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**Article**

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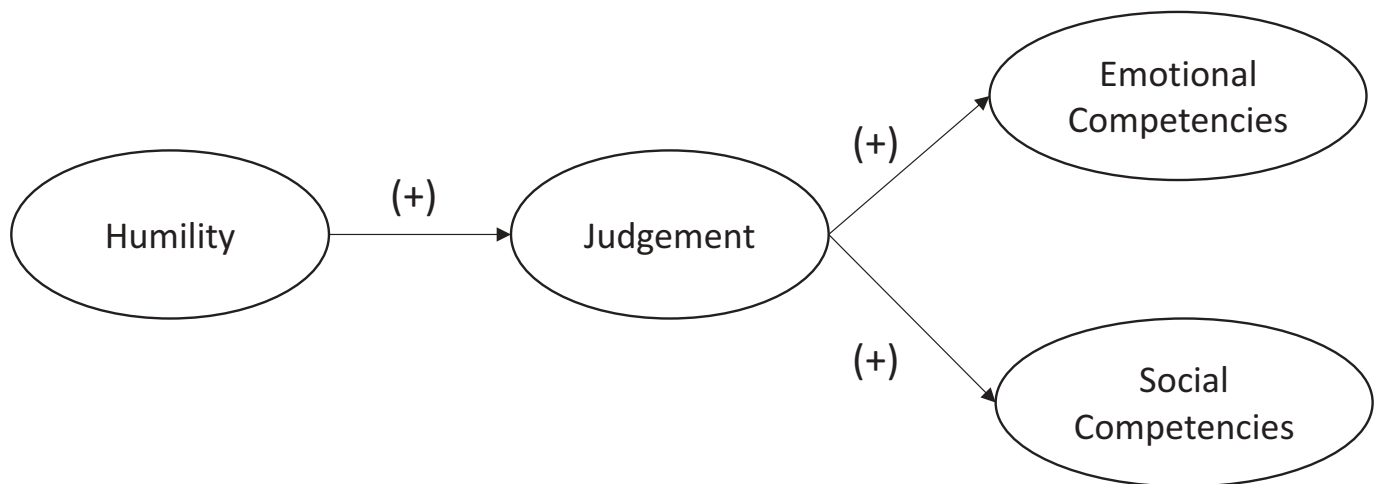
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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The effect of humility on emotional and social competencies: The mediating role of judgment

Rosa Hendijani<sup>1\*</sup> and Babak Sohrabi<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Leadership competencies are important contributing factors of successful performance among leaders. As theory suggests, humility can have a significant effect on building emotional and social competencies. In this study, we examine the effect of humility on competencies both directly and indirectly, through its effect on judgment. We designed and conducted a self-reported survey to measure humility, judgment, and emotional and social competencies among 165 management students. The results of our study showed that humility had a significant positive effect on emotional and social competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. In addition, judgment had a significant mediating role on the relationship between humility and competencies. These results provide support for the important role of humility on personal learning and development as was previously discussed in the literature. Considering its important role, strategies have been recommended in the discussion section to improve humility both at personal and organizational levels.

**Subjects:** Personality; Developmental Psychology; Cognitive Development; Emotional Development; Educational Psychology; Educational Research

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Rosa Hendijani is a professor in management area. Her research focuses on behavioral operations management, judgment and decision making, motivation, and performance. She has done research and teaching for the past ten years in several business schools around the world. One of her key areas of research is to examine and better understand the underlying factors influencing performance of individuals in the business world. Research in personal development and performance highlights character as an underlying factor that contributes to the development of competencies. In this line, she works on a series of studies that examine the effect of character dimensions on the development of emotional and social competencies. This can help in finding more effective ways of developing competencies that result in successful performance. This study focuses on humility as one of the key dimensions of character and its role in the development of emotional and social competencies.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

- Humility has long been considered as a virtue with positive effect on personal development and success among individuals.
- From a historical, monotheistic, or modern view, humility is considered to play a significant role in human excellence.
- In this study, we examine the role of humility on building emotional and social competencies as two important ingredients of successful performance.
- Previous studies suggest that humility can have a significant role in building emotional and social competencies, by encouraging the individual to view his/her past actions in a realistic way, free from overconfident and overly optimistic judgments.
- Our result suggest that humility has a significant positive effect on the development of emotional and social competencies. In addition, this effect is through better judgment. In other words, humility improves judgment, which in turn improves emotional and social competencies.

