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Let's agree about nice leaders: A literature review and meta-analysis of agreeableness and its relationship with leadership outcomes

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we draw from 22 years of research in leadership to investigate the ambiguous relationship between the personality trait agreeableness and leadership. First, we conduct a comprehensive review of the leadership literature to build a foundational understanding of leader agreeableness that includes providing a broad definition for agreeableness, identifying emerging trends, and proposing an agenda for future research. Second, using the literature review as our theoretical foundation, we conduct a *meta-analysis* from the same body of literature to quantitatively decompose the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership emergence and effectiveness. We also hypothesize and test the contextual moderating effects for gender, leadership level, and cultural context (as reflected by individualism-collectivism). Collectively, our findings provide a framework for future research on leadership agreeableness and support the notion that nice (highly agreeable) leaders can emerge as effective leaders.

While most people consider the remark “nice guys [and gals] finish last” an old adage, its origins are relatively recent. Indeed, the basis of this adage stems from the statement “the nice guys are all over there, in seventh place” made by Brooklyn Dodgers manager Leo Durocher in 1946 (Shapiro, 2006). In his statement, Mr. Durocher referred to the New York Giants, who were in seventh place in the standings (which was actually second-to-last). The variant of this quote quickly became the aphorism for the broader concept that being nice is detrimental to performance and that, somehow, niceness hinders leadership effectiveness. This notion fits well with much of the leadership research contributing to the idea that agreeableness—a personality trait that describes the qualities of a nice person (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2010)—is only weakly related to leadership (Judge et al., 2002) which seemingly became lost in a sea of positive leadership theories that have emerged over the past 15 years (Alvesson & Einola, 2019). However, renewed interest in the agreeableness-leadership relationship has begun to take hold as relatively recent studies are “surprisingly” revealing new evidence that agreeableness may be more important to leadership than once

thought. For instance, Antonakis et al. (2017), in an IQ study of 379 middle managers, found strong evidence that agreeableness (when used as a control variable) is significantly and positively related to a host of positive leader behaviors, including the transformational behaviors of idealized-influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. These results are echoed in a recent *meta-analysis* on charismatic leadership as the authors point out that, “while not expected, agreeableness emerged as a stronger predictor of idealized influence (attributes and behaviors) than extraversion...we believe this finding can open the door for future theorizing concerning agreeableness” (Banks et al., 2017, p. 519).

Given the unexpected empirical findings, researchers have called for a more thorough investigation of the agreeableness-leadership relationship, citing the role of context-specific performance requirements as a possible influence on current research findings (Koenig et al., 2011; Zaccaro et al., 2018). Additionally, characteristics of agreeableness such as being nice, compassionate, and/or altruistic are garnering increased attention among business leaders (Freiberg & Freiberg, 2019; Kelly, 2019), as well as in the popular press (Dowd, 2019;

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Hauser, 2018). This renewed interest in agreeableness from the business community, combined with the emphasis on positive psychology in leadership research (Alvesson, 2020), creates cautious optimism for research on agreeableness, and yet, previous presumptions still hinder progress regarding the effect of agreeableness on leadership (Antonakis et al., 2012; Judge et al., 2002). We argue and provide evidence in this paper that it is time to agree that nice leaders often emerge and operate as effective leaders.

First, however, we need to make an important note regarding the definitions of agreeableness. In general, agreeableness describes the interpersonal tendencies of an individual (Barrick et al., 2013). As illustrated in Table 1, our review and meta-analysis show that researchers use various terms to describe the interpersonal tendencies of agreeableness, including altruistic, nice, caring, prosocial, honest, kind, gentle, modest, cooperative, and tender-minded. While the myriad of agreeableness descriptors seems complex and potentially redundant on the surface, a basis for these distinctions emerges in the operationalization. For instance, DeYoung and colleagues (2007) put forth an agreeableness measure that breaks down agreeableness into the two distinct aspects of compassionate and polite. Ashton and Lee's (2007) measure of agreeableness describes an individual's proclivity to be lenient and forgiving as opposed to easily angered and resentful. Another measure of agreeableness from Costa and McCrae (2008) describes agreeableness in terms of six facets: trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness. Because of these differences, we refrain from leaning towards a specific measurement definition and instead set an overarching premise for the trait to define agreeableness as "the motivation to maintain smooth interpersonal relationships" (Tobin & Graziano, 2020, p. 105).

To ground this definition of agreeableness phenomenologically, we analyzed the item content of available scales used in this study that measured agreeableness to create a graphical representation and interpretation of the most frequently used content words (i.e., a word cloud). To attain content words, we removed stop words, and the remaining words were lemmatized and tokenized from each available scale item (or semantic differential). As shown in Fig. 1,¹ the content words were organized as positive items (blue) and reverse-coded negative items (red) to facilitate interpretation of the content scales used to measure the construct of agreeableness. We ground our interpretation in the assumption (based on our definition of agreeableness) that agreeable leaders are motivated to maintain smooth interpersonal relationships. As shown in Table 2, the top five most common positive words were: people (20), feel (8), considerate (6), forgive (6), and human (5). Some of these words speak to the importance that interpersonal relationships (people, human) have for measuring agreeableness, while the other three words describe how agreeable leaders can facilitate smooth relationships through forgiving, feel(ing), and being considerate to people.

On the other hand, the top five negative content words were: people (23), cold (6), rude (4), advantage (3), and argument (3). As was the case for the positive words, "people" emerged for the negative item content, highlighting the object of importance to the agreeableness construct. The words "cold," "rude," and "argument" describe behaviors that likely will not foster smooth interpersonal relationships, while "advantage" alludes to competitiveness, which is likely not characteristic of a leader interested in interpersonal relationships. Beyond the top five words for each set of items, a similar trend emerges regarding how (dis)agreeable leaders may approach their interpersonal relationships. Trust (4), cooperate (4), and unselfish (3) arise in positive items, while at the same time, critical (3), fault (3), and fight (3) surface from negative items. More broadly, these findings illuminate a constellation of internal and external attributes

and behaviors that benefit or hinder smooth interpersonal relationships.

Moving forward with this definition and content interpretation, the purpose of our paper is two-fold. First, we provide the first systematic review of the agreeableness-leadership relationship since 1998, the cutoff year for the Big-Five personality review conducted by Judge and colleagues (2002). Our goal for the review is to create a foundation for future research on agreeableness and its relationships with leadership by identifying important trends and research findings. The second purpose of this paper is to go beyond a comprehensive literature review to conduct a series of quantitative analyses on the relationships between agreeableness and leadership. Specifically, we test a set of general hypotheses about the relationships between leader agreeableness and leadership emergence and effectiveness using meta-analytic procedures. Using our literature review as a foundation for our theoretical arguments, we first predict that leader agreeableness will positively influence leadership emergence. We theorize that because persons high on agreeableness tend toward cooperation and collaboration rather than conflict, and they are both trustworthy and trusting (McCrae & Costa, 2008)—highly valued leadership attributes in interpersonal and team settings (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Morgeson et al., 2005; Tyran et al., 2003). Next, we argue that leader agreeableness is also positively related to leadership effectiveness because agreeable leaders foster cooperation and trust among followers (Tyran et al., 2003) and facilitate goal attainment (Lim & Ployhart, 2004; Peterson et al., 2003). Finally, we develop and test a set of moderator hypotheses investigating the effects of gender, leadership level, and culture on the relationships between leader agreeableness and leadership outcomes.

Our paper makes the following contributions to the scholarly conversation about the relationships of agreeableness with leadership outcomes. First, through our systematic literature review, we synthesize the agreeableness-leadership literature by identifying three topical areas of research: (a) leadership styles, (b) leader behaviors, and (c) outcomes. We also identify three primary opportunities for future research focused on: (a) key leadership constructs and outcomes, (b) the processes through which leader agreeableness influences outcomes, and (c) exploring the role of perceived leader agreeableness.

Second, by quantitatively decomposing the agreeableness-leadership literature through a meta-analysis, we establish support for our assertion that nice leaders can emerge and operate effectively. Specifically, our results show that agreeableness is a significant and robust predictor of leadership emergence and effectiveness. Answering the call for the examination of personality in leadership contexts (Zaccaro et al., 2018), we also explore contextual effects (gender, leadership level, and individualism-collectivism) that may influence the agreeableness-leadership emergence and effectiveness relationships (Judge et al., 2002). While we predict that gender will strengthen the relationship between agreeableness and leadership emergence for females versus males, our results do not support that assertion. Our results show that the relationship between agreeableness and leadership effectiveness is stronger for non-executives than executives. While these results support our hypothesis, we must note that the number of studies investigating leadership agreeableness on the executive level is small, and it presents an opportunity for future investigations in the upper echelons research stream. Finally, the results support our prediction that the relationship of agreeableness with leadership emergence is stronger in job contexts found in collectivistic versus individualistic cultures. Overall, our findings support the idea that agreeableness is an important factor in predicting leadership outcomes, and these results are consistent with the increased emphasis on the "niceness" of leaders in popular (Iger, 2019; Krapivin, 2018; Schultz, 2012) and academic publications (Petrenko, 2020). Further, our study provides strong evidence for the argument that nice leaders do not finish last but are rather effective both in non-executive and executive roles.

¹ We removed the content word "people" from the word cloud to enhance the clarity.

Table 1
Definitions of Agreeableness.

Source	Definition
Judge & Bono (2000, p. 752) Murenky (2000, p. 29)	“Factor 2, Agreeableness, consists of tendencies to be kind, gentle, trusting and trustworthy, and warm.” “Agreeableness is a dimension reflecting interpersonal tendencies and a fundamental altruism expressed through a willingness to help others and a belief that they will reciprocate.”
Halfhill et al. (2005, p. 44)	“Research on individual job performance has linked it with the agreeableness trait (Frei & McDaniel, 1998; Hough, 1992), which includes personal characteristics such as empathy, humility, willingness to cooperate, altruism, and concern for others.”
Bernerth et al. (2007, p. 617)	“Overall, the traits associated with an agreeable individual seem likely to influence both parties [supervisor and subordinate]. For example, agreeableness is characterized by cooperation, tact, modesty, sensitivity, kindness, and respect. Agreeable individuals are described as good-natured, cheerful, and caring. An individual high in agreeableness is fundamentally altruistic. ‘He or she is sympathetic to others and eager to help them and believes that others will be equally helpful in return. By contrast, the disagreeable or antagonistic person is egocentric, skeptical of others’ intentions, and competitive rather than cooperative’ (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 15).”
O’Neil (2007, p. 38)	“Agreeableness refers to the quality of interpersonal relationships (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Hogan et al. (1994), defined agreeableness as a measure of an individual’s sympathy, cooperation, and warmth. According to Piedmont (1998), agreeableness includes the facets of trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness.”
Bell & Arthur (2008, p. 688)	“Finally, agreeableness is associated with good-natured, flexible, trusting, cooperative, and tolerant dispositions.”
Nadkarni & Herrmann (2010, p. 1054)	“Agreeableness represents the tendency to be altruistic (empathetic, kind, cooperative, trusting, and gentle) and compliant (modest, having a values affiliation, and conflict avoiding) (Bono & Judge, 2004).”
Grant & Berg (2011, p. 12)	“Agreeableness refers to a positive orientation toward others, and is manifested in higher tendencies toward altruism, cooperation, sympathy, trust, morality, and modesty (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991).”
Cogliser et al. (2012, p. 758)	“Persons high on agreeableness tend toward affiliation, compassion, and cooperation rather than conflict and are both trusting and trustworthy (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Agreeableness arises as a key trait within teams where collaboration is required (Morgeson, Reider, & Campion, 1995). Further, more agreeable persons focus on cooperation rather than competition within teams (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001).”
Powers (2012, p. 19)	“This trait describes an individual’s ability to interact with others in a harmonious fashion (Mount & Barrick, 1995).”
Emery et al. (2013, p. 8)	“... we expect individuals high in agreeableness to be increasingly nominated as an interpersonally caring, friendship-based point of reference for the group over time, independent of any guiding structural direction of the group’s task or project.”
Comber (2014, p. 19)	“The agreeableness factor describes how well an individual is able to connect with others. The consistent demonstration of positive facets of this trait (e.g., concern for others, empathy, flexibility, straightforwardness) by an individual often results in others experiencing a deeper and more genuine connection as well as greater sense of safety with the agreeable team member.”
Fang & Zhang (2014, p. 787)	“Altruism and interpersonal sensitivity, two facets of agreeableness, promote good leadership, but agreeable individuals are likely to be more modest (Goldberg, 1990) and have a greater need for involvement and “belonging” within a social group (Yukl, 2012) than are disagreeable individuals.”
Lounsbury et al. (2016, p. 439)	“Agreeableness- propensity for working as part of a team and functioning cooperatively on group effects at work.”
Baptiste (2018, p. 11)	“Agreeableness: The personality trait that “deals with the motives for maintaining positive relations with others“ (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001, p. 325). Agreeableness refers to social behaviors such as the expression of interpersonal warmth and positive affect. These social behaviors include smiling, laughing, and eye contact (Cuperman & Ickes, 2009).”
McKee et al. (2018, p. 16)	“Agreeableness is primarily a dimension of interpersonal behavior and interaction, though it also influences self-image and social attitudes (Costa et al., 1991). In terms of interpersonal interaction, Agreeableness exists “along a continuum from compassion to antagonism“ (Costa & McCrae, 1985, p.2). The FFM facets of Agreeableness include Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness (Costa et al., 1991).”

