or employees may engage in deviant behavior because they have been the target of knowledge hiding. The high-profile scandals at World Com and Wells Fargo are just two examples of the magnitude of damage that can occur when both behaviors are rampant within an organization (Kuhn & Sutton, 2006; Tayan, 2019). Due to their pervasiveness and overwhelmingly negative impact on organizations, research on possible mitigating variables is imperative (Hussain et al., 2014). In the present research, I investigate leader humility as an antecedent of both workplace deviance and knowledge hiding that may reduce such behaviors among employees (Sychns et al., 2019).

Several scholars have noted there is a need to identify additional mediators that help explain the process of leader humility on followers (Lin et al., 2019; Naseer et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017). The current research presents *moral disengagement* as one such variable and examines if leader humility has a positive impact on a typically negative process. Moral disengagement is a set of cognitive processes individuals engage in to psychologically alter and justify unethical behaviors to avoid feelings of guilt (Bandura, 1991). Conceptualized by Bandura (1990; 1991), moral disengagement describes why and how individuals disregard shared norms and violate ethical boundaries in varying situations. Drawing from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), I investigate how leader humility may trigger perceptions of social obligation and expectations of reciprocity and thereby diminish follower moral disengagement tendencies.

Additionally, humility scholars have suggested that leader humility is most effective when it is authentic and not utilized or perceived as a form of *impression management* (Bharanitharan et al., 2021; Owens, 2009; Owens et al., 2013). Impression management is the process in which individuals only present self-related information that aligns with how they want to be viewed by others (Rosenfeld et al., 1995). Leader humility, because of its self-transcendent nature and deference toward others, could easily be interpreted as *ingratiation*, an impression management tactic that entails solely presenting information about oneself that reflects likeability (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Since research has suggested that strategically manipulating follower impressions of leader humility undermines its effectiveness, I consider follower attributions of ingratiation as a contextual moderator that may lessen the impact of leader humility on workplace deviance and knowledge hiding through moral disengagement.

Thus, grounded in social exchange theory, the current research looks at how the interaction of leader humility and follower attributions of ingratiation affects follower moral disengagement and subsequent follower workplace deviance and knowledge hiding. Employing a moderated mediation model, I propose that attributions of ingratiation will reduce the main effect of leader humility on moral disengagement as well as the indirect effect of leader humility on workplace deviance and knowledge hiding through moral disengagement (see Figure 1).

While leader humility is often considered a universally good thing, research has begun to emerge that suggests how it is perceived by followers is crucial to its effectiveness (Bharanitharan et al., 2021; Owens, 2009; Owens et al., 2013). Thus, the research contributes to the ethics and leader humility literatures in three ways: First, it

presents leader humility as a variable that may discourage workplace deviance and knowledge hiding within organizations. Second, moral disengagement is tested as a mediator that may help explain the effects of leader humility on follower workplace deviance and knowledge hiding. Third, follower attributions of ingratiation is investigated as a contextual variable that may moderate the impact of leader humility on moral disengagement. In whole, the research questions if leader humility may only be effective at buffering follower moral disengagement and unethical behaviors when followers believe leader humility to be sincere.

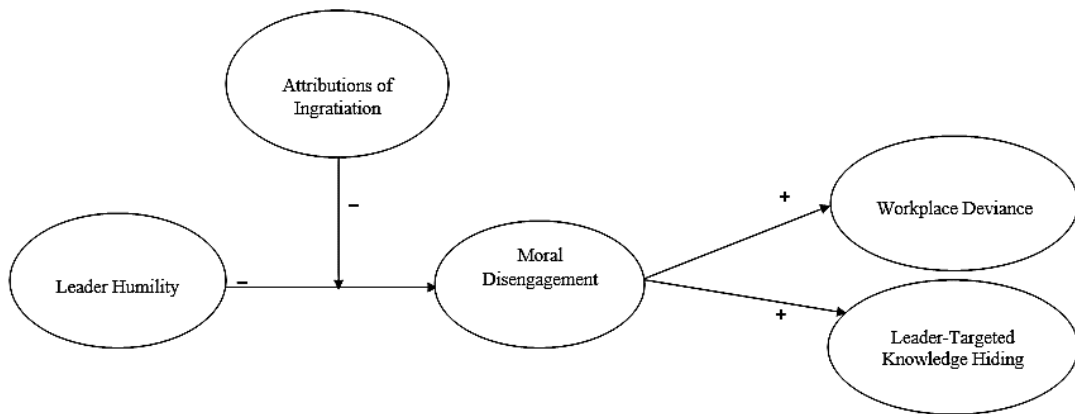


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Hypothesized Variable Relationships.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Moral Disengagement

According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1990; 1991), moral disengagement is a set of cognitive processes that individuals engage in to mentally alter and justify unethical behaviors to avoid feelings of guilt. The cognitive variable helps explain why individuals disregard shared norms and violate ethical boundaries in varying situations. Moral disengagement involves eight social-cognitive mechanisms that enable individuals to perceive unethical actions as less harmful. These mechanisms include 1) the diffusion of responsibility, 2) the displacement of responsibility, 3) attribution of blame, 4) distorting or minimizing consequences, 5) advantageous comparison, 6) euphemistic labeling, 7) dehumanizing victims, and 8) moral justification (Bandura, 1991). Diffusing responsibility entails justifying behaviors by assuming that most people engage in some form of unethical behavior at some point. The displacement of responsibility mechanism justifies unethical behavior because an individual has seen others engage in the same act. Attribution of blame places culpability for an unethical action on the receiving target because according to the actor, the target deserves it. Distortion of consequences includes minimizing the outcome of unethical behavior thus helping actors believe they are less wrong if the consequences are minimal.

Advantageous comparison entails comparing others' unethical behaviors to a current ethical dilemma and rationalizing an unethical choice because it seems less wrong than what others have done. Euphemistic labeling is mentally altering the way an action is labeled to make it more palatable to an individual (e.g., replacing 'stealing' with 'borrowing'). Dehumanizing victims defends unethical behavior by suggesting that victims cannot really be harmed because they are subhuman. Lastly, moral justification defends an unethical action by suggesting it will have utilitarian outcomes and benefit the greater good.

The eight moral disengagement mechanisms enable unethical behaviors because they permit individuals to bend and distort reality and view their behavior as acceptable (Bandura et al., 1996). Research has repeatedly documented the link between moral disengagement and deviant behavior across many contexts (Moore, 2015; Newman et al., 2020). Specifically, connections between moral disengagement and unethical decision-making (Baron et al., 2015; Chugh et al., 2014; Ogunfowora et al., 2013) and moral disengagement and unethical behaviors (Keem et al., 2018; Knoll et al., 2016; Tasa & Bell, 2017; Welsh et al., 2015) are well recognized.

It has been demonstrated that individual humility is negatively related to moral disengagement (Guo et al., 2021; Ogunfowora & Bourdage, 2014; Zhao et al., 2019), yet after an exhaustive literature search on these topics, nothing was found on the effect of leader humility on follower moral disengagement. The impact of leader humility on follower moral disengagement is important to study as it has been suggested that leader humility has the potential to mitigate deviant or unethical behavior (Schyns et al., 2019). In the current research, I employ moral disengagement as a cognitive process variable to

test if leader humility impacts subordinates' mental justification and/or minimization of deviant behaviors (Valle et al., 2019)

2.2 Leader Humility

Leader humility is conceptualized with three facets: 1) the ability to assess strengths and weaknesses accurately and accept personal limitations (Davis et al., 2011; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Owens & Hekman, 2012), 2) being open to feedback and feeling unthreatened by the strengths of others (Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Owens & Hekman, 2012; Owens et al., 2013), and 3) maintaining a self-transcendent view of one's place in the world (Morris et al., 2005; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Ou et al., 2014). It has been proposed that humble individuals are more self-aware and conscious of the impact their behaviors have on others (Davis et al., 2011; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) and have a greater ability to regulate self-centered emotions (Davis et al., 2010). Thus, they are less likely to engage in opportunistic behaviors and take advantage of others (Hilbig & Zettler, 2009).

Wright et al. (2018) argues that humility is a dual-dimension construct of both low self-focus and high other-focus and found humility to be positively associated with other-focused ethical orientations such as civic responsibility and humanitarian-egalitarian ideals. Appropriately, leader humility is associated with greater helpfulness (LaBouff et al., 2012), increased pro-social behavior (Jankowski et al., 2013; Owens et al., 2013; Tangney, 2009), the development of an others-focused climate (Wang et al.,

2020), and higher quality social exchanges (Carnevale et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2020).