**Keywords: humility; character; emotional competencies; social competencies; effective leadership; personal development; overconfidence bias**

## 1. Introduction

Leadership education has been one of the main goals of business schools' program. Every year, a lot of money and effort is spent on improving competencies among university students in business school programs (Boyatzis & Saatcioglu, 2008). Competencies are defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that can help in realizing one's goals (Boyatzis & Saatcioglu, 2008; Gandz, Crossan, Seijts, Sapp, & Vandenbosch, 2010; Gupta & Srivastava, 2019). It is related to one's ability to use knowledge and skills to achieve required outcomes (Pop & Khampirat, 2019; Trinder, 2008). Identifying and thriving competencies have become highly important in recent years (Gupta & Srivastava, 2019). With the emphasis on competency-based human resource management, several studies have attempted to find the type of competencies required for workers in different job positions and industries in today's digital world (Periáñez-Cañadillas, Charterina, & Pando-García, 2019; Shaheen, Azam, Soma, & Kumar, 2019; Silva, Costa, & Kniess, 2019).

In addition, humility has proved to have a significant effect on individuals' effort for learning and personal improvement. Without humility, individuals are unable to understand and learn from their own mistakes and the mistakes of others and use that understanding to improve themselves (Seijts, Gandz, Crossan, & Reno, 2015). Humility results in better self-awareness which is the first step in continual learning and personal development (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013a; Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad, 2008).

Humility is one of the dimensions of character, a mix of virtues, values, and personality traits that influence behavior (Seijts et al., 2015). It has received significant attention by researchers in several areas of knowledge including philosophy, psychology, and more recently in management. As previous studies have suggested, humility has numerous advantages. It encourages individuals to act in an other-enhancing compared to a self-enhancing way. It helps the individual to look beyond the praise and attention of others and be able to focus on learning and personal improvement through realistic and unexaggerated views of the self and the situation.

Historically, humility has been considered a virtue (currently, referred to as character). In Greek philosophy, for example, humility was considered a starting point of a virtuous life rather than a goal in itself (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Recent studies on character categorize humility as one of the main dimensions of character (Crossan et al., 2017). In this study, we examine the effect of humility on building emotional and social competencies. In addition, we examine the mediating role of judgment, the central dimension of character (Seijts et al., 2015), on this relationship.

## 2. Literature review

In this section, the literature on humility, judgment, and competencies will be reviewed. Then, hypotheses will be developed based on the relationship between study variables.

### 2.1. Humility

Humility has long been addressed from different perspectives. The humility literature shows different perspectives, including historical, monotheistic, and modern ones (Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005). From a historical perspective, humility comes from the traditions of Greek Stoic, Buddhism, and Taoism (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In early Greek philosophy, humility was considered a virtue. Virtue refers to one's excellence in capacity, power, or behavior. Humility was not significantly mentioned in Greek philosophy due to the fact that well-educated individuals were rightly informed of their own limitations as human beings and therefore, they were inclined to show high levels of humility. Thus, the importance of humility was obvious in a way that it was considered as an underlying requirement for pursuing a virtuous life.