Literature review

We reviewed the 89 manuscripts² that tested or had propositions about leadership and agreeableness with the goals of organizing the extant literature, achieving a more comprehensive understanding, and, subsequently, identifying areas for continued research. The author team followed best practices suggested for conducting a systematic literature review (Hiebl, 2021; Siddaway et al., 2019) and coded each of the included studies’ propositions and (un)supported hypotheses, identifying the key variables and relationships considered within each article. In doing so, three main topic categories emerged: (a) leadership style, or a leader’s preferred pattern of interpersonal behavior and decision-making (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007); (b) leadership behavior, or the aspects of a leader’s actions that are observable, distinct, measurable and relevant to the performance of the group members, teams, work units, and/or organizations (Yukl & Gardner, 2020); and (c) outcomes of leader agreeableness that were related to group members, teams, work units, and/or organizations. While the distinction between leadership styles and behaviors may seem somewhat arbitrary, a natural division appeared in the coded data with some studies focusing on leaders enacting discrete behaviors (e.g., collaboration tactics or conflict management strategies) versus those studies theorizing or testing more general patterns of behavior (e.g., transactional or transformational leadership). Through the literature review, we also identify potential contextual factors that likely influence the relationship between leader agreeableness



Fig. 1. Word Cloud from Agreeableness Scale Items. Note. Words extracted from all available scale items found in meta-analysis. We removed the content word “people” (listed in Table 2) to enhance clarity.

² Details on the sample selection process employed to identify the articles included in our systematic review are described in the methods section of our meta-analysis.

Table 2
Frequency Table Illustrated in Word Cloud.

Positive (Not Reverse-Coded)		Negative (Reverse coded)	
Content Word	Count	Content Word	Count
People	20	People	23
Feel	8	Cold	6
Considerate	6	Rude	4
Forgive	6	Advantage	3
Human	5	Argument	3
Emotion	4	Critical	3
Feeling	4	Fault	3
Nature	4	Fight	3
Tend	4	Selfish	3
Trust	4	Start	3
Cooperate	3	Stubborn	3
Person	3	Aloof	2
Rarely	3	Business	2
Sympathize	3	Calculate	2
Unselfish	3	Cynical	2
Warm	3	Disagreeable	2
Agreeable	2	Egotistical	2
Badly	2	Hard	2
Consideration	2	Head	2
Cooperative	2	Insult	2
Courteous	2	Manipulate	2
Deal	2	Mind	2
Ease	2	Quarrel	2
Flexible	2	Skeptical	2
Forget	2	Sympathy	2
Goal	2	Time	2
Heart	2		
Helpful	2		
Honest	2		
Lenient	2		
Like	2		
Policy	2		
Praise	2		
Respect	2		
Soft	2		
Sympathetic	2		
Thoughtful	2		
Time	2		

and leadership emergence and effectiveness for use in the *meta*-analytic procedures (e.g., leader gender).

Leadership style

There is a natural connection between personality traits and leadership style as both, at some level, describe patterns of human behavior (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007). Unsurprisingly, a common question that surfaced in our sample of articles was how leader agreeableness relates to leadership styles. Our systematic review identified the four leadership styles most emphasized in relation to leader agreeableness: servant leadership, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and abusive supervision.

A positive relationship between leader agreeableness and servant leadership—defined by putting others' needs, aspirations, and interests first (Greenleaf, 1977)—was supported across multiple studies (Hunter et al., 2013; Sun & Shang, 2019; Washington et al., 2006). For example, Hunter and colleagues (2013) found that manager agreeableness relates positively to followers' perceptions of managers' servant leadership which, in turn, was negatively related to employee turnover intentions and disengagement in the context of retail stores. Agreeableness was also positively related to transformational leadership (Judge & Bono, 2000) as one of its components—individualized consideration—focuses on others' well-being and developmental needs. Similarly, agreeableness is positively related to dimensions of charismatic leadership, which some scholars believe to be directly related to motives of interpersonal harmony (Bank et al., 2017).

Concerning ethical leadership as conceptualized by Brown and Treviño (2006), a positive relationship with leader agreeableness has been identified (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009; Xu et al., 2011). That is, agreeable leaders are more likely to display and promote “normatively appropriate conduct” to their followers (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009), for example, found that, in a major U.S. financial institution, followers rated agreeable leaders higher on ethical leadership and that ethical leadership promoted psychological safety. The authors argued that agreeable individuals are likely to use constructive tactics (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001) that, when combined with their proclivity to be “considerate, helpful, honest, decent, trustworthy, understanding, [and] responsive to the needs and wishes of others,” lead to higher perceptions of ethical leadership (p. 1277).

However, not all leadership styles are ethical or beneficial, and, as such, it is crucial to understand how agreeableness relates to these less desirable styles as well. Leader agreeableness relates negatively to abusive supervision (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017; Wu, 2020) or a subordinate's perception of a leader's sustained hostile behaviors (Tepper et al., 2017), and it attenuates the relationship between psychological power and abusive behavior (Foulek et al., 2018). In the latter example, Foulek and colleagues (2018) found that leader psychological power positively related to abusive behaviors and that leader agreeableness weakened this effect. In sum, our review reveals that leader agreeableness relates positively to servant leadership, transformational leadership, and ethical leadership and negatively predicts abusive supervision and, therefore, underscores the importance of exploring how trait agreeableness relates to specific leadership styles.

We suggest scholars expand on these findings by first considering the conceptual differences between measures of agreeableness, then creating a theoretical rationale for selecting specific agreeableness measures, and, where appropriate, examining particular individual facets, such as compassionate and polite (DeYoung et al., 2007), or straightforwardness, compliance, altruism, modesty, and tender-mindedness (McCrae & Costa, 2003). For example, does altruism (versus straightforwardness or modesty) differentially predict servant leadership? Ethical leadership? Does trust relate to the different transformational leadership factors? These are unanswered questions that merit investigation to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between agreeableness (and its facets) and leadership styles.

Leadership behavior

Agreeable leaders behave in a manner consistent with the motivation to get along with others (Barrick et al., 2013). According to our review, research examining leadership behavior primarily focused on how leader agreeableness relates to leader-member exchange (LMX). LMX theory focuses on the mutual exchange between a leader-follower dyad and pays particular attention to how high-quality leader-member relationships result in more positive outcomes for the organization and its members (Dansereau et al., 1975; Gerstner & Day, 1997). High-quality LMX relationships are distinguished by “mutual support, trust, liking, provision of latitude, attention and loyalty,” whereas low-quality relationships emphasize “role distinctions, social distance, contractual obligations and distrust” (Barling et al., 2011, p. 189). Indeed, research indicates that agreeable leaders are more likely to trust their followers (Savino, 2019) and enact relational psychological contracts, which can strengthen a relationship's emotional and long-term dynamics (Metz et al., 2017; Ntalianis, 2006). More broadly, our review indicates empirical support for the theoretical connection between leader agreeableness and LMX quality (Bernerth et al., 2007; Nahrgang et al., 2009; Sears & Hackett, 2011). To further explicate the leader agreeableness-LMX relationship, some researchers have taken more nuanced approaches and considered: (a) the moderating effects of formal hierarchical power, finding that the relationship

between leader agreeableness and LMX quality was stronger for supervisors than subordinates (Yoon & Bono, 2016); (b) the mediating role of managers' positive affect towards their respective supervisors (Sears & Hackett, 2011); and (c) the influence of personality convergence on the agreeableness dimension for leaders and followers (Bernerth et al., 2008; Yoon & Bono, 2016). Other examples such as Kahya and Şahin (2018) found that LMX quality mediates the relationship between leader agreeableness and followers' satisfaction with the leader and follower organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), highlighting how leader personality has downstream consequences for followers' attitudes and behaviors.

Beyond LMX, leader agreeableness relates positively to other functional behaviors, including leader engagement in OCB (Singh & Singh, 2009), fairness behaviors (Walker, 2015), empowering exchanges (Jada & Mukhopadhyay, 2019), and relates negatively to the upward influencing tactics of legitimization and pressure (Cable & Judge, 2003). Respectively, the authors above used versions of the NEO-PI-R (e.g., the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised; Costa & McCrae, 1992), HEXACO Personality Inventory (Ashton & Lee, 2007), and IPIP (Goldberg, 1990) to operationalize agreeableness. While the underlying latent construct of agreeableness and its associated markers (altruistic, collaborative, cooperative, and trust-building) likely account for higher follower citizenship and perceived fairness levels, there is a lack of clarity as to which markers are driving each relationship.

Concerning conflict management strategies, agreeable leaders are more likely to enact integrating (where leaders adopt a win-win or collaborative approach) and avoidant tactics (where leaders refrain from expressing their needs) and were less likely to enact dominating tactics (where leaders prioritize their own needs) (Antonioni, 1998). Across each of these examples, scholars draw on the fundamentally altruistic, empathetic orientation associated with agreeable individuals to make their predictions (Judge & Bono, 2000). However, investigations of more nuanced predictions regarding the relationships of particular facets of agreeableness (e.g., compassion, altruism) with particular types of conflict management tactics would be informative.

Finally, while not a prominent area of research in the articles we reviewed, leader agreeableness is related to how leaders engage with their team or group. It is reasonable to expect agreeable leaders to be team players (e.g., Gardiner & Jackson, 2015; Mount et al., 1998) and prefer cooperation (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Our review showed that agreeableness in entrepreneurial top management teams (TMTs) positively relates to their collective knowledge integration or how teams make sense of and react to new business opportunities and threats (Dai et al., 2019). Other researchers found that agreeable leaders were more willing to collaborate using a sample of nonprofit managers (Bullock, 2018). Further, Cogliser et al. (2012) demonstrated that agreeableness was positively related to the social-oriented aspects of leaders' emergence (i.e., leader communication oriented towards member needs).

Seen as a whole, our review of the literature shows that agreeable leaders' motivation to get along with others manifests in critical leader behaviors at the individual, dyadic, and group/team levels that are related to leadership effectiveness (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). For example, relations-oriented behaviors, such as engaging in high-quality LMX or supporting and developing groups, are markers of leadership effectiveness likely related to some of the agreeableness markers, including altruism, trust, and warmth (O'Neil, 2007). Likewise, change-oriented behaviors such as facilitating collective learning or inspiring a collective vision relate to leaders' ability to influence their followers (DeRue et al., 2011; Yukl & Gardner, 2020) and likely align with the cooperative nature of agreeable leaders (Cogliser et al., 2012; O'Reilly et al., 2014). Research is needed to enhance understanding between agreeableness and leadership behaviors by exploring theoretically meaningful relationships between specific facets of agreeableness and particular behaviors.

Outcomes of leader agreeableness

A final category of focal research that emerged from our literature review describes the effects of leader agreeableness across three levels of analysis—follower outcomes, group or team outcomes, and organizational outcomes. Notably, as a part of their *meta*-analysis on leader traits and behaviors, DeRue and colleagues (2011) found that leader agreeableness was related to leader effectiveness, group performance, follower job satisfaction, and satisfaction with the leader. However, the strength of these relationships lessened when controlling for leadership styles (e.g., transformational or laissez-faire leadership). Despite these relevant findings, fewer studies focus on how leader agreeableness directly relates to relevant workplace outcomes than the last two research categories.