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is a psycho-sociological theory that helps explain the behaviors of two parties in social interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Core components of the theory include the interdependence of social exchanges and the self-interested pursuits of both actors who attempt to maximize their own outcomes (Blau, 1964). These outcomes consist of both risks and rewards which influence relationship satisfaction and dependence (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Dependent relationships entail a continued series of exchanges that can generate obligations (Emerson, 1976) and in some circumstances lead to high quality relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As these relationships develop, norms and rules of behavior can emerge that influence subsequent interactions (Emerson, 1976).

One such norm summarized by Gouldner (1960), the *reciprocity norm*, states that a bestowed reward should be returned by the receiver and the giver should not be hurt. A key aspect of the reciprocity norm is that fairness and equality are actively maintained in social exchanges (Gouldner, 1960; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). That is, if one party receives something positive or negative from the other party, they will adjust their actions (Ashforth, 1997) and respond similarly to preserve exchange equilibrium (Valle et al., 2019). This idea has also been elevated to a broader cultural belief that implies people “get what they deserve” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 876).

Individuals can develop quality social exchanges with a variety of environmental actors including a supervisor or leader at work (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Liden et al., 1997). In the context of a leader and subordinate relationship, social exchanges are

influenced by power differentials that can produce inequalities and alter the nature of their interdependence (Zafirovski, 2005). Yet, if subordinates are met with general goodwill and helpfulness by their leaders, they will generally respond in kind to leaders they have established social exchange relationships with (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Masterson et al., 2000). Workplace relationships based on quality social exchanges engender commitment, trust, loyalty, and reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003) and can increase affective attachment between leaders and followers (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Ferris et al., 2009).

Based upon social exchange theory, as humble leaders approach varying situations with low self-focus and high others-focus (Wright et al., 2018), followers will respond to these positive and prosocial behaviors with their own positive and prosocial behaviors (Ashforth, 1997; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Valle et al., 2019). As humble leaders develop quality social exchange relationships with their subordinates (Carnevale et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2020), they will engender greater commitment, trust, loyalty, and reciprocity from subordinates (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). The reciprocity norm dictates that subordinates will feel obligated to reward their leader's positive behaviors with similarly beneficial behaviors (Gouldner, 1960; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). I contend this exchange will serve as a buffer against the justification of selfish and unethical behavior among subordinates.

Hypothesis 1: Leader humility is negatively related to follower moral disengagement.

2.3 The Moderating Role of Attributions of Ingratiation

While authentic leader humility is believed to be largely prosocial (Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Wright et al., 2018), researchers have suggested that engaging in humble behaviors for selfish reasons or to impress others can lead to perceptions of inauthenticity (Bharanitharan et al., 2021; Owens, 2009; Owens et al., 2013). A recent study revealed that the interaction of leader humility and attributions of impression management is positively associated with perceptions of hypocrisy (Bharanitharan et al., 2021). In other words, some followers did not believe that their leader's expressions of humility were due to their leader's actual values. Instead, they believed their leader was engaging in impression management and strategically behaving humbly to be well-liked (Bharanitharan et al., 2021).

The impression management process occurs when individuals only present self-related information that aligns with how they want others to view them (Rosenfeld et al., 1995). Jones and Pittman (1982) developed a taxonomy that includes five forms of impression management tactics that individuals may utilize to encourage others to view them in a certain way: 1) self-promotion to appear competent, 2) ingratiation with the aim to be liked, 3) exemplification to appear like a model employee, 4) intimidation to appear dangerous, and 5) supplication to appear needy and helpless.

In the short term, the aim of ingratiation is to alter a target's perceptions of the actor to something more favorable. In the long term, the actor's goal is to change the balance of power between the target and the actor (Jones, 1964). Ingratiation is comprised of three specific behaviors: 1) other-enhancement, 2) conformity of opinion, judgement, and behavior, and 3) self-presentation (Jones, 1964; Jones & Wortman,

1973). Other-enhancement, also known as flattery, is the expression of positive judgements about the target's characteristics. Conformity in behavior, opinion, and judgement makes the target feel as though they have more in common with the actor and increases their attractiveness (Byrne, 1971). There are two ways to engage in self-presentation according to Jones (1964): 1) the actor communicates their own strengths and positive qualities, and 2) the actor presents themselves in a way that enhances the strengths of the target.

Ingratiation aligns well with humility as a form of impression management because of its specific behaviors and aim. While humble expressions seem to be others-focused for the sake of increasing learning, competence, and improving relationships (Li et al., 2019; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Owens et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2018), these behaviors could easily be interpreted as ingratiation. Humble leaders are more apt to notice, appreciate, and compliment others for their strengths which could be considered flattery and attributed to leaders simply wanting to be well-liked (Bourdage et al., 2020). Humble leaders are more apt to ask followers for feedback, ideas, and advice which could be misinterpreted as the leader having similar views, opinions, and judgements. Asking for help (Jecker & Landy, 1969) and asking questions in general (Huang et al., 2017) have both been documented as strategies to enhance an individual's likability. Humble individuals are more aware of both their strengths and weaknesses and are more apt to frankly acknowledge both their weaknesses and their abilities in front of their followers (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Some followers may misconstrue this as strategic self-presentation.

Ingratiation becomes problematic for social exchange relationships when followers attribute a leader's behavior to a manipulative motive instead of the expression of a genuinely held virtue or value (Bharanitharan et al., 2021; Owens, 2009; Owens et al., 2013). Research has shown that some individuals are predisposed to engaging in this type of manipulative behavior (Hyde & Grieve, 2018) and some employees do perceive that this form of manipulation regularly occurs in their workplace (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Followers who feel they have experienced manipulation report increased negative affect (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017) and perceptions of leader dishonesty (Hyde & Grieve, 2018).

A common characteristic of social exchange relationships is the uncertain and unspoken expectations of both parties to engage in fair and equal exchanges. (Rousseau, 1989). Although leader humility is strongly associated with trust in leader (Nguyen et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019), if subordinates perceive their leader engaging in ingratiation, they may become unsure of their leader's true motivations (Li et al., 2017) and trust in leader can diminish (Yang et al., 2019). A breach of trust or exchange expectations may trigger a "tit for tat' rationale" (Valle et al., 2019) in which one party returns a negative behavior (being fake) with another negative behavior to equalize the relationship. They may even attribute blame toward the target for their own negative behavior (Bandura, 1991).

In the context of the current study, I expect leader humility to have a weaker impact on follower moral disengagement when followers attribute humble expressions to ingratiation. This attribution may lead followers to believe that their leaders are not truly virtuous but deceptive and call into question the true moral nature of their leader and the

sincerity of their humility. This breach in expectations may cause some followers to morally disengage and justify unethical behaviors because of their leader's perceived dishonesty.

Hypothesis 2: Follower attributions of ingratiation moderates the negative relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when attributions of ingratiation are higher.

2.4 Workplace Deviance

Defined as voluntary behavior that violates organizational norms and threatens the wellbeing of the organization and its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), workplace deviance is considered a subcategory of counterproductive work behaviors (Fox et al., 2001; Mackey et al., 2021). It includes a range of behaviors such as theft of property, damaging property, time theft, and time fraud (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The construct is divided into two types of workplace deviance: 1) behaviors aimed at individuals within organizations (*interpersonal deviance*) such as physical assault, verbal harassment or spreading gossip, and 2) behaviors aimed at the organization (*organizational deviance*) such as theft, damaging property, or misusing resources (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Due to the ubiquitousness of workplace deviance and the enormous costs associated with it, it is important for research to pinpoint tactics for reducing such behaviors (Hussain et al., 2014).

One view of workplace deviance suggests that employees engage in such behavior to restore perceptions of equity and to seek retribution (Aquino et al., 1999).

From a purely social exchange view, workplace deviance is considered a reciprocation due to unpleasant treatment or unfair interactions (Liu et al., 2012). In both cases, a great deal of interest has been paid to the effects of leadership on the emergence of workplace deviance (Gok et al., 2017; Malik et al., 2019; Mo & Shi, 2017; Valle et al., 2019) as a means of retribution and/or equalizing the relationship between leader and follower.

