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*Should leaders eat humble pie?
Exploring whether humble
leadership helps employees to
thrive at work.*

*Part One:
An exploration of
Occupational and
Organisational
Psychology MSc
dissertation*



Dan James



Andy James



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The study quantitatively tested whether humble leadership was associated with thriving at work.

Humble leadership consists of three components: accurate self-view; showing appreciation of others' strengths and contributions; and teachability



Thriving at work can be defined as when employees feel progress and momentum, marked by a sense of learning and a sense of vitality.



Highlights from the literature

Humble leaders share power, assisting the group in identifying goals that motivate others, facilitating members' development, and providing needed resources.

Research has found humble leadership to link to a myriad of beneficial employee outcomes, such as increased organisational citizenship behaviour, job engagement and adaptive performance.

Psychological empowerment, defined as when individuals perceive meaning and control over their work, could be predicted to be increased by humble leadership.

Under humble leaders, workers are found to be more driven and willing to share information and are therefore more likely to learn and improve as a result. This could be because workers appreciate humble leaders' willingness to listen and learn from them, as well as recognising their strengths.



Study overview

Participants answered questions in an online survey to help answer the key overall research question of, '*Does humble leadership lead to employees thriving at work?*'.

The study acquired 161 responses with a final sample of 138 participants after incomplete responses were removed.

The questionnaire included several previously validated and replicated measures, which assess the variables of humble leadership, psychological empowerment, thriving at work, and power distance.

Some limitations to the study were noted. For example, thriving at work can be considered as a fluctuating state. Measurements over time would have gained more insight into the relationships between the variables. Due to the time constraints of the study, a cross-sectional design, while not perfect, was necessary.



Key study findings

Humble leadership can facilitate knowledge sharing, through increasing psychological safety. This is suggested to be because humble leaders generate non-controlling work environments which can inspire motivation and positive behaviour.



The findings consistently suggest that leaders displaying humility positively associates with subordinates' feelings of empowerment, encouraging them to voice their thoughts and opinions and contributes to higher autonomy levels in employees.

When leaders make themselves available to learn from employees and are realistic about their own capabilities and limitations, employees are likely to engage with their work more and learn more. This satisfies the two dimensions of thriving at work - learning and vitality.



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So what? Now what?

This study suggests that those who rate their managers to be higher in humble leadership experience higher levels of psychological empowerment and thriving at work.

How do think about humility as a leader?

How might you develop humble leadership?

How can you help people to thrive in your organisation?

Watch out for part 2, which will share practical tips for the development of leadership humility.



[Dan James | LinkedIn](#)



[Andy James | LinkedIn](#)

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