Regarding the individual level of analysis, leader agreeableness is related to multiple outcomes for followers. Specifically, followers of agreeable leaders: (a) are less likely to report witnessing or experiencing workplace bullying (Mathisen et al., 2011), (b) report higher levels of psychological safety (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), (c) engage in more OCBs (Kahya & Şahin, 2018, and (d) report higher total job and supervisor satisfaction (Smith & Canger, 2004). As another example of follower related outcomes, a study within the hospitality industry showed followers' ratings of the effectiveness of their managers' evaluations of their performance (i.e., managers' transparency, communication, and effort while distributing evaluations) were positively associated with their managers' agreeableness (Storey, 2018). Hence, leader agreeableness was associated with more positive follower attitudes towards their managers and, more generally, the workplace across these contexts. These findings suggest that agreeable leaders are associated with more positive outcomes for followers, presumably because they desire to satisfy followers' needs and support their work efforts.

Regarding group outcomes, TMTs who operate under agreeable leaders are more likely to engage in joint decision-making processes (Wu, 2018) and have a healthy expression of ideas and disagreements (de Jong et al., 2013). One possible explanation for these findings is that the focus on collaboration that characterizes agreeable leaders inspires them to incorporate multiple, and at times divergent, points of view into team processes. Moreover, de Jong and colleagues (2013) found that because of this, performance suffers for new venture teams led by agreeable leaders, demonstrating that group outcomes associated with leader agreeableness are not uniformly positive.

In a similar vein, several studies focused on the relationship between agreeable CEOs and organizational culture or strategic change. For example, O'Reilly and colleagues (2014) found that disagreeable CEOs were more likely to lead firms characterized by results-oriented organizational cultures. Further, in a study of small- and medium-sized businesses, Herrmann and Nadkarni (2014) found support for a posited inverted-U relationship between CEO agreeableness and strategic flexibility, which is positively related to firm performance. The authors reasoned that while some markers of agreeableness such as altruism and cooperation may foster a culture of creativity and risk-taking because of open, cooperative, and trust-based relationships, excessive CEO agreeableness may produce passivity and compliance, resulting in low levels of employee risk-taking and thereby inhibiting strategic flexibility. Studies such as these that reflect a more nuanced perspective on the effects of leader agreeableness by examining relationships, including those that may be curvilinear, with macro-level variables such as organizational culture and strategy are encouraged.

Overall, it appears that leader agreeableness has a largely positive relationship to followers' attitudes and behaviors but may have more negative and/or complex implications for group and organizational level outcomes. Moreover, the relative paucity of research focused

on outcomes related to leader agreeableness signals a need for continued research, a topic that we explore in detail below.

Opportunities for future research

Through our systematic review of 89 manuscripts that examined leadership and agreeableness, we offered a more complete picture of the current state of literature and highlighted the three main categories of extant work. Drawing on these findings, we suggest three opportunities for scholars to engage understudied areas or address concerns regarding perceptions of leader agreeableness (see Table 3 for opportunities for future work in these areas).

Opportunity 1: focus on key leadership constructs and outcomes

Extant work has considered the relationship between being a “nice” (or not so “nice”) leader and a variety of key leadership styles and behaviors, yet several key leadership constructs require further attention. For instance, while servant leadership, ethical leadership, and transformational leadership have been readily considered, multiple popular leadership styles remain understudied. Authentic leadership—marked by leader self-awareness, interpersonal transparency, an internalized moral perspective, and objectivity in decision-making (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2011; Luthans & Avolio, 2003)—has received relatively little attention to date but likely relates to the social style adopted by more agreeable managers. Likewise, the relationship between leadership development, which has gained increased attention over the past two decades (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Day & Thorton, 2018; Gardner et al., 2020), and agreeableness has received no attention to our knowledge. Key leadership behaviors that reflect how leaders engage the work unit’s external environment (Yukl & Gardner, 2020), such as boundary spanning or networking, are likely related to the proclivities of an agreeable leader to build and maintain positive relationships across groups (Baptiste, 2018; Costa & McCrae, 1992) and therefore merit empirical attention.

In addition to focusing on key leadership styles and behaviors, we invite scholars to empirically consider a broader set of outcomes across levels of analysis. For example, there is a near absence of research addressing the outcomes of agreeableness for leaders themselves. Do agreeable leaders have longer or shorter tenures than their counterparts? Does their propensity towards altruism and compassion influence their strategic decision-making and their focus on corporate social responsibility? While current research highlights followers’ attitudes as an outcome of leader agreeableness (e.g., Kahya & Şahin, 2018; Smith & Canger, 2004), it would be informative to consider other outcomes such as objective markers of subordinates’ job performance. What occurs when an agreeable manager leads teams? Considering team efficacy, the leverage or exploitation of skills, communication patterns, and critical outcomes like creativity or task performance are pertinent and would complement current work in the area (e.g., de Jong et al., 2013). Finally, little consideration has been given to organizational-level effects of leader agreeableness. We agree with scholars (e.g., Gardner et al., 2020) who suggest an increased awareness of strategic leadership in the field is merited. More specifically, we suggest that thought be given to the trait dispositions of CEOs, such as agreeableness and their downstream consequences for the firm. One potential avenue for this research would be to use agency theory lenses (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Shapiro, 2005; Payne & Petrenko, 2019) to investigate how leader agreeableness affects agentic behaviors of top executives.

Opportunity 2: explicate the process through which leader agreeableness influences outcomes

Extant research focused on leader personality lacks a comprehensive approach, which some scholars elaborate on: “despite knowledge about average tendencies, little is known about the processes through

Table 3
Opportunities for Future Research.

Opportunity	Examples of Future Research Questions
Focus on key leadership constructs and outcomes	<p>What are the cross-level effects of leader agreeableness on leadership development across the organization? How does leader agreeableness relate to the development of different leadership styles across roles (Day, 2000)?</p> <p>What are meaningful relationships between the facets of agreeableness (e.g., trust, altruism, and compliance) and different leadership styles?</p> <p>How does leader agreeableness relate to authentic leadership and, in turn, how does this affect follower task performance or organizational citizenship behavior?</p> <p>How does working for an agreeable manager influence team perceptions of diversity climate or overall team performance? Does this relationship change depend on the leader’s gender, race, ethnicity, or social class background?</p> <p>What is the relationship between leader agreeableness and emotional contagion in groups or organizations? Are more likable leaders better able to inspire passion or dedication in their followers?</p>
Explicate the process through which leader agreeableness influences outcomes	<p>What leadership behaviors (informed by leader agreeableness) operate in tandem to influence key organizational outcomes, such as firm performance or board interlocks?</p> <p>How does the relationship between leader agreeableness and team outcomes unfold over time (Fischer et al., 2017)? What are the short vs. long-term effects of leader agreeableness on top management team integration or efficacy?</p> <p>How does culture or the defining core values of a nation, region, or group (Hofstede, 2001) amplify or attenuate process-driven models of leader agreeableness and its effects?</p> <p>How does follower identification with the leader or organization mediate the relationship between leader agreeableness and key outcomes such as job performance or voice behavior?</p>
Attend to perceptions of agreeableness	<p>What leader evaluations are associated with follower positive bias?</p> <p>Are more agreeable leaders punished less for poor performance?</p> <p>What are the mechanisms influencing positive bias of agreeable leaders?</p> <p>What expressions of leader agreeableness shape positive bias in followers?</p>

which leader personality traits influence organizational outcomes” (Barling et al., 2011, p. 196). Understanding what drives the relationships between leader agreeableness and its relevant outcomes is vital for a complete explanation of the phenomena. That is, when questions of “why” or “how” are addressed, findings are more generalizable, and boundary conditions can be better assessed (Fischer et al., 2017). It is noteworthy that very few of the studies we reviewed adopted a process-driven approach, where leadership styles or behaviors acted as a mechanism through which leader agreeableness influenced performance, affective, or relational outcomes. Notable exceptions include Walumbwa and Schaubroeck’s (2009) study on the mediating role of ethical leadership on psychological safety and Hunter and colleagues’ (2013) study of how leader agreeableness increases perceptions of servant leadership and, in turn, reduces employee turnover and disengagement. As is evident from these examples, adopting a

process-driven approach offers academics and practitioners additional insights as to how agreeableness can promote or impede decisions that engender better outcomes for the organization and its members.

We draw on previous work in the area of leadership (Barling et al., 2011; DeRue et al., 2011) to suggest three specific categories of mediators to be considered for inclusion in future studies: (a) those relating to how leader agreeableness impacts followers' internal states, perceptions of the job, and perceptions of the leader; (b) those relating to specific leadership styles or behaviors; and (c) those relating to the attribution or identification processes engaged in by followers. While we encourage scholars to explicate the mechanisms motivating leader agreeableness–outcome relationships, we join previous authors (Fischer et al., 2017) and urge scholars also to consider the role of time (Day & Dragoni, 2015) and the multiple mechanisms through which leader agreeableness works.

Opportunity 3: attend to perceptions of leader agreeableness

A third opportunity for future research is to build theory on how leader and follower agreeableness can influence perceptions and evaluations (e.g., Zaccaro et al., 2018). Indeed, while some scholars have shown that agreeable leaders are perceived as effective (Chua & Iyengar, 2011) and competent by their team (Bernardin et al., 2000), it is not clear what mechanisms are driving this relationship and what expressions of leader agreeableness influence this bias. One potential mechanism could be that subordinates like, or have positive feelings towards, their agreeable leaders more than disagreeable leaders (Martinko et al., 2018). Another possible explanation for positive bias could be a desire to reciprocate for a prior transgression overlooked or forgiven by the agreeable leader. We encourage future researchers to explore how agreeable leaders could be (knowingly or unknowingly) influencing how their team rates them and how this could be impacting the organization.

Leadership scholars can also focus on exploring how follower agreeableness may shape leader perceptions. Evidence shows that agreeable followers have higher self-reported LMX scores (Bernerth et al., 2008; Yoon & Bono, 2016), evaluate leaders as more transformational (Schyns & Felfe, 2006), and are more likely to assign desirable characteristics to leaders (Bono et al., 2012). Researchers have called attention to this pattern of findings, suggesting that “individuals high in agreeableness may be prone to endorse desirable leader behaviors regardless of their actual occurrence” (Hansbrough et al., 2015, p. 222). Future research could examine how agreeable followers influence various team and organization variables, including the proclivity of abusive leadership behavior and leader tenure, and team and organizational performance.

Theory and hypotheses development

Having provided an overview of the extant literature on the agreeableness–leadership relationship, we will draw on this literature and related theories to advance hypotheses explored in our *meta-analysis*. In doing so, we note that the roots for conceptualizing and measuring leadership begin with two broad categorizations: leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002; Lord et al., 1986). We advance hypotheses regarding the relationships between leader agreeableness and these criteria in the sections that follow.

Leadership criteria

Leadership emergence refers to “the factors associated with someone being perceived as leaderlike” (Hogan et al., 1994, p. 496). In the context of leadership research, scholars consider individuals occupying managerial and supervisory positions to be leaders by default despite well-argued distinctions between leaders and managers (see

Kotter, 2001; Zaleznik, 1992). However, in a recent comprehensive review of the literature on leadership emergence, Hanna et al. (2021) defined emergent leadership as “the degree to which an individual with no formal status or authority is perceived by one or more team members as exhibiting leaderlike influence” (p. 82). As such, we converge on a definition that enables us to provide a more comprehensive examination of the factors influencing perceptions of the leader. Thus, we define leadership emergence as the degree to which an individual is considered a leader based on his or her leadership characteristics regardless of formal position (e.g., leadership style, leadership behavior, etc.). The second category, leadership effectiveness, is based on understanding the factors that influence leadership goal accomplishment (House & Podsakoff, 1994; Yukl, 2012). We define leadership effectiveness as the individual follower, leader, group, team, or organizational outcomes directly attributable to the leader (Hogan et al., 1994; Judge et al., 2002; Lord et al., 1984).

Leadership emergence

Leadership emergence is a within-group phenomenon (Hanna et al., 2021; Judge et al., 2002) influenced in part by high-quality interpersonal relationships (Bass & Bass, 2009; Burns, 1978; DeRue et al., 2011). Advancements in leadership theory posit that individuals' emergence as leaders is a dynamic process influenced by interdependent actor interactions (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). By adopting this framework, we theorize that tendencies of agreeable group members to be cooperative (Graziano et al., 1996), friendly, and caring (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997) help to fill the social needs of the group, which influences their emergence as a leader (Cogliser et al., 2012). For instance, in a study of self-managed groups, agreeable individuals were more likely to be nominated as a relationship-oriented leader (Emery et al., 2013). In a separate study on virtual teams, agreeable individuals were more likely to emerge as socially-oriented leaders (Cogliser et al., 2012).