Recently, leader humility has been put forward as one such variable that may mitigate follower workplace deviance (Qin et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2021; Qiuyun et al., 2020). It is recognized that leader humility has a positive effect on social exchange relationships (Carnevale et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2020) and previous research has indicated that individual perceptions of social exchange relationships help explain why some employees engage in workplace deviance (El Akremi et al., 2010; Guay et al., 2016; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Singh, 2019). Supportive social exchange relationships engender supportive behaviors. Based on this logic of reciprocity (Fremeaux & Michelson, 2011), leader humility should trigger a felt obligation to reciprocate helpful behavior reducing the likelihood that subordinates will justify unethical behaviors. I contend leader humility will interrupt the moral disengagement process, a reliable predictor of workplace deviance (Moore, 2015), and thereby reduce unethical behaviors toward both individuals and the organization. Thus, I propose:

Hypothesis 3a: Leader humility is negatively related to interpersonal deviance.

Hypothesis 3b: Leader humility is negatively related to organizational deviance.

Hypothesis 4a: Moral disengagement mediates the negative relationship between leader humility and interpersonal deviance.

Hypothesis 4b: Moral disengagement mediates the negative relationship between leader humility and organizational deviance.

While targets of ingratiation tend to react positively (Bolino et al., 2016; Dulebohn et al., 2017), observers of ingratiation behaviors tend to perceive actors negatively (Kim, 2019; Vonk, 1998). Observers tend to attribute these behaviors to self-serving and political motives (Fein, 1996; Kim, 2019; Vonk, 1998) and several derogatory names have emerged for these individuals such as “suck up” or “brown-noser” (Parker & Parker, 2017). Within Western cultures especially, individuals expect greater authenticity of themselves and of others (Cross et al., 2003; Heppner et al., 2008). A follower may at first feel positively about ingratiation behaviors directed at them, but observing their leader direct the same behaviors at others may increase perceptions of dishonesty and negative affect (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Hyde & Grieve, 2018; Yang et al., 2019). In one study, subordinates who observed their supervisors engaging in ingratiation developed less positive exchange relationships with that supervisor (Kim et al., 2018).

Poor social exchange and negative affect toward leaders are some of the primary causes of counterproductive work behaviors like interpersonal and organizational deviance (Lian et al. 2014; Liu et al., 2012; Mayer et al. 2012, Qin et al., 2021; Singh, 2019). When experiencing negative emotions, individuals will sometimes engage in deviant behavior to improve their mood (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000; Tice et al., 2001). Followers who interpret their leader’s behavior as ingratiation as opposed to genuine virtue are likely to experience less trust in their leader (Yang et al., 2019), greater

negative affect (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017), and lower quality social exchange (Kim et al., 2018). Followers may then morally disengage and justify deviant behaviors to “settle the score” between themselves and their leader and then engage in either interpersonal or organizational deviance (Valle et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 5a: Follower attributions of ingratiation moderates the negative indirect relationship between leader humility and interpersonal deviance through moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when attributions of ingratiation are high.

Hypothesis 5b: Follower attributions of ingratiation moderates the negative indirect relationship between leader humility and organizational deviance through moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when attributions of ingratiation are high.

2.5 Knowledge Hiding

Knowledge hiding is defined as “an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person” (Connelly et al., 2012, p. 65). It is purely intentional and not just the absence of knowledge sharing (Connelly et al., 2012). There are three different forms of knowledge hiding: 1) playing dumb, 2) evasive hiding, and 3) rationalized hiding. Playing dumb entails feigning that one does not know the information requested. Evasive hiding involves misdirection by either providing different information than requested or offering to provide the information later (without really intending to do so). Rationalized hiding entails making

excuses as to why the information cannot be given such as blaming a circumstance or another individual. While playing dumb and evasive hiding involve an element of deceit, rationalized hiding could sometimes be due to confidentiality concerns (Pan et al., 2018). It is conceptually similar to employee silence, or the intentional withholding of information and ideas that could potentially improve work and the organization (He et al., 2019; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008).

Scholars argue that unlike counterproductive work behaviors, knowledge hiding does not always emerge with an intention to cause harm but is simply a response to a given context (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). For example, Connelly et al. (2012) found that employees are more likely to hide knowledge when knowledge is complex, not task related, and when employees feel their organization does not have a sharing climate. Additionally, interpersonal issues can influence knowledge hiding (Černe et al., 2014; Connelly et al., 2012). Specifically, employees are more likely to hide knowledge from those they distrust, while the type of knowledge hiding they engage in is more influenced by context (Connelly et al., 2012; Ford, 2004). Despite the motivation behind it, knowledge hiding is extremely detrimental to organizational functioning and financial performance (Babcock, 2004; He et al., 2019; Pan et al., 2018) and thus an important behavior to minimize.

Reciprocal social exchange is one variable that has been found to reduce knowledge hiding (Černe et al., 2014) and, as previously mentioned, leader humility has a positive effect on social exchange relationships (Carnevale et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2020). In the current research, leader-targeted knowledge hiding was measured to tease out the effects of leader humility on moral disengagement and

knowledge hiding through the lens of social exchange theory. Leader humility should prompt the reciprocation of helpful behaviors reducing the likelihood that subordinates will justify selfish and potentially unethical behaviors like knowledge hiding. Recently, Zhong et al. (2021) found leader humility has a negative indirect relationship with knowledge hiding via follower moqi, the unspoken understanding of expectations between a leader and follower from the follower's perspective (Zheng et al., 2019). Similarly, I propose that leader humility will reduce knowledge hiding because of clearer behavioral expectations that emerge from positive social exchange (Emerson, 1976). Also, in line with previous research on knowledge hiding (Koay & Lim, 2021; Zhao & Xia, 2019), I expect moral disengagement to mediate the negative relationship between leader humility and leader-targeted knowledge hiding.

Hypothesis 6: Leader humility is negatively related to leader-targeted knowledge hiding.

Hypothesis 7: Moral disengagement mediates the negative relationship between leader humility and leader-targeted knowledge hiding.

As leader humility facilitates positive social exchange (Carnevale et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2020), followers should respond with similarly positive behaviors (Ashforth, 1997) thereby reducing the mental justification of selfish and unethical behaviors (Valle et al., 2019) such as knowledge hiding (Koay & Lim, 2021; Zhao & Xia, 2019). However, I expect the strength of the negative relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement to be weakened when followers attribute leader humility to attempts at ingratiation because it violates trust and psychological contract

expectations (Rousseau, 1989; Valle et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2019). Social exchange theory purports that such violations will reduce social exchange quality and potentially trigger the reciprocation of negative behavior (Gouldner, 1960; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Followers may utilize moral disengagement mechanisms such as the diffusion or displacement of responsibility to justify their own deviant thoughts because they believe their boss is dishonest (Bandura, 1986). They may reason, “Why should I behave honestly and pro-socially if my boss is behaving dishonestly and in the service of their own image?”

Social exchange theory suggests when followers distrust their leadership, they will go beyond mental justification of knowledge hiding and engage in knowledge hiding behaviors as a form of retaliation for their leader’s perceived bad behavior (Gouldner, 1960; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003; Valle et al., 2019). Previous research demonstrates that increased interpersonal distrust (Connelly et al., 2012; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2021; Ford, 2004) and moral disengagement (Koay & Lim, 2021; Zhao & Xia, 2019) are both predictors of knowledge hiding behavior. Thus, followers are more likely to conceal information from individuals they distrust and when they can mentally craft a moral justification for doing so. Additionally, followers may also hide certain forms of knowledge from leaders to protect themselves because they perceive their leader to be untrustworthy (Connelly et al., 2012). There may be concerns that information will not remain confidential. Despite the type of knowledge that is hidden, followers will be more apt to hide knowledge from leaders they perceive to be ingratiating as it implies that leaders may be dishonest and therefore, untrustworthy.

Hypothesis 8: Follower attributions of ingratiation moderates the negative indirect relationship between leader humility and leader-targeted knowledge hiding through moral disengagement such that the relationship is weaker when attributions of ingratiation are high.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

3.1 Participants and Sample

Two hundred participants were recruited through Prolific, an online data collection platform that vets and compensates individuals for their participation in survey-based research. Individuals were pre-screened before selection and self-reported working at least 21 hours per week and having a direct supervisor to whom they report. After agreeing to participate, individuals were forwarded to a Qualtrics survey that began with an informed consent form. Surveys two and three also included an informed consent form and a qualifying question which asked participants if there had been a change in their supervisor in the last week. Individuals that answered “yes” were sent to the end of the survey and removed from the study. To match responses across time waves, individuals were asked to input their unique Prolific ID in each survey.