In Buddhist and Taoist traditions, humility has been considered to play a significant role in human excellence. In contrast with Greek philosophers, these schools of thought do not view humility as a result of human limitation, but instead they viewed it as a need to forgo one's ego and connect with the reality (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In Buddhism, the cause of human suffering is craving (referred to as *Samudaya*) which in turn, is the result of one's misunderstanding or ignorance of the self (Mishra, 2004). In order to mitigate the suffering, individuals should follow an eighth fold path of enlightenment (referred to as *Marga*). Two main elements of this path are having the right view and intention. Right view is to perceive things as they actually are and the right intention is to better understand oneself and becoming free of selfishness. Humility can help in part, in improving the second element, that is the better understanding of oneself (i.e., achieving right intention). Similarly, in Taoism tradition, humility is referred to as losing of the self. In Taoist view, the effectiveness of the leader was largely determined by the leader's ability to forgo things to become in harmony with Tao (Morris et al., 2005).

Monotheistic traditions including, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity have their own perspective of humility. In these traditions, humility is conceptualized as the submission to God (Murray, 2001). Christianity has a paradoxical view to humility in the sense that humility is considered as the path to glory (Spiegel, 2003). The central role of humility in Christianity and its texts has had a significant impact on the development of Western culture (Comte-Sponville, 2002; Sandage & Watson Wiens, 2001; Spiegel, 2003). In one definition, humility is defined as "having or showing a low estimate of one's own importance" (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996, p. 689). In Christianity instructions, individuals are advised not to consider themselves more highly than others and consider others higher than oneself (Morris et al., 2005). According to these notions, in Christian tradition, humility results in loving others and loving requires humbleness. Thus, humility has a central role in considering other people as being worthy of love and compassion in Christianity (Comte-Sponville, 2002). In Islam, there are similar views of humility. Muslims are recommended to consider God as "Kabir" and surrender to his abilities and omnipotence. In fact, the word Islam has an Arabic origin "Aslama" which means to accept or surrender and Muslim means a humble person who submits to God (Mir, 2010).

Studies in positive psychology and its related concepts of virtue and character have significantly increased in recent years (Park & Peterson, 2009; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). These studies have given rise to the development of a set of virtues and character strengths. Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified a set of six virtues that are common to the cultural traditions of Buddhism and Taoism, Greece, Christianity and Islam that were discussed above (McGrath, 2014). They decompose character into six virtues of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Each of these dimensions consists of several character strengths. Humility and modesty are considered as one of the character strengths that are related to the virtue of temperance (McGrath, 2014). Recent research on character which is based on studies on organizational leadership extends Peterson and Seligman's framework and creates a new framework with eleven dimensions. These dimensions include courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence, accountability, drive, collaboration, humility, integrity, and judgment (Crossan, Seijts, & Gandz, 2015; Seijts et al., 2015). In Peterson and Seligman's classification, humility was considered a sub-category of the virtue of temperance. The new classification classifies humility as a separate dimension of character. This is due to the burgeoning research in the leadership literature which highlights humility as one of the important virtues that influence leadership (e.g., Ou et al., 2014; Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013). As Seijts et al. (2015) explains, humility is one of the main qualities of an individual. It allows one to learn from his/her mistakes and from the mistakes of others. It is related to one's level of self-awareness, ability to reflect upon acts and behaviors, and gratitude for the help and contribution of others in one's personal success and achievement.

## 2.2. Judgment

Similar to humility, judgment is one of the main dimensions of character. In the eleven-dimension framework of character, judgment plays a central role through which other dimensions of character influence learning and personal improvement (Seijts et al., 2015). The central role of judgment is consistent with the notion of "practical wisdom" delineated by Aristotle. This notion emphasizes that a person with a good judgment can scrutinize a situation from different perspectives and make better

decisions, resulting in a more realistic understanding of self and the situation and creating better performance outcomes (Crossan et al., 2017). In one empirical study, sound judgment proved to have a significant effect on performance among executives (Sosik et al., 2012).