These findings also speak to the broader notion that individuals liked by the group are more likely to be perceived as a leader due to the link between affective reactions and the members' implicit leadership theories (Brown & Keeping, 2005; Hansbrough et al., 2015; Martinko et al., 2018). As our review revealed, prior empirical work documents an association between agreeableness and leadership styles such as transformational and charismatic leadership (Barling et al., 2011; Judge & Bono, 2000) and that agreeable individuals are likely to produce high-quality interpersonal relationships (Bernerth et al., 2008; Nahrgang et al., 2009; Sears & Hackett, 2011). As such, we theorize that agreeableness is related to group members' affective responses, which, in turn, increases the likelihood that the focal individual will be perceived as leaderlike. Taken together, we advance the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Leader agreeableness is positively associated with leadership emergence.

Leadership effectiveness

Whereas leadership emergence refers to the process whereby an individual comes to be seen by others as a leader (Hanna et al., 2021), leadership effectiveness is related to the degree to which a leader can influence individual, group, team, or organizational task performance, affective/relational criteria (e.g., motivation or satisfaction), or both (DeRue et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2002). From a task performance standpoint, agreeable leaders tend to be perceived as more effective by their subordinates (Chua & Iyengar, 2011), build effective relationships with their subordinates (Nahrgang et al., 2009), and create cohesive teams that are associated with organizational income growth (Peterson et al., 2003).

Regarding the affective/relational criteria, agreeable leaders are more likely to inspire, motivate, and build high-quality relationships

with their subordinates (Antonakis et al., 2017; Banks et al., 2017). Their teams tend to be committed to the organization, have increased cooperation (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018), and are generally more satisfied with their leader (Smith & Canger, 2004). Taken together, agreeableness seems to be playing a role in both the task performance and affective/relational categories of leadership effectiveness. Therefore, we expect to find that, on average, agreeableness will be positively related to leadership effectiveness. Thus, we advance the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Leader agreeableness is positively associated with leadership effectiveness.

Moderating role of gender

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, especially at the upper echelons of organizations, is a widely discussed topic across management research (Ryan et al., 2016) and within leadership studies specifically (Gardner et al., 2020). Gender discrimination has emerged as one recurrent explanation in leadership research for this phenomenon (Eagly & Heilman, 2016). The basis for this explanation stems from role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) which postulates that female members of groups do not fit the “predominantly masculine attributes” (p. 557) associated with leadership roles resulting in an increased likelihood of prejudice towards females. Building from this theory, we expect agreeableness to influence the perception of women as leaders for two reasons. First, empirical studies have shown that women are more agreeable on average than their male counterparts (Costa et al., 2001; Feingold, 1994). Second, because agreeableness is associated primarily with stereotypical communal/feminine behaviors (e.g., cooperation, friendliness, compassion), we expect this will increase the degree of perceivable feminine attributes among females (relative to males) and decrease the likelihood for females to be perceived as leaders. Thus, we advance:

Hypothesis 3. Gender moderates the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership emergence, such that the relationship is weaker for females.

Moderating role of leadership level

Following the presumption that leader role expectations are associated primarily with masculine characteristics, we shift the focus onto leadership level. Specifically, related research on executives and non-executives suggests that the context of the leader position influences the degree of masculine expectations for leaders. In the case of the executive leadership, this is primarily due to the high concentration of men in executive positions relative to females (Catalyst, 2010), resulting in higher “role incongruity for women” (Koenig et al., 2011, p. 619). Because agreeable individuals are more likely to exhibit communal and feminine behaviors, our theoretical expectation is that agreeableness manifestations will be less likely to be perceived as leaderlike by others in the group. We therefore advance:

Hypothesis 4. Leadership level moderates the positive relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership emergence, such that the relationship is stronger for non-executives.

Apart from leadership emergence, research on agreeableness and leadership effectiveness reflects some similarities regarding potential moderating effects or leadership level. For instance, research focused on non-executive managers indicates that followers of agreeable leaders are more satisfied with their job and supervisor (Smith & Canger, 2004), engage in more OCBs (Kahya & Şahin, 2018), and report higher

levels of psychological safety (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). At the same time, research on leadership at the executive level downplays the importance of executive agreeableness, as stated by Colbert and colleagues (2014): “[t]hus, contrary to what research and theory in the small groups’ arena would suggest but consistent with findings in the leadership literature [Judge et al., 2002], we believe neither CEO nor TMT agreeableness will significantly influence firm effectiveness” (p. 360). Other researchers echo this sentiment in empirical research on CEO agreeableness (Harrison et al., 2019; Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014; Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010), with results supporting a broader narrative that the unassertive and conflict avoidant pattern of behaviors associated with agreeable leaders is mostly unrelated or detrimental to firm effectiveness. Following this logic, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5. Leadership level moderates the positive relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership effectiveness, such that the relationship is stronger for non-executives.

Cultural context: individualism-collectivism

From the broadest view, national culture provides a general context for jobs that can vary from study to study (Johns, 2018), contribute to how employees behave in an organization (Meyer et al., 2010), and influence the demands and actions of effective leaders (Dill, 1958; Dorfman et al., 1997; Hansbrough et al., 2015; House et al., 2004; Negandhi & Reimann, 1972; Wendt et al., 2009). This is because national culture involves the nebulous set of values, rituals, heroes, symbols, and practices that are *programmed* into the minds of individuals and groups, vary across nations (Hofstede et al., 2005), and set the “rules of the game of life” (Triandis, 1989, p. 512). Research on national culture and leadership also shows that differences in individualistic-collectivistic cultures are related to the effectiveness of supportive leadership behaviors on team cohesion (Wendt et al., 2009) and positively influence the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and team confidence and performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2007). The theoretical expectation underpinning these results rests primarily in the differences of task and relationship foci reflected in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures. On the one hand, individualistic societies prioritize task completion, sometimes at the expense of relationships (House et al., 2004). On the other, collectivistic societies prioritize harmonious relationships with group members, which are likely to influence how impactful the relational behaviors of the leader are for followers (House et al., 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schaubroeck et al., 2007; Triandis, 1995). Building from this logic, we expect the relationship between leader agreeableness and leader effectiveness to be higher in collectivistic cultures in relation to individualistic cultures.

Hypothesis 6. Individualism/collectivism moderates the positive relationship between leader agreeableness and leader effectiveness, such that the greater the collectivistic culture (lesser individualistic), the stronger that relationship.

Methods

Literature search

Following past reviews on leadership, we used PsycINFO, a database that broadly covers the fields of psychology, political science, management, and leadership, as well as the ProQuest Dissertations database, to perform keyword searches for the years 1998 to 2020 (Judge et al., 2002; Lee & Carpenter, 2018). We included the following terms: agreeableness with leader, leadership, CEO, administrator,

manager, and supervisor. To ensure a robust scope of data, we searched annual conference presentations for the past five years of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) conference and the past three years of the Academy of Management (AOM) conference. We also made several requests for unpublished data on AOMNet. In total, our preliminary search identified 442 articles. Next, we conducted a screening process to identify articles that fit the scope of our review. We conducted the screening process in two waves with six graduate-level judges trained in social science. In wave one, we assigned each judge a random set of articles to screen. In wave two, the first author reviewed inclusion/exclusion recommendations. The first author resolved any disagreements about a decision. For literature review, articles had to be published in English; hence, we removed articles that were exclusively reported in another language. Additionally, the term “agreeableness” had to be included in a formal proposition or hypothesis relating to some aspect of leadership. Our rationale for employing this inclusion criterion was to ensure that the focal articles shed light on the underlying theoretical rationale for the agreeableness-leadership relationship examined. For the *meta-analysis*, we included studies that reported the correlation of leader agreeableness with leadership emergence and/or leadership effectiveness in the correlation table along with the sample size. This ensured a more comprehensive representation of our data. The full dataset can be provided upon the request.

Meta-analytic methods

As reported in Table 4, our search yielded 82 studies that met the literature review criteria; 254 correlations of leader agreeableness with leadership emergence and/or effectiveness were included in the *meta-analysis*. Next, we coded each included study and sample individually to ensure that no sample was counted twice (Cragun et al., 2020). The coding of leadership emergence and effectiveness followed two distinctive steps.

In step one, we assigned a unique code to the study’s variables related to either leadership emergence or effectiveness. Our definitions of leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness are based on those employed by Judge and colleagues (2002) in their *meta-analysis*. Specifically, leadership emergence included instances when an individual was scored on a leadership characteristic (e.g., leadership style or leadership behavior). For leadership effectiveness, we included and assigned unique codes to any individual (follower or leader), dyadic, team, or organizational outcome variable that was directly related to the leader’s actions (e.g., follower job satisfaction, team performance, or follower creativity). The lead authors reviewed each unique variable in step two and assigned it to either the leadership emergence or leadership effectiveness category.

In sum, there were 27 emergence studies (49 total correlations) and 67 effectiveness studies (205 total correlations). In studies for which a negative effect size would be considered effective leadership (e.g., job burnout, abusive supervision, role overload), we multiplied it by a negative one. We coded for effect size, sample size, mean, standard deviation, reliability, and the correlations of other Big-Five traits. We also coded for three moderators: (a) percentage of females in the sample, (b) leadership level (non-executive = 0, executive = 1; Lee & Carpenter, 2018), and (c) cultural context (individualistic culture = 0, collectivistic culture = 1; Hofstede et al., 2005).

Following Schmidt and Hunter (2015) and the “individual-corrections” approach (see Wiernik & Dahlke, 2020 for the procedure), we used a random-effects model for our *meta-analysis* that allows for the correction of individual study artifacts. We computed a mean composite score for studies that reported more than one intercorrelation between leader agreeableness and the outcome of interest (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). We used Cronbach’s alpha to correct for measurement error. In cases where measurement error was not provided, we imputed scores by bootstrapping measurement error for agreeableness

Table 4
Studies Used in Meta-analysis.

Variables	Study	N	r	
Effectiveness	Judge & Bono, 2000	169	0.039	
	Gellatly & Irving, 2001	81	0.055	
	Bartone et al., 2002	855	0.130	
	Lim & Ployhart, 2004	39	0.280	
	Morrison et al., 2004	45	0.059	
	Smith & Canger, 2004	131	0.073	
	Duehr, 2006	175	0.090	
	Ntalianis, 2006	50	0.318	
	Washington et al., 2006	126	0.143	
	Bernerth et al., 2007	195	0.190	
	Buddhavarapu, 2007	205	0.214	
	Grant & Langan-Fox, 2007	211	0.199	
	Bernerth et al., 2008	195	0.140	
	Francoeur, 2008	294	0.115	
	Quinlan, 2008	22	0.110	
	Chi et al., 2009	122	0.110	
	Nahrgang et al., 2009	330	0.099	
	Singh & Singh, 2009	188	0.436	
	Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009	222	0.485	
	Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010	192	0.190	
	Chua & Iyengar, 2011	83	0.290	
	Chua & Iyengar, 2011	134	0.310	
	Chua & Iyengar, 2011	110	0.618	
	Kalshoven et al., 2011	150	0.150	
	Sears & Hackett, 2011	161	0.443	
	Siewert, 2011	151	−0.122	
	Cogliser et al., 2012	243	0.140	
	de Jong et al., 2013	323	0.410	
	Hunter et al., 2013	110	0.352	
	Powers, 2012	139	0.230	
	Quigley, 2013	198	0.158	
	Colbert et al., 2014	94	0.144	
	Fang & Zhang, 2014	121	0.210	
	Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014	120	0.100	
	Liborius, 2014	210	0.057	
	Liborius, 2014	209	0.111	
	Liborius, 2014	207	0.076	
	Srivastava et al., 2015	152	0.110	
	Walker, 2015	148	0.233	
	Barron et al., 2016	55	0.296	
	Barron et al., 2016	76	0.227	
	Bernardin et al., 2016	125	−0.170	
	Camps et al., 2016	103	0.070	
	Cernea, 2016	116	0.050	
	Olls, 2016	135	0.070	
	Panaccio, 2009	231	0.320	
	Yeh et al., 2016	135	0.118	
	Yoon & Bono, 2016	693	0.214	
	Breevaart & de Vries, 2017	107	0.527	
	Eissa & Lester, 2017	190	0.341	
	Hu & Judge, 2017	71	0.588	
	Metz et al., 2017	749	0.260	
	Bullock, 2018	71	0.254	
	Foulk et al., 2018	108	0.176	
	Kahya & Şahin, 2018	67	0.376	
	McKee et al., 2018	378	0.127	
	Malhotra et al., 2018	1639	0.020	
	Storey, 2018	90	0.194	
	Harrison et al., 2019	3449	−0.020	
	Jada & Mukhopadhyay, 2019	262	0.833	
	Mahlamäki et al., 2019	168	0.200	
	Qu & Page, 2019	374	0.158	
	Bergner, 2020	123	0.000	
	Boyd, 2020	69	0.076	
	Harrison et al., 2020	2880	−0.019	
	Priesemuth & Bigelow, 2020	160	0.090	
	Wu, 2020	136	0.280	
	Judge & Bono, 2000	169	0.240	
	Kornør & Nordvik, 2004	106	0.111	
	Lim & Ployhart, 2004	39	−0.290	
	Duehr, 2006	525	0.210	
	Washington et al., 2006	126	0.380	
	Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009	222	0.410	
	Kalshoven et al., 2011	89	0.240	