The wave one survey received 200 responses, wave two received 184 responses, and wave three received 176. Several quality checks were applied to ensure data integrity. The 36 respondents who did not complete all three surveys were removed from the sample. 28 individuals experienced a change in their supervisor over the course of the three weeks and were also removed from the sample. Additionally, participants were removed if they selected the same response for two-thirds or more of the questions and if

they responded incorrectly to attention checks (e.g., “Please mark this item as strongly disagree.”). Finally, when missing data for an observation exceeded 15% it was removed from the sample (Hair et al., 2017). The additional 13 missing values were treated with mean replacement as zero indicators were missing more than 5% of their values (Hair et al., 2017). This protocol resulted in a final sample of 130.

Participants were 53.8% female and had an average age of 29.08 years. Average organizational tenure was 3.14 years, average job tenure was 3 years, and average tenure under supervisor was 1.67 years.

3.2 Procedure

Data was collected in three waves, each a week apart, to help diminish common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al., 2012). At each data collection interval, a Qualtrics survey began with a notice that participation is voluntary and anonymous and included an informed consent form. Once this form was acknowledged, participants were directed to the main survey. To match responses across each wave of data collection, participants were instructed to input their unique Prolific ID. Participants were notified of a new survey link in the Prolific app at time waves two and three and were instructed to input the same unique identifier for both waves. Approval for this research has been applied for from the University of South Alabama (USA) Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix A).

3.3 Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all survey responses were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (*1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree*).

Leader Humility. Followers rated their leader's humility with a nine-item scale ($\alpha = .95$) from Owens et al. (2013). A sample item is "This person admits when they don't know how to do something."

Attributions of Ingratiation. Followers evaluated the impression management motives of their leader with a five-item scale ($\alpha = .88$) adapted from Bolino and Turnley (1999). Items were rated with a seven-point Likert scale (*1 = never behaves this way to 7 = often behaves this way*). A sample item is "My leader takes an interest in subordinates' personal lives to show that he/she is friendly".

Moral Disengagement. An eight-item scale ($\alpha = .74$) developed and validated by Moore et al. (2012) was used to measure follower moral disengagement. A sample item is "Taking personal credit for ideas that were not your own is no big deal."

Interpersonal Deviance. A seven-item scale ($\alpha = .72$) from Bennett and Robinson (2000) was used to measure interpersonal deviance. Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale (*1 = never, 4 = sometimes, and 7 = daily*). A sample item is "Acted rudely toward someone at work."

Organizational Deviance. A 12-item scale ($\alpha = .75$) from Bennett and Robinson (2000) was used to measure organizational deviance. Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale (*1 = never, 4 = sometimes, and 7 = daily*). A sample item is "Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at your workplace."

Leader-Targeted Knowledge Hiding. A twelve-item scale ($\alpha = .90$) adapted from Connelly et al. (2012) was used to measure knowledge hiding. Items were rated using a seven-point Likert scale ($1 = not\ at\ all$, $4 = somewhat$, and $7 = yes, absolutely$). A sample item is “I say that I do not know, even though I do.”

Control Variables. Age, gender, organizational tenure, job tenure, and tenure under leader were controlled based on previous findings in the literature (Anand et al., 2021; Mackey et al., 2021). Age was measured in years and organizational tenure, job tenure, and tenure under leader was measured in months. For gender, participants were asked “With what gender do you identify?” and given a multiple-choice option (Male, Female, Other).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Analysis

SmartPLS 3.3.5 was used to run partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM; Ringle et al., 2015) because it is effective at evaluating and predicting complex relationships (Hair, Risher et al., 2019). It is also an appropriate tool because the research attempts to make predictions based on a group of interdependent composite variables (Hair, Risher et al., 2019; Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). PLS-SEM analysis involves two steps: 1) assessment of the measurement model to determine how well variables reflect constructs, and 2) assessment of the structural model to determine how constructs are related to each other (Hair, Black et al., 2019). The theoretical model tested can be seen in Figure 1.

First, confirmatory composite analysis (CCA), similar to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), was applied to assess the measurement model. Item loadings ($> .60$), composite reliability ($> .70$), and average variance extracted ($> .50$), were compared to generally accepted cutoffs (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and by assessing heterotrait-monotrait ratios ($< .85$; Henseler et al., 2015). The structural model was evaluated by checking for multicollinearity using

variance inflation factor scores (< 3.0 ; Hair, Black et al., 2019). PLS bootstrapping was conducted to evaluate path coefficients and their significance using bias-corrected confidence intervals. Finally, total variance explained in endogenous constructs (R^2), exogenous construct effect sizes (f^2), in-sample predictive power (Q^2 ; > 0), as well as out-of-sample prediction were assessed (Hair et al., 2020).

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlations can be found in Table 1. As expected, the correlations between moral disengagement and interpersonal deviance ($r = 0.30, p < 0.01$), moral disengagement and organizational deviance ($r = 0.26, p < 0.01$), and moral disengagement and leader-targeted knowledge hiding ($r = 0.36, p < 0.001$) were positive and significant. Also, leader humility and attributions of ingratiation were positively and significantly correlated ($r = 0.45, p < 0.001$) reflecting similar findings in the literature and providing further support for the reliability and validity of the conceptual model. There were negative and significant correlations between leader humility and interpersonal deviance ($r = -0.19, p < 0.05$), leader humility and organizational deviance ($r = -0.28, p < 0.01$), leader humility and leader-targeted knowledge hiding ($r = -0.19, p < 0.05$), but the leader humility and follower moral disengagement correlation was not significant.

Table 1. Standard Deviations, Means, and Correlations of Model Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Leader Humility	4.68	1.60										
2. Ingratiation	3.42	1.41	0.45***									
3. Moral Disengagement	2.35	0.86	-0.03	0.14								
4. Interpersonal Deviance	1.51	0.51	-0.19*	0.03	0.30**							
5. Organizational Deviance	1.83	0.54	-0.28**	0.05	0.26**	0.32***						
6. Knowledge Hiding	2.00	1.03	-0.19*	0.16	0.36***	0.27**	0.39***					
7. Age	29.08	10.12	-0.12	-0.04	-0.25**	0.08	-0.04	-0.24**				
8. Gender	1.57	0.53	0.03	0.08	-0.12	-0.15	-0.12	-0.19*	0.11			
9. Organization Tenure	37.75	52.37	-0.19*	0.02	-0.09	0.10	0.04	-0.12	0.64***	0.18*		
10. Supervisor Tenure	20.70	22.68	-0.24**	-0.17	-0.14	0.12	0.00	-0.10	0.41***	0.06	0.63***	
11. Job Tenure	36.06	83.03	-0.23*	-0.07	0.02	0.11	-0.01	-0.05	0.41***	0.15	0.58***	0.27**

Notes: N=130, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

4.3 Measurement Model Evaluation – PLS-SEM

First, the outer measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity. In PLS-SEM this is accomplished by applying confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) similar to confirmatory factor analysis in CB-SEM (Hair et al., 2020). Outer loadings that were not significant and/or below .40 were removed (Bagozzi et al., 1991; Hair et al., 2011). This included items OD3 (.26), OD6 (.38), and OD10 (.32). Indicator loadings between .40 and .70 are justified for removal if doing so improves composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE), and their removal does not significantly impact content validity (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, OD1 (.44), OD2 (.54), OD5 (.51), OD9 (.50), ID4 (.42), ID5 (.42), KH12 (.52), MD2 (.52), and MD7 (.57) were all removed which did improve the measures. Remaining indicators below the recommended loading criterion (.60) were retained to maintain content validity and because they were very close to the cutoff (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 lists all indicator items, corresponding factor loadings, and whether they were retained or removed. All retained items were significant, $p < .001$.

Table 2. PLS-SEM Results: Construct Items and Corresponding Indicator Loadings

Leader Humility		
LH1	This person actively seeks feedback, even if it is critical.	0.74 Retained
LH2	This person admits it when they don't know how to do something.	0.82 Retained
LH3	This person acknowledges when others have more knowledge and skills than him or her.	0.88 Retained
LH4	This person takes notice of others' strengths.	0.86 Retained
LH5	This person often compliments others on their strengths.	0.82 Retained
LH6	This person shows appreciation for the unique contributions of others	0.88 Retained
LH7	This person is willing to learn from others.	0.91 Retained
LH8	This person is open to the ideas of others.	0.88 Retained
LH9	This person is open to the advice of others	0.92 Retained
Attributions of Ingratiation		
IG1	Compliments followers so they will see him/her as likable.	0.88 Retained
IG2	Take an interest in subordinates' personal lives to show that he/she is friendly.	0.64 Retained
IG3	Praises subordinates for accomplishments so they will consider he/she to be a nice person.	0.89 Retained
IG4	Does favors for subordinates to show them that he/she is friendly.	0.83 Retained
IG5	Asks followers for advice so they will like him/her.	0.81 Retained

Table 2. Cont.

