

SAM AND BONNIE RECHTER FELLOWSHIP Research Report

Dejun “Tony” Kong, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Management, Muma College of Business, University of South Florida

USF Bishop Center for Ethical Leadership’s Trust-Centered Ethical Leadership Scale (Individual Level of Analysis)

The research I undertook while serving as a Rechter Fellow was to validate a scale for trust-centered ethical leadership. In a pilot study, I found that executives expect leadership to be self-aware, socially mindful, and to have a virtuous mindset. This was consistent with other research, especially research on trust, which suggests the need of perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity for trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). self-awareness can be related to ability and integrity, social mindfulness can be related to benevolence and ability, and a virtuous mindset can be related to benevolence and integrity. I validated scales for each of these concepts and report the results below. These scales were created or adapted based on prior research and were selected based on the results of a factor analysis. These scales focus on the individual level of analysis.

Scale 1: Leader Self Awareness (see Eurich, 2018)

Self-awareness involves both internal awareness and external awareness. I used the following scales to measure this construct. The anchors for the scales were 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = moderately disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = neutral; 5 = slightly agree; 6 = moderately agree; 7 = strongly agree.

Internal Awareness

My supervisor shows that he/she clearly sees his/her own ____.

1. Passions
2. Aspirations
3. Fit with his/her environment
4. Thoughts
5. Strengths

External Awareness

My supervisor shows that he/she clearly understands how other people view his/her ____.

1. Passions
2. Aspirations
3. Fit with his/her environment
4. Thoughts
5. Strengths

Scale 2: Leader Social Mindfulness (see Axtell, Parker, Holman, & Totterdell, 2007; Fasbender, Burmeister, & Wang, 2020; Gerpott, Fasbender, & Burmeister, 2020)

Social mindfulness involves both considering others' perspectives and feeling empathic concern for others. I used the following items to measure this construct (using the same anchors as the self-awareness subscale).

Leader Perspective Taking

1. My supervisor shows that he/she can imagine how things look from others' perspectives.
2. My supervisor shows that he/she can think about how he/she would feel in others' situations.
3. My supervisor tries to see things from others' viewpoints.
4. My supervisor tries to imagine himself/herself in similar situation as others.

Leader Empathic Concern

1. My supervisor feels concerned for others if they are experiencing difficulties.
2. My supervisor shows that he/she understands when others get frustrated.
3. My supervisor identifies and empathizes with problems others experience.

Scale 3: Leader Virtuous Mindset (Cawley III, Martin, & Johnson, 2000)

I assessed a virtuous mindset using the same anchors and the following phrase for each item in this scale:

The virtue of ___ guides my supervisor's decisions and actions.

I filled in the blank for each item with each of the virtues below, which factor into three categories:

Factor I: Empathy

1. Empathy
2. Concern
3. Friendliness
4. Sympathy
5. Affability
6. Sensitivity
7. Comparison
8. Liberty
9. Grace
10. Courtesy

Factor II: Order

1. Order
2. Discipline
3. Seriousness
4. Obedience
5. Conservatism
6. Cautiousness
7. Carefulness
8. Tidiness
9. Austerity
10. Cleanness

Factor III: Resourcefulness

1. Resourcefulness
2. Purposefulness
3. Perseverance
4. Persistence
5. Confidence
6. Sagacity
7. Fortitude
8. Intelligence

Predictive Validity Study

I next conducted a study to assess the predictive validity of this scale in a sample of 352 adults in the U.S. The participants' demographic information is as follows:

- Gender: female 63.7%, male 36.3%
- Ethnicity: Asian (6.8%), Black/African descent (9.4%), Hispanic/Latinx (5.1%), White/Caucasian (75.3%), other (3.4%)
- Education: high school (5.7%), some college but no degree (21.3%), Associate degree (12.8%), Bachelor's degree (46.9%), Master's degree (10.2%), Doctoral degree (2.6%), other (0.5%)

As the table below illustrates, the scale I developed related significantly to the trust that employees have in their leaders. However, when all variables are included, leader virtuous mindset and leader social mindfulness were significant, while self-awareness was not. Empirical results suggested that it was because leader social mindfulness mediated the relationship between leader self-awareness and employee trust in leader. Females and neurotic employees in the sample were less likely to trust their leader, while agreeable employees were more likely to trust their leader (consistent with the notion that agreeableness can represent individuals' general propensity to trust others). I will continue to examine this scale in other settings, samples, and with other research questions.

Dependent variable: Employee trust in leader	Standardized B (SE)	F-statistic & R ²
<i>Step 1 predictors (employees' control variables)</i>		F(9, 329) = 5.732, R ² = .136
Age	-.014	
Female	-.151**	
Organizational tenure	-.017	
Work experience	-.083	
Extraversion	.045	
Agreeableness	.223***	
Conscientiousness	.009	
Neuroticism	-.223***	
Openness	-.035	
<i>Step 2 predictors</i>		F(11, 327) = 28.202, R ² = .487
Leader self-awareness	.313***	
Leader virtuous mindset	.381***	
<i>Step 3 predictors</i>		F(12, 326) = 44.138, R ² = .619
Leader self-awareness	.039	
Leader virtuous m indset	.138**	
Leader social mindfulness	.634***	

Note: The discrepancy in the sample size for the regression analysis from 352 was due to the missing values.

References

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