(continued on next page)

Table 4 (continued)

Variables	Study	N	r
	Kalshoven et al., 2011	150	0.150
	Thomason et al., 2011	114	0.208
	Xu et al., 2011	59	0.400
	Cogliser et al., 2012	243	0.121
	de Vries, 2012	113	0.050
	Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012	131	0.246
	Hunter et al, 2013	110	0.370
	Colbert et al., 2014	94	0.098
	Yeh et al., 2016	135	0.076
	Hu & Judge, 2017	71	0.150
	Baptiste, 2018	55	-0.278
	Johnson, 2018	177	0.286
	Reeve et al., 2018	42	-0.358
	De Hoyos-Aguilar, 2019	247	0.224
	Hu et al., 2019	223	0.090
	Hu et al., 2019	337	-0.070
	Jada & Mukhopadhyay, 2019	262	0.739
	Sun & Shang, 2019	81	0.140
	Bergner, 2020	123	-0.050
	Ishaq et al., 2021	131	0.220

Note. Correlations in table are aggregated at the study level.

($M = 0.77, SD = 0.08; M = 0.76, SD = 0.07$), leadership emergence ($M = 0.85, SD = 0.12$), and leadership effectiveness ($M = 0.86, SD = 0.07$) (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). We applied individual corrections to the effect size (observed r) and standard deviation, as seen in equations 1–7 below (adapted from Wiernik & Dahlke, 2020).

$$r_c = \frac{r_{obs}}{\left(\sqrt{r_{xxA}}\sqrt{r_{yyA}}\right)} \tag{1}$$

$$w_i^* = N_i \times \left(\frac{r_{obs_i}}{r_{ci}}\right)^2 \tag{2}$$

$$\rho = \frac{\sum w_i^* r_{ci}}{\sum w_i^*} \tag{3}$$

$$SE_{r_c}^2 = SE_{r_{obs}}^2 \times \left(\frac{r_c}{r_{obs}}\right)^2 \tag{4}$$

$$SD_{r_c}^2 = \frac{\sum w_i^* (r_{ci} - \rho)^2}{\sum w_i^*} \tag{5}$$

$$\overline{SE}_{r_c}^2 = \sum w_i^* \frac{SE_{r_{ci}}^2}{\sum w_i^*} \tag{6}$$

$$SD_p = SD_{r_c}^2 - \overline{SE}_{r_c}^2 \tag{7}$$

Except for our meta-regression analysis, we computed all corrections and meta-analysis computations using the Psychmeta package in R (Dahlke & Wiernik, 2019; R Core Team, 2021). We also corrected for studies with small sample sizes. We computed confidence intervals (95%) and credibility intervals (80%) using a normal distribution. Outliers were assessed by removing scores above and below three stan-

dard deviations and then recalculating the mean correlation. In both cases (leadership emergence and effectiveness), outliers did not heavily influence our findings (see Tables A3–A8 of the Appendix for results without outliers). To conduct our meta-regression, we used the Metafor package for continuous moderators (Viechtbauer, 2010). Following prior meta-analytic work, we computed credibility intervals to assess heterogeneity (Bank et al., 2017). Finally, we calculated retrospective power analyses (Valentine et al., 2010) for leadership emergence and effectiveness. In both cases, statistical power was sufficient (> 0.80).

Results

Results for leadership emergence and effectiveness are reported in Table 5. Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, the effect sizes of agreeableness on leadership emergence and effectiveness were both positive and had confidence intervals that did not include zero. Leadership emergence showed stronger results for agreeableness ($k = 27; \rho = 0.241; LL = 0.146, UL = 0.336$) than leadership effectiveness ($k = 67; \rho = 0.143; LL = 0.095, UL = 0.191$). Statistical artifacts (a general term to describe error or bias in the data (Wiernick & Dablke, 2020)) accounted for 14.175 and 12.218 percent variance respectively (regarding this study, measurement error is the statistical artifact). We also conducted an omnibus ANOVA to examine the potential for publication bias. Specifically, we compared the effect size of studies that were published versus studies that were unpublished for both leadership emergence and effectiveness. In both cases, the differences were not significant (emergent: $F = 0.004, p = 0.952$; effectiveness: $F = 1.114, p = 0.300$). The corrected standard deviation (variation in effect size between studies) was $SD_p = 0.234$ for leadership emergence and $SD_p = 0.188$ for leadership effectiveness. The credibility intervals both included zero, which provided additional evidence for moderators which we explore in the following paragraph ($LL = -0.059, UL = 0.541; LL = -0.098, UL = 0.384$).

To further explore the potential for publication bias in the form of p-hacking (a practice which researchers use to make non-significant results significant), we follow research in leadership (Li, Sun, Tari, Xing, & Peeters, 2021) and psychology (Simonsohn, Nelson & Simmons, 2014) by using the P-curve method to explore our data. The underlying logic of the P-Curve method is that significant true effects of a relationship found in the literature will naturally skew towards p-values at $p < 0.01$ (positive skew). In cases of p-hacking, the skew will be towards p-values at $p < 0.05$ (negative skew). Upon visual inspection (Figs. A3 and A4 of the Appendix), leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness follow a positive skew pattern.

Results for Hypothesis 3 are reported in Table 6. In sum, 22 studies reported gender descriptions that fit our criteria for meta-regression analysis. Counter to our hypothesis, gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership emergence ($k = 22; \beta = -0.001; p = 0.823; LL = -0.006, UL = 0.005$).

Table 7 shows results for Hypotheses 4 and 5. For leadership emergence, there were 25 studies that included non-executive managers and two studies that included executives. We did not find that leadership level moderated the relationship between leader agreeableness

Table 5
Meta-Analysis of Leadership Effectiveness and Emergence.

Variables	k	N	r_m	ρ	SD_p	% Var	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}	CV _{LL}	CV _{UL}
Effectiveness	67	19,670	0.118	0.143	0.188	12.243	0.095	0.191	-0.098	0.384
Emergence	27	4174	0.197	0.241	0.234	14.175	0.146	0.336	-0.059	0.541

Note. k = number of studies, N = total sample size, r_m = average correlation adjusted for sample size, ρ = average effect size corrected for measurement error and adjusted for sample size, SD_p = standard deviation of estimated population correlation, % Var = percentage of variance explained by artifacts, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit, CV_{LL} = credibility interval lower limit, CV_{UL} = credibility interval upper limit.

Table 6
Moderator Analysis (meta-regression) of Leader Gender and Leadership Emergence.

DV/Moderator	<i>k</i>	β	<i>p</i> -value	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}
Emergence					
Percentage of female leaders	22	-0.006	0.823	-0.006	0.005

Note. *k* = number of studies, β = regression coefficient, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit.

Table 7
Moderator Analyses of Leadership Level and Individualism-Collectivism.

Variables	<i>k</i>	<i>r_m</i>	ρ	SD _{ρ}	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}	<i>p</i> -value
Leadership Level							
Effectiveness							
Non-executive	54	0.174	0.215	0.127	0.174	0.258	0.058
Executive	10	0.056	0.069	0.204	-0.057	0.195	
Emergence							
Non-executive	25	0.161	0.198	0.172	0.120	0.276	0.283
Executive	2	0.571	0.676	0.340	0.198	1.155	
Cultural Context (individualism-collectivism)							
Effectiveness							
Collectivistic	11	0.359	0.446	0.312	0.254	0.638	0.058
Individualistic	50	0.190	0.234	0.131	0.193	0.280	

Note. *k* = number of studies, *N* = total sample size, *r_m* = average correlation adjusted for sample size, ρ = average effect size corrected for measurement error and adjusted for sample size, SD _{ρ} = standard deviation of estimated population correlation, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit.

and emergence ($F = 4.090$; $p = 0.283$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Regarding leadership effectiveness, there were 54 studies that included non-executives ($\rho = 0.215$, LL = 0.172 UL = 0.225) and 10 studies that included executives ($\rho = 0.069$, LL = -0.057, UL = 0.195). We found support for Hypothesis 5 at the $p < 0.10$ alpha level ($F = 4.440$; $p = 0.058$).

As shown in Table 7, results support our hypothesis that collectivistic versus individualistic culture positively moderates the relationship between leader agreeableness and effectiveness. In sum, there were 11 studies that represented samples from collectivistic countries and 50 studies that represented individualistic societies. Omnibus ANOVA showed that there is a significant difference between collectivistic ($\rho = 0.446$; LL = 0.254, UL = 0.638) and individualistic cultures ($\rho = 0.234$; LL = 0.193, UL = 0.280) at the $p < 0.10$ alpha level ($F = 4.440$; $p = 0.058$).

Research designs and methodological approaches

In this section, we summarize key research design and methodological features of the studies included in our meta-analysis, identify areas of concern and gaps regarding these methods, and offer recommendations for addressing them. Our analysis produced several interesting observations. First, studies in our sample rely heavily on survey designs (68 studies, 83%), with only 13 studies (15%) utilizing archival research designs. Additionally, there is an apparent lack of experimental designs. Only six studies (<8%) included experiments. Second, most studies utilize a single-level analysis, with only 22 (27%) using multi-level analyses. Third, 36 studies (44%) provided additional validity checks and/or analyzed the robustness of their findings to different specifications. Fourth, 65 studies (79%) employed cross-sectional designs, and 17 studies utilized either longitudinal or time-lagged designs. Finally, five studies (6%) mentioned endogeneity concerns, and one study (1%) took active steps to address endogeneity.

Based on our coding and analysis of methodological and design approaches, we want to note specific concerns that require attention from the field moving forward. First, consistent with the broader leadership literature (Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019), the lack of experimental designs is a concern. Only 7 out of 82 studies utilized experiments. This provides an important opportunity for future research because

experimental designs can establish causality and thereby help to build stronger theory (Antonakis et al., 2010). The second concern for the study design arises from a lack of time-lagged or longitudinal designs (17 studies out of 82). Such designs can help address common method variance and establish the precedence of measures (not causality) and, in doing so, improve theory strength and methodological rigor. The third concern related to research design arises from a lack of multi-level studies, with only 22 studies utilizing such approaches. Leadership is an inherently multi-level phenomenon with executives or managers leading teams or organizations consisting of many other individuals. To grasp the complexity of agreeableness and leadership, we suggest increased attention to developing multi-level studies and analyses. Finally, out of 82 studies in our sample, only one attempted to address endogeneity (i.e., the correlation of an explanatory variable with the error term). To remedy this deficiency, we recommend that future scholars apply additional rigor and attention to research design by consulting works that have painstakingly described various solutions to endogeneity (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2014).

Our findings also highlight several important research design and methodological gaps. First, we found that only two studies included qualitative approaches out of the 82 studies in our sample. We strongly encourage scholars to utilize qualitative methods as appropriate in future studies to facilitate grounded theory building on how leaders express agreeableness in organizations and the organizational effects of such expressions (cf., Weick, 1979). The second gap that our analysis revealed involves the underutilization of experimental, multi-level, and longitudinal designs, as previously noted. We recommend that researchers take advantage of these more rigorous designs to enhance confidence in the findings obtained. To address the third gap, a dearth of objective measurement, we suggest scholars move beyond traditional self-report measures towards the utilization of alternative techniques such as machine learning (Blake et al., 2020; Cooper et al., 2020; Harrison et al., 2019) or videometric analysis (Petrenko et al., 2016; Petrenko et al., 2019) to operationalize agreeableness and other focal variables. These techniques can provide opportunities for measurement triangulation of personality (i.e., when multiple methods are used to measure the construct) and enhance access to difficult-to-reach leader populations (e.g., CEOs). The concerns and the gaps we identify provide exciting new venues for exciting research questions and theory building.