Moral Disengagement		
MD1 It is okay to spread rumors to defend those you care about.	0.64	Retained
MD2 Taking something without the owner's permission is okay if you're just borrowing it.	0.52	Removed
MD3 Considering how others misrepresent themselves, it's okay to inflate your credentials.	0.77	Retained
MD4 People should be held accountable for doing questionable things if they are doing what an authority figure told them to do.	0.63	Retained
MD5 People can't be blamed for doing things technically wrong when their friends are doing it too.	0.66	Retained
MD6 Taking personal credit for ideas that were not your own is no big deal.	0.62	Retained
MD7 Some people have to be treated roughly because they lack feeling that can be hurt.	0.57	Removed
MD8 People who get mistreated have usually done something to bring it on themselves.	0.63	Retained
Leader-Targeted Knowledge Hiding		
KH1 Agreed to help him/her but never really intended to.	0.71	Retained
KH2 Agreed to help him/her but instead give him/her information different from what s/he wanted.	0.56	Retained
KH3 Told him/her that I would help him/her out but stalled as much as possible.	0.74	Retained
KH4 Offered him/her some other information instead of what he/she really wants.	0.67	Retained
KH5 Pretended that I did not know the information.	0.87	Retained
KH6 Said that I did not know, even though I did.	0.86	Retained
KH7 Pretended that I did not know what s/he was talking about.	0.82	Retained
KH8 Said that I was not very knowledgeable about the topic.	0.82	Retained
KH9 Explained that I would like to tell him/her but was not supposed to.	0.64	Retained
KH10 Explained the information is confidential and only available to people on a particular project.	0.52	Retained
KH11 Told him/her that another superior would not let anyone share this knowledge.	0.52	Retained
KH12 Said I would not answer his/her questions.	0.50	Removed
Interpersonal Deviance		
ID1 Made fun of someone at work	0.61	Retained
ID2 Said something hurtful to someone at work	0.56	Retained
ID3 Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work	0.52	Retained
ID4 Cursed at someone at work	0.42	Removed
ID5 Played a mean prank on someone at work	0.42	Removed
ID6 Acted rudely toward someone at work	0.78	Retained
ID7 Publicly embarrassed someone at work	0.69	Retained
Organizational Deviance		
OD1 Taken property from work without permission	0.44	Removed
OD2 Spent too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working	0.54	Removed
OD3 Falsified a receipt to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on business expenses	0.26	Removed
OD4 Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at your workplace	0.57	Retained
OD5 Come in late to work without permission	0.51	Removed
OD6 Littered your work environment	0.38	Removed
OD7 Neglected to follow your boss's instructions	0.59	Retained
OD8 Intentionally worked slower than you could have worked	0.82	Retained
OD9 Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person	0.50	Removed
OD10 Used an illegal drug or consumed alcohol on the job	0.32	Removed
OD11 Put little effort into your work	0.81	Retained
OD12 Dragged out work in order to get overtime	0.72	Retained

Next, indicator and measurement model reliability were evaluated. Measurement model results can be seen in Table 3. All indicator items showed satisfactory reliabilities. Composite reliabilities, a measure of the internal consistency among construct indicators (Hair, Black, et al., 2019) exceeded the .70 threshold requirement for all constructs ranging from .72 to .96 (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, all guidelines were met for measurement model reliability.

To assess convergent validity the average variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs were evaluated against the .50 minimum (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). All constructs met the cutoff except moral disengagement (.42) and interpersonal deviance (.47). However, Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that average variance extracted is a conservative gauge of measurement model validity and researchers may conclude that convergent validity is satisfactory if composite reliabilities are above accepted thresholds. Since composite reliabilities of moral disengagement (.82) and interpersonal deviance (.72) are above the .70 recommended minimum, I concluded the internal reliability of the measures were acceptable.

Table 3. PLS-SEM Results: Reliability, Validity, and AVEs of Model Variables

Variable	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Leader Humility	.96	0.862					
2. Ingratiation	.91	0.421	0.819				
3. Moral Disengagement	.74	-0.069	0.181	0.654			
4. Interpersonal Deviance	.72	-0.266	-0.024	0.257	0.682		
5. Organizational Deviance	.75	-0.393	0.016	0.273	0.245	0.709	
6. Knowledge Hiding	.91	-0.265	0.153	0.412	0.276	0.457	0.708

Discriminant validity measures the differences between model constructs and helps establish that they are distinct conceptually (Hair, Black et al., 2019). The Fornell-Larcker Criterion was used to assess discriminant validity. All the square roots of all AVEs were greater than the inter-construct correlations, suggesting adequate discriminant validity between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, all cross-loadings were lower than construct loadings which also indicates discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Finally, heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios were assessed to compare the within construct correlations to the between constructs correlations. All ratios were below .85 indicating the constructs are inherently different concepts (Henseler et al., 2015). Also, all HTMT confidence intervals fell outside one indicating all constructs are empirically distinct (Hair et al., 2017).

The final steps of CCA evaluate nomological and predictive validity. The significant correlations between the constructs as compared to the leader humility literature is considered acceptable evidence that the model has theoretical and empirical reliability (Hair, Risher et al., 2019). Based on the previous literature review, the measurement model has acceptable nomological validity. As the current study was longitudinal, predictive relevance must also be assessed. To assess the model's predictive relevance, Q^2 values resulting from the blindfolding approach with an omission distance of 7 were examined to evaluate its in-sample predictive power. All values were slightly above zero for endogenous constructs indicating that the model has in-sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2020). The Q^2 for moral disengagement was .02, the Q^2 for interpersonal deviance was .05, the Q^2 for organizational deviance was .09, and the Q^2 for

leader-targeted knowledge hiding was .10. All Q^2 values indicate the model paths have predictive relevance for the four endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2017).

4.4 Structural Model Evaluation – PLS-SEM

PLS-SEM structural model assessment involves evaluating multicollinearity, path coefficients and their significance, variance explained in endogenous constructs (R^2), effect sizes for exogenous constructs (f^2), endogenous construct Q^2 for in-sample predictive relevance, and out-of-sample-predictive relevance using PLSpredict (Hair et al., 2020). The next sections explain the findings and results (see Figure 2). First, the structural model was assessed for multicollinearity by checking variance inflation factor (VIF) values. All values were beneath 3.0 indicating multicollinearity is unlikely a critical issue (Hair, Black et al., 2019). Additionally, the SRMR value was .09 which is below the required value of .10 and indicates acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2017).

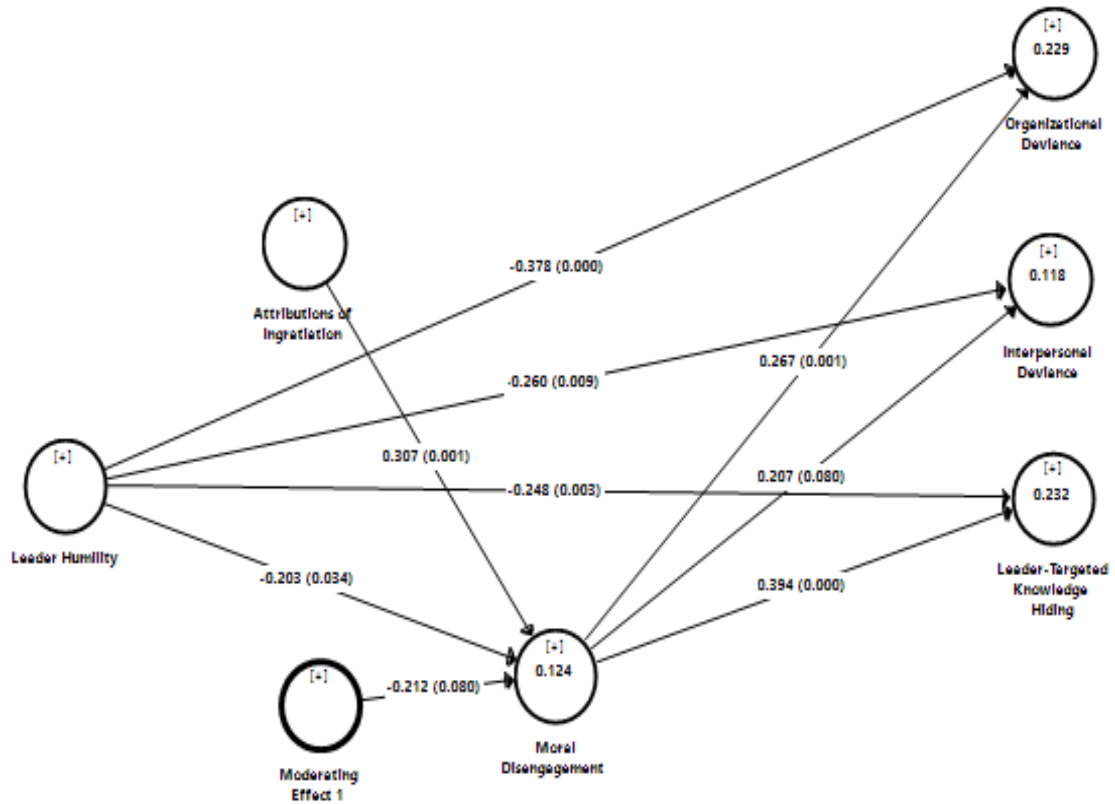


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Results: Structural Model of Hypothesized Variable Relationships

Finally, path coefficients and their significance were assessed. After running bootstrapping where 5,000 samples were taken to produce bias-corrected confidence intervals, all path coefficients and their significance were evaluated (see Table 4). First the hypothesized direct relationships were evaluated followed by the hypothesized indirect relationships.