### **2.3. Humility and judgment**

High levels of humility can have a significant positive effect on judgment and decision-making. Based on the decision-making literature, personal biases can negatively affect judgment and decision-making. Among different types of biases, overconfidence bias has been widely discussed as one of the most dangerous ones (Moore & Healy, 2008). It is generally related to lack of humility. Humility results in a realistic and proper estimation of one's self, personal abilities, and knowledge. Overconfidence bias, however, is an overestimation of one's personal self, abilities, performance, or success probabilities compared to others (Moore & Healy, 2008). Overconfidence bias has been proposed as one of the main predictors of catastrophic phenomena such as wars, business failures, and stock market bubbles (Camerer & Lovallo, 1999; Glaser & Weber, 2007; Johnson, 2004; Moore & Healy, 2008). In fact, as one of the scholars starkly states: "No problem in judgment and decision making is more prevalent and more potentially catastrophic than overconfidence" (Plous, 1993, p. 217). Thus, overconfidence bias can negatively impact judgment and decision-making. On the other hand, higher levels of humility can control the level of personal confidence and prevent from falling into the trap of overconfidence bias which results in hubris and arrogance (Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). Therefore, it can be predicted that humility can have a positive effect on judgment and decision-making.

### **2.4. Competencies**

Competencies consist of a set of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that can help in realizing one's goals (Gupta & Srivastava, 2019). They can lead to effective performance among individuals (Boyatzis, 2008). Building competencies have become highly important in today's rapidly changing world (Gupta & Srivastava, 2019). Competency-based human resource management emphasizes the need to find competencies required for workers in different job types (Daley, 2012; Periañez-Cañadillas et al., 2019; Shaheen et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2019).

The literature on competence lists important competencies that can help individuals in completing their responsibilities and accomplish their goals (Conger, 2004; Seijts et al., 2015). Previous research (Boyatzis, 2008; Goleman, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Spencer & Spencer, 2008) categorize human competencies into two main clusters of emotional and social competencies. The emotional competencies consist of self-awareness and self-management. The self-awareness category is related to recognizing and understanding one's own emotions. Self-management category refers to effective management of oneself and consists of one's emotional self-control, achievement orientation, positive outlook, and adaptability. Social competencies consist of social awareness and relationship management. Social awareness is related to understanding the emotions of others and consists of two competencies of empathy and organizational awareness. Relationship management is related to the use of one's emotional understanding in relationship with others and consists of one's influence, ability to coach and mentor, conflict management, inspirational leadership, and teamwork (Boyatzis, 2011).

## **3. Hypotheses development**

### **3.1. The effect of humility on emotional and social competencies**

Previous studies have predicted that humility can have a significant positive effect on building competencies resulting in successful performance. High levels of humility can help individuals in the development of their competencies. Humility encourages one to have a realistic self-assessment of their own capabilities and contribution compared to others. This attribute results in a reflection on abilities, strengths and weaknesses and a realistic and unexaggerated evaluation of own successes and failures (Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). The process of self-reflection leads them to acknowledge strengths and weaknesses and look for ways to develop the competencies that they realize they are lacking (Sturm, Vera, & Crossan, 2017). In another empirical study, Fredrickson (2003) found that virtues (including humility) increased intellectual, emotional, and social competencies of employees and organizations.

Hypothesis 1a. Humility has a significant positive effect on the emotional competency of self-awareness.

Hypothesis 1b. Humility has a significant positive effect on the emotional competency of self-management.

Hypothesis 2a. Humility has a significant positive effect on the social competency of social awareness.

Hypothesis 2b. Humility has a significant positive effect on the social competency of relationship management.

### 3.2. The mediating role of judgment

Humility is defined as “a realistic assessment of one’s own contribution and the recognition of the contribution of others, along with luck and good fortune that made one’s own success possible” (Solomon, 1999, p. 94). Such realistic assessment of own capabilities which is the characteristics of humble individuals can help them in having a more accurate judgment and decision-making (Crossan, Mazutis, & Seijts, 2013b; Crossan et al., 2013a). It can improve individuals’ judgment of their own strengths and weaknesses and those of others. Thus, by encouraging individuals to do a realistic reflection of self and situation, humility can help them develop better judgment of own strengths and weaknesses which in turn can encourage them to develop different types of competencies (Strum et al., 2017).