Table 8
Moderator Analyses of Common Method Variance and Agreeableness Measurement.

DV/Moderator	<i>k</i>	<i>r_m</i>	ρ	SD _{ρ}	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}
Common Method Variance						
Effectiveness						
Same source, same time	25	0.246	0.298	0.232	0.202	0.394
Same source, different time	3	0.138	0.174	0.000	0.093	0.254
Different source, same time	7	0.170	0.237	0.132	0.114	0.359
Different source, different time	37	0.070	0.086	0.136	0.038	0.135
Emergence						
Same source, same time	7	0.297	0.374	0.341	0.112	0.635
Same source, different time	2	0.181	0.235	0.000	0.113	0.356
Different source, same time	–	–	–	–	–	–
Different source, different time	17	0.164	0.201	0.177	0.106	0.296
Measurement						
Effectiveness						
BFI	10	0.177	0.241	0.132	0.136	0.346
HEXACO	2	0.358	0.437	0.113	0.235	0.640
IPIP	12	0.322	0.393	0.239	0.251	0.534
NEO	24	0.159	0.195	0.108	0.141	0.248
TEXT	3	–0.011	–0.013	0.000	–0.036	0.009
MMI	2	0.002	0.008	0.149	–0.250	0.266
SDI	2	0.258	0.306	0.000	0.261	0.352
TUPI	3	0.410	0.492	0.141	0.299	0.685
PCI	2	0.196	0.240	0.000	0.151	0.328
Emergence						
BFI	5	0.154	0.183	0.164	0.009	0.356
HEXACO	–	–	–	–	–	–
IPIP	6	0.394	0.488	0.247	0.280	0.696
NEO	13	0.125	0.154	0.177	0.045	0.263

Note. *k* = number of studies, *N* = total sample size, *r_m* = average correlation adjusted for sample size, ρ = average effect size corrected for measurement error and adjusted for sample size, SD _{ρ} = standard deviation of estimated population correlation, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit, BFI = Big Five Inventory, HEXACO = HEXACO Personality Inventory, IPIP = International Personality Item Pool, NEO = NEO Personality Inventory, TEXT = Text-based Personality Measurement, MMI = Mini Markers Inventory, SDI = Self-Description Inventory, (PCI) = Personal Characteristics Inventory, Ten Item Personality Inventory = TIPI.

Post hoc analysis

To further explore our results, we conducted four post hoc analyses. First, we tested how common method variance (CMV; Lindell & Whitney, 2001) could be influencing the relationship between agreeableness and leadership emergence and effectiveness. CMV was coded on a bivariate basis from one to four, with the number “1” corresponding to “same source, same time” and “4” corresponding to “different source, different time.” As expected, results in Table 8 show that studies with the largest degree of CMV (i.e., same source, same time) also had the strongest effect sizes for leadership emergence ($\rho = 0.374$) and effectiveness ($\rho = 0.298$); the weakest effect size for leadership emergence ($\rho = 0.201$) and effectiveness ($\rho = 0.086$) was found for studies that had the smallest degree of CMV (i.e., different source, different time).

These results clearly show that CMV is an issue for studies of the agreeableness-leadership relationship, as is the case for much of the leadership literature (Antonakis et al., 2010). Nonetheless, we also agree with the logic of Richardson et al. (2009), who concluded following an extensive review of purported statistical remedies for CMV that “we cannot recommend any post hoc CMV technique as a means of correcting CMV’s potential effects in a given data set, nor can we recommend any technique as a means for detecting bias” (p. 296). Following their logic, we instead offer a straightforward recommendation for future investigations of the agreeableness-leadership relationships: adopt multi-source, multi-wave, and multi-method designs rather than relying on cross-sectional designs with exclusive use of survey measures of leader effectiveness and emergence. Rather than applying post hoc statistical techniques to identify and detect CMV, researchers should implement a priori research design solutions that minimize CMV, such as those described by Podsakoff and colleagues (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff et al., 2012; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). These include: (a) temporal separation of the indepen-

dent, mediating, and dependent variables to reduce the impact of transient factors such as respondent mood state, which could elevate or dampen ratings of agreeableness and leadership; (b) employing different sources for ratings of agreeableness and leadership (e.g., self, others [such as superiors, subordinates, peers, or customers]), and (c) using non-survey methods such as experimental manipulations and content-analysis of textual data to operationalize agreeableness and leadership. Note that given the tendency of agreeable individuals to inaccurately rate their abilities (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2004; Furnham et al., 2005), including leadership skills (McKee et al., 2018), separating the source of personality and leadership ratings may help to attenuate bias brought about by self-ratings of leadership or performance.

Second, we examined how the measurement of agreeableness may be moderating the effect size between agreeableness and leadership emergence and effectiveness. Personality measurement coding followed a two-step process. In step one, coders copied the name of the measurement tool and citation. In step-two, the lead authors grouped the measures into their broader categories, such as the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999), HEXACO (Ashton & Lee, 2007), International Personality Item Pool³ (IPIP; Goldberg, 1990), and NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). We note that some measures were only found to be used once (e.g., the Big-Five Aspects Scale; DeYoung et al., 2007) and could not be included in the moderation analysis. Also, in some cases, CEO personality was measured using a text analysis technique, which we categorized as “TEXT.” Regarding agreeableness and leadership emergence, IPIP was used in six studies and had the largest effect size ($\rho = 0.488$), followed by five studies that used the BFI ($\rho = 0.183$), and 13 studies that used the NEO-PI-R ($\rho = 0.154$).

³ Out of all studies, one used the IPIP-NEO measure of agreeableness. Because the items of the IPIP-NEO are derived from the IPIP, we categorized this study under the broader IPIP category for analysis.

Regarding leadership agreeableness measurement and leadership effectiveness, while only used in two studies, HEXACO had the strongest effect size ($\rho = 0.437$). The IPIP, used in 12 studies, had a slightly weaker ($\rho = 0.393$) effect size. The NEO-PI-R which was used the most with 24 studies, had a weaker effect size ($\rho = 0.195$) than the IPIP. The effect size of the BFI, used in 10 studies, was slightly stronger than that of the NEO-PI-R ($\rho = 0.241$). Notably, the studies using text-based measurement of leader agreeableness had a negative effect size ($\rho = -0.013$).

Third, given the popularity of unobtrusive measurement in executive research (Cragun et al., 2020; Hill et al. 2019) and the disparity in the measurement moderation analysis on leader agreeableness and leadership effectiveness for text versus survey measurement, we explored the potential influence that unobtrusive measurement could be having on the relationship between executive agreeableness and leadership effectiveness. Specifically, we first used binary coding to categorize executive studies employing text-based (unobtrusive) or survey-based (obtrusive) measurement. We then conducted a hierarchical moderation analysis to examine the relationship between executive agreeableness and leadership effectiveness when using text-based measurement versus survey-based measurement. The results showed the magnitude of the relationship between executive agreeableness and leadership effectiveness to be medium and positive in survey-based studies ($k = 7$; $\rho = 0.418$, LL = 0.227, UL = 0.608) and weak and negative in text-based studies ($k = 3$, $\rho = -0.013$, LL = -0.036 , UL = 0.009). We consider the implications of this finding in the discussion section.

Fourth, following previous leadership studies (Judge et al., 2002), we conducted a correlation matrix regression from our leadership sample to control for other factors of the Big-Five. Results show that when controlling for other Big-Five factors, the effect of leader agreeableness on leadership effectiveness is still positive and significant ($\beta = 0.117$, $p = 0.043$, $t = 2.026$). The effect of leader agreeableness on leadership emergence, however, is not significant ($\beta = 0.101$, $p = 0.236$, $t = 1.191$). Notably, none of the other Big-Five factors are significant; this is likely due to the low average sample size in the leadership emergence sample.

Discussion

In the *meta-analysis* on leadership emergence and effectiveness that covered the period up to 1998, Judge and colleagues (2002) found that agreeableness overall was not a significant predictor, and it was the “least relevant of the Big Five traits” ($p = 0.774$). That particular finding was in line with the concept of nice guys [or gals] finishing last and fit well with the implicit leadership theories that presented a stereotype of a strong leader (Lord, 1985; Lord & Maher, 1991; Shondrick et al., 2010). Two decades later, however, that stereotype is changing, yielding first to an acceptance of nice leaders and moving towards an expectation of the leader to be nice, which is seen in the business press (Dowd, 2019; Hauser, 2018). This subtle shift in leadership expectations coincided with sporadic evidence that leader agreeableness is positively related to leadership outcomes (Antonakis et al., 2017). However, a question remains: does sufficient evidence exist to substantiate the notion that agreeable individuals are likely to emerge as leaders and be effective leaders? Our paper gives a definitive “yes” answer to this question.

Our review of current literature shows that leader agreeableness relates to several key leadership styles, leader behaviors, and outcomes. Specifically, extant research shows that leader agreeableness relates positively to servant leadership (Hunter et al., 2013; Sun & Shang, 2019; Washington et al., 2006), transformational leadership (Judge & Bono, 2000), and ethical leadership (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009; Xu et al., 2011), while it relates negatively to patterns of abusive supervision (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017; D. Wu, 2020). Leader agreeableness is also associated with higher quality

LMX (Bernerth et al., 2007; Nahrgang et al., 2009; Sears & Hackett, 2011) and other functional behaviors (e.g., cooperation and collaboration, conflict management tactics, OCBs). Finally, current literature shows that having an agreeable manager is associated with positive outcomes for followers (Mathisen et al., 2011; Smith & Canger, 2004; Storey, 2018), while there have been mixed findings at the team (de Jong et al., 2013; Y. Wu, 2018) and organization levels (Dai et al., 2019; de Jong et al., 2013). These relationships thus necessitate additional research.

The literature review revealed three exciting opportunities for future research. First, we encourage scholars to draw from previous work in leadership to test the relationship between leadership agreeableness and other key constructs and outcomes. For instance, multiple leadership styles (e.g., authentic leadership; Avolio & Gardner, 2005), constructs (e.g., leadership development; Day & Thornton, 2018), and outcomes (e.g., the effect of leader agreeableness on manager tenure or turnover) remain understudied concerning agreeableness. Second, we suggest scholars attend to the questions of “why” and “how” leadership agreeableness influences relevant outcomes, advancing understanding as it relates to the processes through which leader agreeableness operates. Finally, we encourage giving attention to how leaders' perceptions foster a “positive bias” that may lead to inflated ratings of leader performance (Hansbrough et al., 2015). That is, as studies often rely on the follower, superior, and/or peer ratings of leader behavior, it may be that “liking” the leader because of their agreeable personality skews the accuracy of ratings (Martinko et al., 2018).

While the literature review provides a foundation for the idea that leader agreeableness is important for leadership emergence and effectiveness, it is also important to analyze the evidence from empirical studies to investigate support for these relationships. The results of our *meta-analysis* show that leader agreeableness is positively related to leadership emergence. This supports the importance of high-quality interpersonal relationships to leadership emergence and suggests that agreeable leaders—being cooperative, friendly, and caring—are more likely to develop such high-quality interpersonal relationships and help fill the social needs of groups (Hanna et al., 2021). Furthermore, this supports the idea that agreeable individuals could be more likely to produce affective responses of group members, making such individuals more likely to be perceived as leaderlike. The results of our *meta-analysis* also support our prediction that leader agreeableness is positively related to leadership effectiveness. This reinforces arguments that agreeable leaders build more effective relationships with their subordinates and create cohesive teams that are more likely to perform well (Cogliser et al., 2012). Additionally, this supports the argument that agreeable leaders are more likely to inspire and motivate their subordinates (Antonakis et al., 2017), leading to teams that are more committed to the organization.

One interesting finding of our *meta-analysis* is that we did not obtain support for an interactive effect of gender and leader agreeableness on leadership emergence. We think that several factors can explain this. First, there has been a shift in beliefs in the 21st century. Specifically, research has revealed that beliefs about the equality of women's and men's competency have increased since 1946 (Eagly et al., 2020). Second, following a similar pattern, the masculine construal of leadership has decreased over time (Koenig et al., 2011), and recent conceptual models of leadership emergence move beyond implicit leadership theory (Hanna et al., 2021). And while gender is still important factor to consider when examining the team dynamics (Min et al., 2021), interpersonal skills have become more critical for leadership (Lord et al., 2017). This results in leader agreeableness being equally essential for men and women.