Table 4. PLS-SEM Results: Structural Path Analysis

Direct Effects	β	<i>p</i>	H	Supported?
Leader Humility -> Moral Disengagement	-0.20	**	H1	Yes
Leader Humility -> Interpersonal Deviance	-0.26	***	H3a	Yes
Leader Humility -> Organizational Deviance	-0.38	****	H3b	Yes
Leader Humility -> Leader-Targeted Knowledge Hiding	-0.25	***	H6	Yes
Indirect Effects – Mediation				
Leader Humility -> Moral Disengagement -> Interpersonal Deviance	-0.04	<i>ns</i>	H4a	No
Leader Humility -> Moral Disengagement -> Organizational Deviance	-0.08	*	H4b	Yes
Leader Humility -> Moral Disengagement -> Leader-Targeted Knowledge Hiding	-0.05	*	H7	Yes
Moderating Effect				
Leader Humility X Attributions of Ingratiation -> Moral Disengagement	-0.21	*	H2	Yes
Moderated Mediation				
Leader Humility X Attributions of Ingratiation -> Moral Disengagement -> Interpersonal Deviance	-0.04	<i>ns</i>	H5a	No
Leader Humility X Attributions of Ingratiation -> Moral Disengagement -> Organizational Deviance	-0.05	<i>ns</i>	H5b	No
Leader Humility X Attributions of Ingratiation -> Moral Disengagement -> Leader-Targeted Knowledge Hiding	-0.08	<i>ns</i>	H8	No

Notes: N=130. * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$; *ns*=not significant.

4.4.1 Direct Relationships

Hypothesis 1, which states that leader humility is negatively related to moral disengagement, was supported as leader humility was found to have a negative and significant relationship with moral disengagement ($\beta = -0.20, p < 0.05$). Hypotheses 3a and 3b states leader humility is negatively related to interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance. Results indicate these relationships are also significant ($\beta = -$

0.26, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 6 which offered leader humility is negatively related to leader-targeted knowledge hiding was also supported ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$).

4.4.2 Indirect Relationships – Mediation

The mediating effect of moral disengagement was also analyzed. The results revealed that while the direct negative relationship between leader humility and interpersonal deviance was significant, the relationship through moral disengagement was not. Thus, hypothesis 4a was not supported. The direct relationship between leader humility and organizational deviance as well as the indirect relationship through moral disengagement was significant ($\beta = -0.05$, $p < 0.10$) lending support to hypothesis 4b. Also, the direct relationship between leader humility and leader-targeted knowledge hiding as well as the indirect relationship through moral disengagement was significant ($\beta = -0.08$, $p < 0.10$) lending support to hypothesis 7. Although the social sciences typically use the 0.05 cutoff for significance testing, it is common to occasionally adopt a 10% significance level in reporting results (Hair et al., 2017). Accordingly, I conclude that hypotheses 4b and 7 are both supported. Interestingly, though not hypothesized, the impact of attributions of ingratiation on organizational deviance and leader-targeted knowledge hiding through moral disengagement were also significant ($\beta = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.01$).

4.4.3 Indirect Relationships – Moderation and Moderated Mediation

Moderation analysis was also conducted to assess the impact of attributions of ingratiation. The orthogonalizing approach was used to minimize estimation bias and maximize prediction (Hair et al., 2017). The results revealed the interaction effect of leader humility and attributions of ingratiation on moral disengagement was significant

($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.10$) giving support to hypothesis 2 (see Figure 3). However, the moderating impact of attributions of ingratiation on the indirect relationships between leader humility and the outcome variables through moral disengagement were not significant. Thus, 5a, 5b and 8 were not supported. These results are also outlined in Table 4.

4.4.4 Indirect Relationships – Control Variables

Age, gender, job tenure, organization tenure and tenure under supervisor were all initially controlled in the model. Since age and gender were the only control variables to have a significant correlation with the dependent variables, job tenure, organizational tenure and tenure under supervisor were removed from the final model. After running bootstrapping, only age was significant as a control for leader-targeted knowledge hiding and gender for interpersonal deviance. This indicates that males were more likely to engage in interpersonal deviance and as age decreases leader-targeted knowledge hiding increases. Since the controls were not significant for all dependent variables, the decision was made to remove them from the results for a more parsimonious model (Becker, 2005).

Next, the structural model was accessed for explained variance. Moral disengagement has an R^2 of .12, interpersonal deviance has an R^2 of .17, organizational deviance has an R^2 of .24, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding has an R^2 of .25. In the social sciences these effect sizes are considered weak but still potentially meaningful (Hair et al., 2017; Schäfer & Schwarz, 2019). f^2 effect sizes were evaluated to assess the impact of the exogenous constructs on the endogenous constructs and ranged from small to medium (Cohen, 1988). Leader humility had a small effect on producing the R^2 of

moral disengagement ($f^2 = .04$), a small effect on interpersonal deviance ($f^2 = .06$), a small effect on leader-targeted knowledge hiding ($f^2 = .08$), and a medium effect on organizational deviance ($f^2 = .17$). The moderating effect of ingratiation on moral disengagement was also small ($f^2 = .04$). Finally, moral disengagement had a small impact on the R^2 of interpersonal deviance ($f^2 = .07$), a small impact on organizational deviance ($f^2 = .08$), and medium impact on leader-targeted knowledge hiding ($f^2 = .14$).

4.5 Out of Sample Prediction

Finally, utilizing PLSpredict, out-of-sample predictive relevance was assessed. PLSpredict uses hold-out sampling and compares single-item error terms from a linear regression to those generated from the PLSpredict model (Shmueli et al., 2019). The recommended hold-out sample (k) is greater than 30 (Hair et al., 2020). I utilized 5 subgroups for my sample of 130 ($k=5$; $n=30$). After running the analysis, the endogenous indicators' error terms for the root mean square error (RMSE) method were lower than those generated by the linear regression model, confirming the model's predictive power (Hair et al., 2020). The final model is shown in Figure 2.