On the other hand, low levels of humility can result in arrogance and overly optimistic estimates of personal abilities and strengths among individuals. Such overestimation of abilities is referred to as overconfidence bias in the decision-making literature (Moore & Healy, 2008). Overconfidence bias has proved to have a significant negative effect on performance in many different arenas. Thus, it can be hypothesized that humility has a positive effect on judgment which in turn, positively influences emotional and social competencies.

Hypothesis 3a. Judgment acts as a mediator in the relationship between humility and emotional competency of self-awareness.

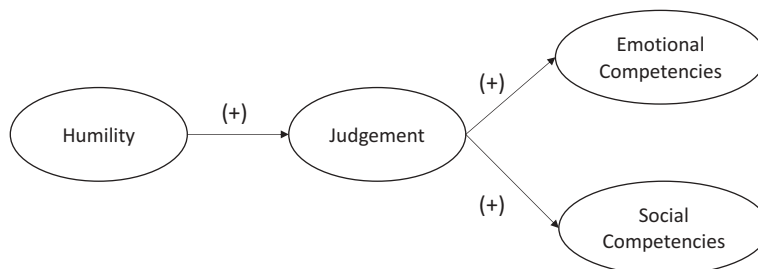
Hypothesis 3b. Judgment acts as a mediator in the relationship between humility and emotional competency of self-management.

Hypothesis 4a. Judgment acts as a mediator in the relationship between humility and social competency of social awareness.

Hypothesis 4b. Judgment acts as a mediator in the relationship between humility and social competency of relationship management.

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between our study constructs.

**Figure 1. The relationship between study variables.**





#### **4. Research methodology**

We designed a survey to examine our research hypothesis. The survey method is one of the most feasible approaches to test our research hypothesis. Our study team developed a survey questionnaire to ask individuals about their character and competencies from their own view point.

##### **4.1. Survey questions**

Our survey consisted of two main sections with self-reported questions to measure character dimensions of humility and judgment and the three types of competencies. Humility and judgment were measured using the character measure developed by Seijts et al. (2015). This measure of character had several advantages. First, it highlights the importance of humility as one single dimension of character (Crossan et al., 2017) while previous measure developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) consider humility as a sub-dimension of temperance. Second, this model has been developed, tested, and used among students. Thus, it is a reliable and validated measure for students. As the scholars recommended, this model can be used among business students for identifying their strengths and weaknesses and for educational purposes (Crossan et al., 2013b; Seijts et al., 2015). We used the humility and judgment dimensions of Leadership Character Insight Assessment (LCIA).<sup>1</sup> The LCIA questionnaires were translated into Iranian language by the research team. It was pilot tested with a small group of 10 people and modified for the main study.

We used the ESCI model to measure emotional, and social competencies. It has some advantages compared to other measures. First, it measures three types of competencies, compared to other models that mostly measure two competency types of emotional and social ones. Second, its framework is primarily used and developed for measuring competencies among business students. This model has been developed, tested, and validated in educational programs for several years (Boyatzis & Saatcioglu, 2008) and across different contexts (Batista-Foguet, Boyatzis, Guillen, & Serlavos, 2008). The multi-language questionnaire was obtained online from Korn Ferry/Hay Group and was used in our research (<http://www.haygroup.com/us/training/details.aspx?id=21547&eventid=602>).

##### **4.2. Study design and measurement**

We used an online survey to conduct this study. Prior to the main study, we did a pilot test using a group of 60 students in MBA programs in participating universities. In this pilot test, we asked participants to identify and indicate any part of the survey or its questions that created misunderstanding. We used this feedback to improve the survey for the main study. The main study was conducted online. The survey link was sent to all the students in the management programs in several universities. We sent the survey online to students four times during the years of 2017 and 2018.