Another interesting finding was that the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership effectiveness was significantly stronger for the non-executive leadership level than the executive leadership level. This finding fits well within some implicit leadership

theories which focus on the socially constructed stereotype of a leader who is “assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships” (House et al., 2004, p. 12) — a prototypical component of leadership that is strongly endorsed in many cultures. While studies of leader agreeableness at the executive level are few, they seem to fit within a dated paradigm embraced by many that goal-oriented executives who put performance ahead of relationships are more effective (Bass & Bass, 2009). Interestingly, this finding is dependent on the measure of executive agreeableness. As we show in the post hoc analysis, if we eliminate text-based measures of agreeableness and analyze only survey-based measures, then the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership effectiveness is positive and significant compared to negative and non-significant. This presents an important opportunity for future research into executive agreeableness to improve the validity of measurements of executive personality (i.e., Petrenko et al., 2019).

As we pursue research on executive agreeableness, we should consider the fundamental nature of the executive position. Generally, foundational research has shown that executives spend most of their workday interacting with individuals, groups, and teams (Barnard, 1968; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973). Agreeable executives are likely creating high-quality relationships throughout these various interactions (Sears & Hackett, 2011) which could also be resulting in inclusive (Chatman & Barsade, 1995) and cooperative organizational cultures (O’Reilly et al., 2014). Indeed, in a study of CEO agreeableness and top management team dynamics, agreeable CEOs were found to promote team cohesion in their TMT leading to the “smooth implementation of intended goals because all team members are cooperatively focus[ed] on decisions” resulting in organizational growth (Peterson et al., 2003, p. 797). Our post hoc analysis shows that the relationship between executive agreeableness and leadership outcomes is more complex than previously conceptualized, aligning with the null result for our Hypothesis 4. Our results indicate that the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership emergence is not stronger on the non-executive versus the executive level, as posited. However, this null finding might be due to only two studies that look at leader agreeableness and leadership emergence on the executive level. This scarcity of research presents an important opportunity for future research in upper echelons to understand how leader agreeableness affects the emergence of leaders in the new paradigm where nice leaders are no longer perceived as weak and ineffective. Overall, we see a preponderance of evidence that indicates a need for additional research examining agreeableness at the executive level.

Our last finding underscores the importance of utilizing different job contexts, such as national culture, when studying the personality to leadership relationships. As predicted, the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership effectiveness was stronger in collectivistic versus individualistic cultures. This finding underscores the logic that collectivistic societies prioritize harmonious relationships with group members and that relational behaviors associated with agreeable leaders are more impactful in such contexts (House et al., 2004). While there were 11 studies conducted within a collectivistic cultural context, the number of studies within the individualistic cultural context was more than four times higher (50), underscoring the importance of researching with cross-cultural samples.

Finally, we would like to highlight a theoretical issue with the conceptualization of agreeableness that we uncovered during our review process. It became evident that the current theoretical focus is on understanding how higher levels of agreeableness influence leadership emergence and effectiveness. Such focus ignores the lower spectrum of agreeableness, where the theoretical mechanisms might be unique in nature. Only three studies theorized the effects of low levels of agreeableness on leadership effectiveness or emergence. We need to understand how disagreeableness (i.e., a low score on the agreeableness) impacts leadership processes. We believe that by extending the theoretical focus to include both ends of the trait spectrum, researchers will

build richer and stronger theory and improve our understanding of agreeableness.

Limitations

As with any correlational study, there is the potential for endogeneity. We caution readers that some of the studies included in our meta-analysis did not always control for every potential predictor of leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness which should be considered in interpreting this study’s results. For instance, not all studies control for humility, which is related to leadership effectiveness (Petrenko et al., 2019). Also, very few studies controlled for IQ (see Antonakis et al., 2017 for exception), which leadership scholars believe is a critical aspect of leadership. Finally, we believe that it is important to control for other Big-Five traits when investigating effects of individual traits. We encourage future researchers to unpack the leadership-agreeableness relationship using study designs that facilitate the elimination of potential endogeneity.

Conclusion

Beyond synthesizing the literature and providing meta-analytic evidence on the relationship between leader agreeableness and leadership outcomes, our paper makes two critical points for practicing managers and leaders. First, managers might try to suppress some of the tendencies associated with agreeableness because they do not want to seem weak and soft. This suppression might not be necessary anymore as being nice is becoming more accepted—and possibly even expected—for leaders. We show that this is true for both women and men. It seems that leaders no longer need to choose to be “effective” or “nice,” but rather both can be achieved simultaneously. Second, practicing managers can benefit from our finding that leader agreeableness is also positively related to leadership emergence, as it has implications for current training programs designed to promote diversity in business leadership. This finding is critically important as the paradigm shift regarding nice leaders continues because, as Offermann et al. (1994) noted, “people’s implicit theories do not simply appear, fully formed, out of nowhere.” Instead, they are “generated and refined over time as a result of people’s experiences with actual leaders” (p. 45). Therefore, providing research-based evidence to practicing managers that nice individuals can emerge as effective leaders can further the leadership paradigm towards a more inclusive reality.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A

Figs. A1–A4 and Tables A1–A8.

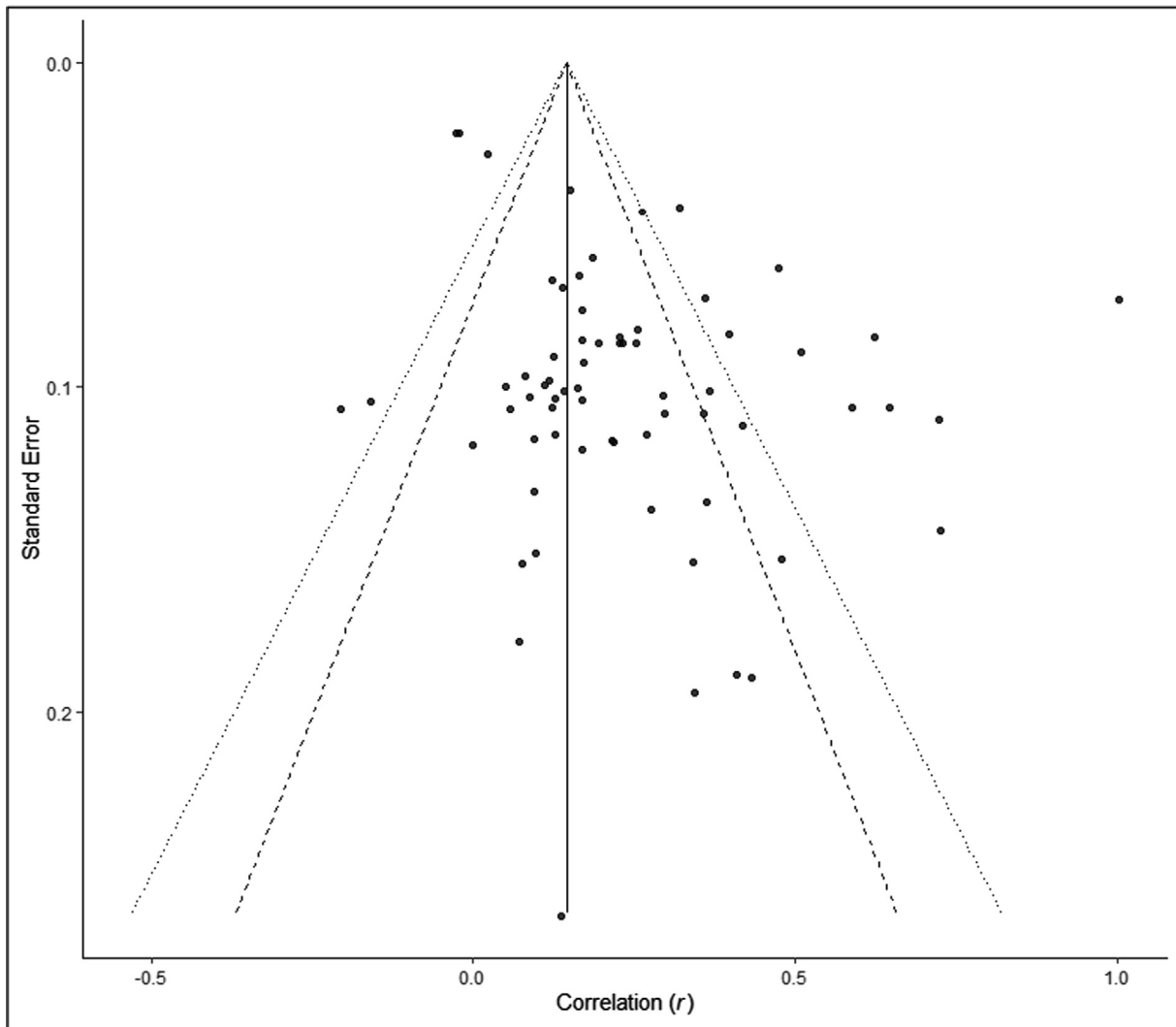


Fig. A1. Leadership Effectiveness Funnel Plot.

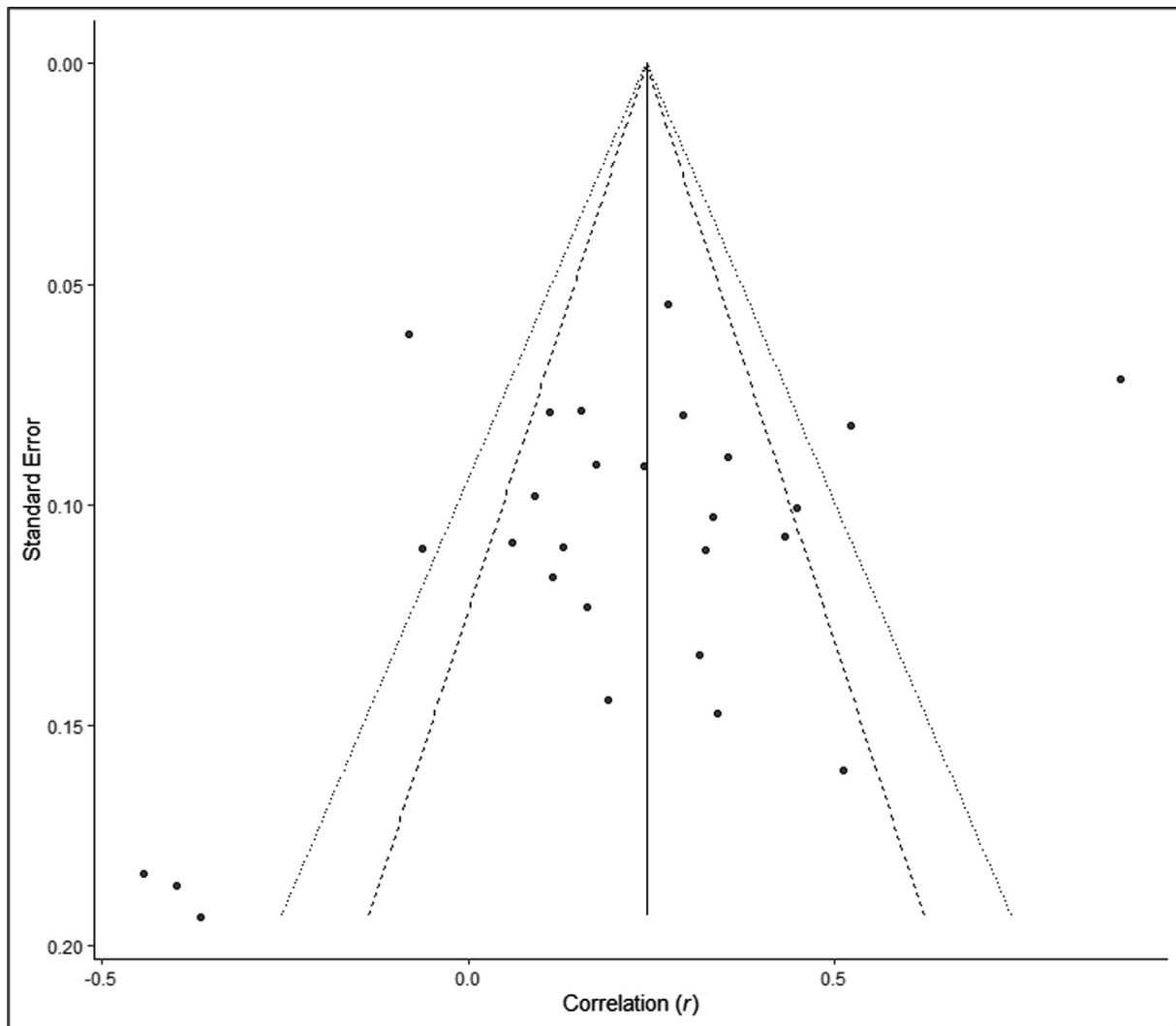
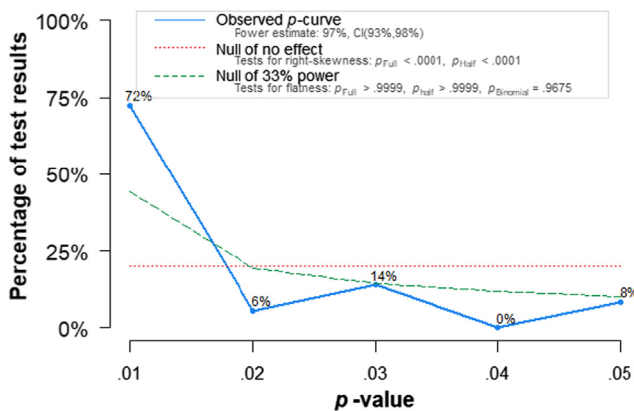
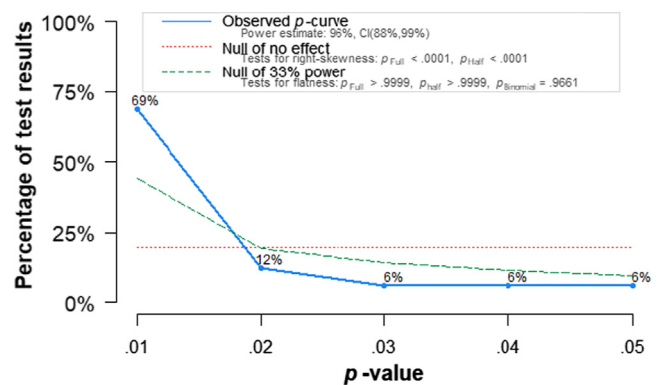