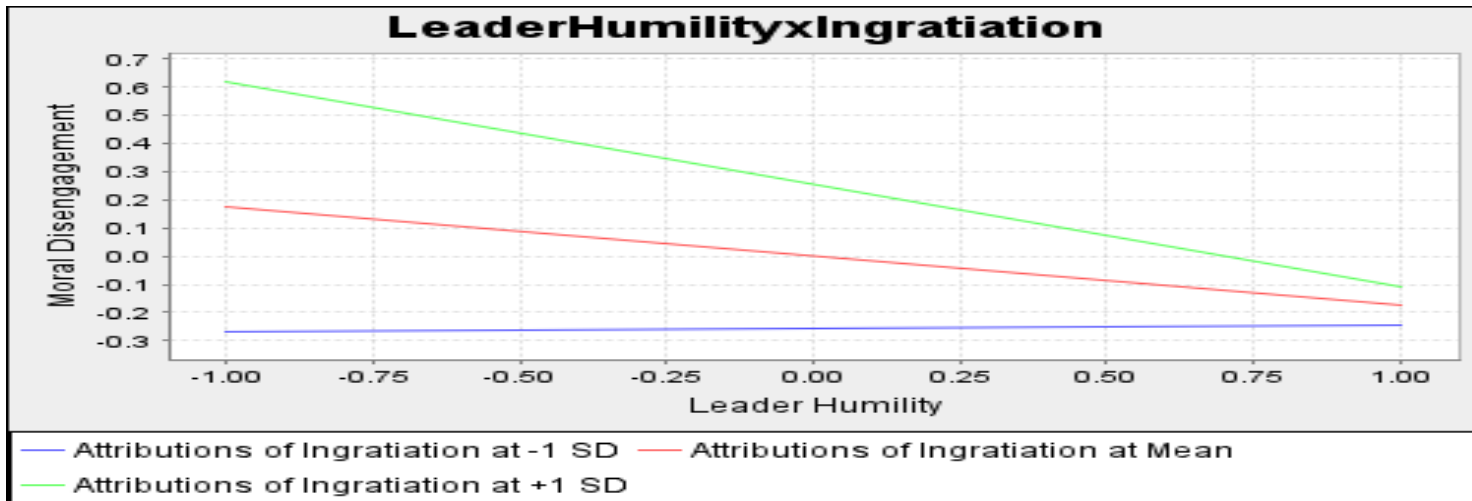


Figure 3. Simple Slope Analysis: Significant moderating impact of Ingratiation between Leader Humility and Moral Disengagement.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Drawing upon social exchange theory, the key purpose of the study was to explore the impact of leader humility on follower moral disengagement and subsequent unethical behaviors. While individual humility is positively associated with higher levels of integrity and greater ethics, (Lee et al., 2008; Nguyen et al., 2020; Ou et al., 2014; Zhao et al., 2019), the effects of leader humility on follower morality has received less attention (Nasser et al., 2020; Owens et al., 2019). As hypothesized, leader humility was negatively related to follower moral disengagement (H1), interpersonal deviance (H3a), organizational deviance (H3b), and leader-targeted knowledge hiding (H6). Additionally, moral disengagement partially mediated the relationship between leader humility and organizational deviance (H4b) and leader humility and leader-targeted knowledge hiding (H7). However, the indirect effect of leader humility on interpersonal deviance through moral disengagement (H4a) was not significant. These results suggest that while leader humility may serve as an environmental deterrent to both moral disengagement and unethical behaviors, moral disengagement may not be the mediating variable that best explains the negative relationship between leader humility and interpersonal deviance. This may be because the target of interpersonal deviance is more likely to be a peer or a coworker. Leader humility may not impact the propensity to target a coworker in the same way that leader humility would deter a subordinate from hiding information from

their leader. Also, it makes theoretical sense that leader humility is more likely to deter moral disengagement and organizational deviance as subordinates tend to consider leadership as representative of the entire organization and their behaviors as reflective of the organization's culture (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Schneider, 1987). Employees may assume their organization is more virtuous if they have a humble leader and therefore be less likely to morally disengage and act against the organization. Conversely, if they have a boss that ranks low on leader humility, subordinates may assume their organization is less moral and thus have greater mental justification to behave unethically. Future researchers may wish to test additional mediators such as coworker support or perceived reciprocity to better explain the negative relationship between leader humility and interpersonal deviance.

Hypothesis 2 presented attributions of ingratiation moderates the negative relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement such that the relationship would be weaker. As hypothesized, this effect was significant. When followers attributed ingratiation behaviors to their leaders, the negative relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement was weakened. However, the moderated mediation effects were not significant. Again, while leader humility is negatively related to moral disengagement and unethical behaviors, it is possible that moral disengagement does not facilitate the negative relationship between leader humility and unethical behavior. Other variables such as leader-member exchange, supervisor support, and perceived reciprocity may better enable the relationships. Inserting one of these variables before moral disengagement in a serial mediating model may also better explain the data.

It is also possible that the international participant sample impacted the results. Cultural dimensions such as power distance, masculinity, and individualism differ greatly among countries and thus, implicit leadership theories can vary from culture to culture (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Den Hartog et al., 1999; Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Some cultures prefer leadership that employs greater power distance between leader and follower and therefore may not react to leader humility in a positive way (Hu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). A participant sample strictly from the United States, which tends to rank lower on power distance expectations (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Robert et al., 2000), may provide a more accurate picture of the effects the study is seeking to identify.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The results support previous findings that leader humility may serve as a deterrent to workplace deviance (Qin et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2021; Qiuyun et al., 2020) and knowledge hiding (Zhong et al., 2021) and that moral disengagement is a key predictor of workplace deviance and knowledge hiding behaviors (Koay & Lim, 2021; Moore, 2012; Zhao & Xia, 2019). Additionally, the results provide support for the detrimental effect attributions of ingratiation can have on leader humility in social exchange relationships (Bharanitharan et al., 2021; Li et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2019). While it has been demonstrated that individual humility is negatively related to moral disengagement (Guo et al., 2021; Ogunfowora & Bourdage, 2014; Zhao et al., 2019), to the author's knowledge this is the first study to provide support for leader humility as a possible deterrent to follower moral disengagement. The study results suggest that leader humility

serves as a buffer to follower moral disengagement and the effect is strongest when followers do not attribute ingratiation tactics to their leader.

Social exchange theory posits that to preserve fairness and equality in relationships, individuals will alter their actions in response to the actions of others (Ashforth, 1997; Valle et al., 2019). Drawing from this theory, the study tested if leader humility would elicit less moral disengagement and subsequent deviant behavior from followers and if the saliency of leader humility would diminish when followers perceived ingratiation from their leaders. The results suggest that leader humility may in fact be rewarded by followers with less moral disengagement, but the effect is diminished when followers believe leaders are engaging in impression management tactics. These results reinforce the reciprocity norm that is foundational to social exchange theory: good behavior is rewarded with good behavior and bad is often responded to with more bad behavior. This likely occurs because impression management diminishes trust and increases suspicions regarding an individual's true motives (Zhou et al., 2017). When a breach in trust occurs, one party may behave negatively to maintain perceived balance in the relationship (Valle et al., 2019). Future research may explore how different impression management tactics beyond ingratiation (e.g., prosocial as opposed to self-serving tactics) affect perceptions of leader humility and its impact on social exchange, moral disengagement, and unethical behavior.

The research contributes to the leader humility and ethics literature by highlighting the importance of follower attributions of leader humility and its impact on follower morality. Leader humility may discourage moral disengagement in followers, but the perceived authenticity of leader behaviors is important. These results are expected

to apply to individuals who interact often with their supervisor and have ample opportunity for in-person social exchange. Results may not be generalizable to individuals who work remotely or who do not regularly report to a direct supervisor. Future research is warranted that explores how leader humility is perceived via telecommunications technology and if digital interactions affect the perceived sincerity of leader humility as compared to in-person interaction.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The research adds to the growing body of literature that demonstrates the benefits of humility in organizational leadership. Organizations seeking to reduce moral disengagement and unethical behavior among their employees may wish to install highly humble leaders that are more likely to display prosocial values and behaviors when interacting with subordinates. The results suggest leader humility engenders reduced moral disengagement, workplace deviance, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding among subordinates. However, simply installing humble leaders may not be enough. As it appears that attributions of ingratiation diminish the effects of leader humility on moral disengagement, managers may want to reconsider their hiring and promotion practices and perhaps utilize validated personality scales to evaluate and identify truly humble individuals. In addition, specialized training or coaching could be implemented to instruct leaders of the importance of authentic expressions of humility for follower perceptions and healthy social exchanges. Leader humility may only be effective in reducing follower moral disengagement and unethical behaviors when followers believe it is authentic and not a strategic manipulation.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, the current study has limitations that open avenues for future research. Although, the surveys were separated by time, there is still potential for common method bias when utilizing same source data. Leader-follower dyads could be used to acquire variable measures in future research to help minimize this bias. Also, despite temporal separation, the study is not completely longitudinal. Future studies may wish to measure each variable at each time interval to capture changes over time. Additionally, the international participant sample may inflate social desirability bias (Steenkamp et al., 2010; Tellis & Chandrasekaran, 2010) as well as alter perceptions of leader humility (Hu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). A United States-only participant sample should be considered for a future study to increase the study's generalizability. Finally, other variables such as follower personality may confound the effects the study attempts to isolate. Researchers may wish to include these variables in future studies of leader humility and follower ethics.

As moral disengagement did not mediate the relationship between leader humility and interpersonal deviance, there may be additional mediators that better explain this relationship such as co-worker support, empathy, or perceived reciprocity. This also highlights a potential area for future research which may explore how leader humility impacts the interpersonal interactions of followers through such mechanisms. Although the moderating impact of attributions of ingratiation was significant, there may also be additional boundary conditions that moderate the relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement such as ethical climate or competitive climate. Future research should also test how other impression management tactics beyond ingratiation affect

perceptions of leader humility and resulting follower behaviors. Lastly, moral disengagement did not mediate the relationships between leader humility and unethical outcomes in the full moderated mediation model. Future research should test additional mediators such as leader-member exchange, moral attentiveness, and perceived reciprocity or include one of these in a serial mediating model with moral disengagement.

