

The Role of Humble Leadership in Shaping Team Cognition, Psychological safety Climate, and Team Innovation: A Multilevel Temporal Investigation

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Abstract

Teams are central to organizations in accomplishing complex tasks, and leadership serves as a critical antecedent influencing both team interactions and outcomes. This study investigates the relationships among humble leadership, transactive memory systems (TMS), psychological safety climate, and team innovation. Data were collected at three different time points at the team level, resulting in matched responses from 53 teams and 53 team leaders, with 340 to 372 team members drawn from a large pharmaceutical organization.

The findings reveal that humble leadership positively predicts both team psychological safety climate and the development of a transactive memory system. While TMS is positively associated with team performance, it does not significantly predict either radical or incremental innovation. In contrast, team psychological safety climate shows a significant positive relationship with both forms of innovation. Furthermore, humble leadership indirectly predicts radical innovation through the mediation of psychological safety climate.

This study centers on humble leadership and explores two distinct mediating mechanisms—team cognition and team climate—to understand their effects on team performance and innovation. The results offer further empirical support for the external validity of humble leadership theory and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how leadership shapes team-level processes and outcomes.