Fig. A2. Leadership Emergence Funnel Plot.



Note: The observed p-curve includes 36 statistically significant ($p < .05$) results, of which 30 are $p < .025$. There were 31 additional results entered but excluded from p-curve because they were $p > .05$.

Fig. A3. Leadership Effectiveness P-Curve.



Note: The observed p-curve includes 16 statistically significant ($p < .05$) results, of which 14 are $p < .025$. There were 11 additional results entered but excluded from p-curve because they were $p > .05$.

Fig. A4. Leadership Emergence P-Curve.

Table A1
List of Reverse Coded Phenomena.

List of Reverse Coded Phenomena
Abusive Supervision
Managerial Burnout
Team Conflict
Follower Disengagement
Follower Deviance
Paradoxical Leader Behavior
Managerial Avoidance and Substance Abuse
Passive Leadership
Perceived Incivility
Supervisor Role Overload
Destructive Leadership

Table A2
Coded Study Designs.

Coded Study Designs
Archival
Computer simulation
Content Analysis
Diary study/experience sampling
Experimental simulation
Field experiment
Interview
Judgement task (e.g., raters)
Lab experiment
Meta-analysis
Observation
Quasi-experiment
Review
Survey
Other (specified in notes)

Table A3
Studies Used in Meta-analysis: Leadership Effectiveness (outliers removed).

Variables	Study	N	r
Effectiveness	Judge & Bono, 2000	169	0.039
	Gellatly & Irving, 2001	81	0.055
	Bartone et al., 2002	855	0.130
	Lim & Ployhart, 2004	39	0.280
	Morrison et al., 2004	45	0.059
	Smith & Canger, 2004	131	0.073
	Duehr, 2006	175	0.090
	Ntalianis, 2006	50	0.318
	Washington et al., 2006	126	0.143
	Bernerth et al., 2007	195	0.190
	Buddhavarapu, 2007	205	0.214
	Grant & Langan-Fox, 2007	211	0.199
	Bernerth et al., 2008	195	0.140
	Francoeur, 2008	294	0.115
	Quinlan, 2008	22	0.110
	Chi et al., 2009	122	0.110
	Nahrgang et al., 2009	330	0.099
	Singh & Singh, 2009	188	0.436
	Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009	222	0.485
	Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010	192	0.190
	Chua & Iyengar, 2011	83	0.290
	Chua & Iyengar, 2011	134	0.310
	Kalshoven et al., 2011	150	0.150
	Sears & Hackett, 2011	161	0.443
	Siewert, 2011	151	-0.122
	Cogliser et al., 2012	243	0.140
	de Jong et al., 2013	323	0.410
	Hunter et al., 2013	110	0.352
	Powers, 2012	139	0.230
	Quigley, 2013	198	0.158

Table A3 (continued)

Variables	Study	N	r
Effectiveness	Colbert et al., 2014	94	0.144
	Fang & Zhang, 2014	121	0.210
	Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014	120	0.100
	Liborius, 2014	210	0.057
	Liborius, 2014	209	0.111
	Liborius, 2014	207	0.076
	Srivastava et al., 2015	152	0.110
	Walker, 2015	148	0.233
	Barron et al., 2016	55	0.296
	Barron et al., 2016	76	0.227
	Bernardin et al., 2016	125	-0.170
	Camps et al., 2016	103	0.070
	Cernea, 2016	116	0.050
	Olls, 2016	135	0.070
	Panaccio, 2009	231	0.320
	Yeh et al., 2016	135	0.118
	Yoon & Bono, 2016	693	0.214
	Eissa & Lester, 2017	190	0.341
	Hu & Judge, 2017	71	0.588
	Metz et al., 2017	749	0.260
	Bullock, 2018	71	0.254
	Fouk et al., 2018	108	0.176
	Kahya & Şahin, 2018	67	0.376
	McKee et al., 2018	378	0.127
	Malhotra et al., 2018	1639	0.020
	Storey, 2018	90	0.194
	Harrison et al., 2019	3449	-0.020
Mahlamäki et al., 2019	168	0.200	
Qu & Page, 2019	374	0.158	
Bergner, 2020	123	0.000	
Boyd, 2020	69	0.076	
Harrison et al., 2020	2880	-0.019	
Priesemuth & Bigelow, 2020	160	0.090	
Wu, 2020	136	0.280	

Note. Correlations in table are aggregated at the study level.

Table A4
Studies Used in Meta-analysis: Leadership Emergence (outliers removed).

Variables	Study	N	r
Emergence	Judge & Bono, 2000	169	0.240
	Kornør & Nordvik, 2004	106	0.111
	Lim & Ployhart, 2004	39	-0.290
	Duehr, 2006	525	0.210
	Washington et al., 2006	126	0.380
	Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009	222	0.410
	Kalshoven et al., 2011	89	0.240
	Kalshoven et al., 2011	150	0.150
	Thomason et al., 2011	114	0.208
	Xu et al., 2011	59	0.400
	Cogliser et al., 2012	243	0.121
	de Vries, 2012	113	0.050
	Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012	131	0.246
	Hunter et al., 2013	110	0.370
	Colbert et al., 2014	94	0.098
	Yeh et al., 2016	135	0.076
	Baptiste, 2018	55	-0.278
	Johnson, 2018	177	0.286
	Reeve et al., 2018	42	-0.358
	De Hoyos-Aguilar, 2019	247	0.224
	Hu et al., 2019	223	0.090
	Hu et al., 2019	337	-0.070
	Sun & Shang, 2019	81	0.140
Bergner, 2020	123	-0.050	
Ishaq et al., 2021	131	0.220	

Note. Correlations in table are aggregated at the study level.

Table A5
Meta-Analysis of Leadership Effectiveness and Emergence (outliers removed).

Variables	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r_m</i>	ρ	<i>SD_ρ</i>	% Var	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}	CV _{LL}	CV _{UL}
Effectiveness	63	19,120	0.101	0.122	0.146	18.419	0.089	0.161	-0.065	0.308
Emergence	25	3841	0.160	0.195	0.168	24.826	0.120	0.271	-0.021	0.411

Note. *k* = number of studies, *N* = total sample size, *r_m* = average correlation adjusted for sample size, ρ = average effect size corrected for measurement error and adjusted for sample size, *SD_ρ* = standard deviation of estimated population correlation, % Var = percentage of variance explained by artifacts, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit, CV_{LL} = credibility interval lower limit, CV_{UL} = credibility interval upper limit.

Table A6
Moderator Analysis (meta-regression) of Leader Gender and Leadership Emergence (outliers removed).

DV/Moderator	<i>k</i>	β	<i>p-value</i>	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}
Emergence					
Percentage of female leaders	20	0.001	0.961	-0.004	0.004

Note. *k* = number of studies, β = regression coefficient, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit.

Table A7
Moderator Analyses of Leadership Level and Individualism-Collectivism (outliers removed).

Variables	<i>k</i>	<i>r_m</i>	ρ	<i>SD_ρ</i>	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}	<i>p-value</i>
Leadership Level							
Effectiveness							
Non-executive	52	0.166	0.207	0.114	0.167	0.246	0.007
Executive	9	0.034	0.041	0.126	-0.0445	0.127	
Emergence							
Non-executive	24	0.161	0.198	0.170	0.120	0.276	-
Executive	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Cultural Context (individualism-collectivism)							
Effectiveness							
Collectivistic	9	0.233	0.284	0.129	0.174	0.395	0.258
Individualistic	48	0.181	0.226	0.116	0.185	0.267	

Note. *k* = number of studies, *N* = total sample size, *r_m* = average correlation adjusted for sample size, ρ = average effect size corrected for measurement error and adjusted for sample size, *SD_ρ* = standard deviation of estimated population correlation, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit.

Table A8
Moderator Analyses of Common Method Variance and Agreeableness Measurement (outliers removed).

DV/Moderator	<i>k</i>	<i>r_m</i>	ρ	<i>SD_ρ</i>	CI _{LL}	CI _{UL}
Common Method Variance						
Effectiveness						
Same source, same time	23	0.205	0.251	0.155	0.180	0.323
Same source, different time	3	0.138	0.174	0.000	0.090	0.258
Different source, same time	7	0.170	0.237	0.132	0.114	0.359
Different source, different time	35	0.064	0.076	0.119	0.032	0.121
Emergence						
Same source, same time	6	0.156	0.199	0.178	0.033	0.365
Same source, different time	2	0.181	0.235	0.000	0.113	0.356
Different source, same time	-	-	-	-	-	-
Different source, different time	16	0.165	0.199	0.174	0.103	0.295
Measurement						
Effectiveness						
BFI	9	0.155	0.211	0.069	0.129	0.293
HEXACO	1	-	-	-	-	-
IPIP	11	0.263	0.327	0.119	0.241	0.412
NEO	24	0.159	0.195	0.109	0.141	0.249
TEXT	3	-0.011	-0.013	0.000	-0.035	0.009
MMI	2	0.002	0.008	0.149	-0.250	0.266
SDI	2	0.258	0.319	0.000	0.268	0.369
TUPI	2	0.304	0.367	0.000	0.351	0.384
PCI	2	0.196	0.243	0.000	0.146	0.340
Emergence						
BFI	4	0.154	0.182	0.182	-0.023	0.387
HEXACO	-	-	-	-	-	-
IPIP	5	0.283	0.367	0.070	0.265	0.469
NEO	13	0.125	0.154	0.167	0.051	0.257

Note. *k* = number of studies, *N* = total sample size, *r_m* = average correlation adjusted for sample size, ρ = average effect size corrected for measurement error and adjusted for sample size, *SD_ρ* = standard deviation of estimated population correlation, CI_{LL} = confidence interval lower limit, CI_{UL} = confidence interval upper limit, BFI = Big Five Inventory, HEXACO = HEXACO Personality Inventory, IPIP = International Personality Item Pool, NEO = NEO Personality Inventory, TEXT = Text-based Personality Measurement, MMI = Mini Markers Inventory, SDI = Self-Description Inventory, (PCI) = Personal Characteristics Inventory, Ten Item Personality Inventory = TIPI.

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Asterisk indicates studies included in the meta-analysis

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