The impact of leader humility on additional ethical outcomes is another area ripe for research. The current study only measured interpersonal deviance, organization deviance, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding. Future research is called for that broadens this scope and tests the impact of leader humility on pro-supervisor and pro-organizational unethical behavior, silence, workplace bullying, and corruption intentions.

5.4 Conclusion

The current study sought to investigate the impact of leader humility on follower moral disengagement, interpersonal deviance, organizational deviance, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding. The study also investigated if follower attributions of ingratiation served as a boundary condition to the impact of leader humility on follower moral disengagement. The results suggest that leader humility is negatively related to follower moral disengagement, interpersonal deviance, organizational deviance, and leader-targeted knowledge hiding. Also, attributions of ingratiation did moderate the negative relationship between leader humility and moral disengagement such that the relationship was weakened. However, the mediating role of moral disengagement was not significant in every direct and indirect relationship.

Broadly, the results suggest that leader humility may serve as a deterrent to moral disengagement and unethical behaviors, but the presence of leader humility alone may not be enough. If followers also perceive ingratiation from their leaders, it can have the opposite effect on follower moral disengagement. Additionally, there may be other underlying mechanisms beyond moral disengagement that facilitate the negative relationship between leader humility and follower unethical behaviors. My hope is this study spawns additional research that identifies how exactly leader humility has such a positive impact on followers in the form of reduced moral disengagement and unethical behavior. Also, I hope practitioners take notice of the importance of authentic leader humility for their employees and organizations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. IRB Approval

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD July 30, 2021

Principal Investigator: Kelly Manix
IRB # and Title: IRB PROTOCOL: 21-303
[1778299-1] Is Humility Enough? The Impact of Leader Humility on Follower Moral Processes and Unethical Behaviors

Status: APPROVED Review Type: Exempt Review
Approval Date: July 30, 2021 Submission Type: New Project
Initial Approval: July 30, 2021 Expiration Date:
Review Category: 45 CFR 46.104 (d)(2): Research that only includes interaction involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording):

ii. Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside of the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation

This panel, operating under the authority of the DHHS Office for Human Research and Protection, assurance number FWA 00001602, and IRB Database #00000286 or #00011574, has reviewed the submitted materials for the following:

- 1. Protection of the rights and the welfare of human subjects involved.*
- 2. The methods used to secure and the appropriateness of informed consent.*
- 3. The risk and potential benefits to the subject.*

The regulations require that the investigator not initiate any changes in the research without prior IRB approval, except where necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the human subjects, and that **all problems involving risks and adverse events be reported to the IRB immediately!**

Subsequent supporting documents that have been approved will be stamped with an IRB approval and expiration date (if applicable) on every page. Copies of the supporting documents must be utilized with the current IRB approval stamp unless consent has been waived.

Notes:

Appendix B. Survey Scales and Disclosures

Disclosure Statement

A Study on Follower Perceptions of Leadership and Workplace Behavior

Primary Researcher - Kelly G. Manix
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You are invited to participate in a research project on your self-perceptions of your personality, your current boss, and your workplace behaviors. The purpose of the study is to better understand certain personality facets, perceptions of leadership, and resulting behaviors.

The following survey will take no longer than 7 to 12 minutes to complete. Participation is anonymous and no identifying data will be collected. You will be invited to participate in two follow-up surveys in one week increments after this initial survey. You will be provided a unique identifier by the survey platform to track your responses across surveys.

You have the right to refuse to answer any questions. The results of this study may be beneficial to society based on the information gathered. Although unlikely, it is possible that a loss of confidentiality may occur. However, no identifying information will be recorded for the study and all responses will be saved on a password protected online account.

Should the current study be published, all results will be presented as overall findings – specific information about particular responses will not be provided. There is no compensation for completing the study. Responses will be deleted once three years have passed after any publication. Responses will be used for research purposes only.

Participants must be at least 18 years of age and proficient in the English language. You can withdraw at any time without consequence.

Please contact the primary researcher, Kelly Manix, at kgm1821@jagmail.SouthAlabama.edu or the Institutional Review Board at the University of South Alabama at 251-460-6308 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Survey Scales

Time 1

Leader Humility (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013)

1. This person actively seeks feedback, even if it is critical.
2. This person admits it when they don't know how to do something.
3. This person acknowledges when others have more knowledge and skills than him- or herself.
4. This person takes notice of others' strengths.
5. This person often compliments others on their strengths.
6. This person shows appreciation for the unique contributions of others.
7. This person is willing to learn from others.
8. This person is open to the ideas of others.
9. This person is open to the advice of others.

Attributions of Impression Management (adapted from Bolino & Turnley, 2003)

Ingratiation

1. Compliments followers so they will see him/her as likable.
2. Take an interest in subordinates' personal lives to show that he/she is friendly.
3. Praises subordinates for their accomplishments so they will consider he/she to be a nice person.
4. Does favors for subordinates to show them that he/she is friendly.
5. Asks followers for advice so they will like him/her.

Demographics

1. Gender - What is your gender? (Male = 1, Female = 2, Other = 3)
2. Age – What is your age? (years)
3. Tenure Under Supervisor – How long have you worked for your current supervisor? (in months)
4. Organizational Tenure – How many years have you worked at your current organization? (in months)
5. Job Tenure – How long have you worked in your current position? (in months)

Time 2

Moral Disengagement (Moore, Detert, Klebe Treviño, Baker, & Mayer, 2012).

1. It is okay to spread rumors to defend those you care about.
2. Taking something without the owner's permission is okay as long as you're just borrowing it.
3. Considering the ways people grossly misrepresent themselves, it's hardly a sin to inflate your own credentials a bit.
4. People shouldn't be held accountable for doing questionable things when they were just doing what an authority figure told them to do.

5. People can't be blamed for doing things that are technically wrong when all their friends are doing it too.
6. Taking personal credit for ideas that were not your own is no big deal.
7. Some people have to be treated roughly because they lack feelings that can be hurt.
8. People who get mistreated have usually done something to bring it on themselves.

Time 3

Leader-Targeted Knowledge Hiding (adapted from Connelly, Zweig, Webster & Trougakos, 2012)

The scale opens with the following: "Please think of a recent episode in which your direct supervisor requested knowledge from you and you declined to share your knowledge or expertise with him/her or did not give all of the information needed. For example, you might not have shown s/he how to do something, only gave a part of the information needed, declined to tell something s/he needed to know, or did not help him/her learn something important.

In this situation, I..."

Evasive Hiding

1. Agreed to help him/her but never really intended to.
2. Agreed to help him/her but instead give him/her information different from what s/he wanted.
3. Told him/her that I would help him/her out but stalled as much as possible.
4. Offered him/her some other information instead of what he/she really wants.

Playing Dumb

5. Pretended that I did not know the information.
6. Said that I did not know, even though I did.
7. Pretended that I did not know what s/he was talking about.
8. Said that I was not very knowledgeable about the topic.

Rationalized Hiding

9. Explained that I would like to tell him/her but was not supposed to.
10. Explained that the information is confidential and only available to people on a particular project.
11. Told him/her that another superior would not let anyone share this knowledge.
12. Said I would not answer his/her questions.

Workplace Deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000)

Interpersonal Deviance

1. Made fun of someone at work
2. Said something hurtful to someone at work
3. Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work

4. Cursed at someone at work
5. Played a mean prank on someone at work
6. Acted rudely toward someone at work
7. Publicly embarrassed someone at work

Organizational Deviance

1. Taken property from work without permission
2. Spent too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working
3. Falsified a receipt to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on business expenses
4. Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at your workplace
5. Come in late to work without permission
6. Littered your work environment
7. Neglected to follow your boss's instructions
8. Intentionally worked slower than you could have worked
9. Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person
10. Used an illegal drug or consumed alcohol on the job
11. Put little effort into your work
12. Dragged out work in order to get overtime

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Name of Author: Kelly G. Manix

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Publications:

Manix, K. (2022). Why and When Do Leaders Express Humility? Leader Expressed Humility as Psycho-Social Signaling. *American Business Review*.

Manix, K. (2022). Educating Future Researchers with an Eye Toward Intellectual Humility. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*.

Manix, K. (November 2021). I Get by With a Little Help from My Boss: Leader-Member Exchange as Moderator Between Surface Acting and Moral Disengagement. Paper presentation at the annual Southern Management Association Conference, New Orleans, LA.