First, participants read a description with information related to the purpose and content of the survey and the approximate time it took them to complete the survey. The purpose of the study as mentioned to students was to improve the master's degree program in management by better identifying students' strengths and weaknesses.

The survey had three sections. In the first section, participants answered questions related to their competencies (ESCI questionnaire). These questions were asked on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Consistently). The second section consisted of questions related to humility and judgment, selected from LCIA questionnaire. The questions in this section were asked on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 5 (Extremely Likely). In the third section, participants answered several questions related to their program as well as their demographic data (e.g., age and gender). Finally, participants were asked to provide any comments they had regarding the survey in total.



## 5. Statistical analysis and results

### 5.1. Participants and descriptive statistics

In total, we contacted a random sample of 500 students in master’s degree programs in business and management in two large-sized universities in Iran. Random sampling helps with selecting a representative group of the larger population (Campbell & Stanley, 2015). It increases the independence of observations and generalizability of results to the larger population (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Among these, 200 people participated and 165 of them completed the survey. The response rate was 33%. There were 36 cases of missing data. These cases were removed from the final dataset. Our sample consisted of individuals who were participating in several master’s degree programs in MBA and management, including regular MBA and executive MBA programs. In general, a large percentage of participants in these MBA programs are employed. They mainly come to the program to increase their knowledge in business and management in order to help them improve their career. Among the participants, 135 out of 165 (around 82%) had at least one year of work experience, with several participants (around 21%) having experienced managerial and leadership positions. The number of years of work experience ranged between 0 and 10 years with an average of 2.8 years and a standard deviation of 3.18 years. Out of the total number of participants (165 people), 135 (82%) of them had at least one year of work experience and 54% were working at the time of data collection. Thus, our sample included participants with different levels of work experience and a variety of organizational positions.

Regarding gender mix, 34% of the participants were female and 66% were male. The participants’ average age was 27.3 years and its standard deviation was 6.05. The average number of year in MBA program was 1.76 years. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the main study variables, including independent, mediating and dependent variables. Our independent variable was humility (Huml) and the mediating variable was judgment (Judg). Dependent variables include (1) emotional competencies of self-awareness (SelfAw) and self-management (SelfMan), and (2) social competencies of social awareness (SocialAw) and relationship management (RelMan). Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for dependent, mediating, and independent variables.

### 5.2. Regression analysis

In order to test the first set of our hypotheses, regarding the effect of humility on emotional and social competencies, we ran two regression models with humility as the independent variable and emotional and social competencies as the dependent variables (Cohen, Cohen,

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for study variables**

Variable			
Dependent	Mean (%)	Std Dev. (%)	N
SelfAw	79.25	10.83	165
SelfMan	72.70	8.62	165
SocialAw	76.75	9.38	165
RelMan	72.80	8.71	165
Mediating			
Judg	78.54	10.12	165
Independent			
Huml	83.70	8.44	165

**Table 2. Regression analysis of humility on emotional, and social competencies**

	Dependent Variable			
	Emotional		Social	
	SelfAw	SelfMan	SocialAw	RelMan
(Constant)	1.96	1.46	1.55	1.33
Huml	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***
R Squared (%)	13.40	23.40	23.30	28.00
Adjusted R Squared	12.80	23.00	22.80	27.60
F statistic	25.11	49.92	49.49	63.41
P value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	165	165	165	165

West, & Aiken, 2014). The results of regression analysis of humility on emotional competencies of self-awareness ( $\beta = 0.04, p < 0.001$ ) and self-management ( $\beta = 0.04, p < 0.001$ ) were both significant. Thus, hypotheses H1a and H1b were supported. The results of regression analysis of humility on social competencies of social awareness ( $\beta = 0.04, p < 0.001$ ) and relationship management ( $\beta = 0.04, p < 0.001$ ) were both significant. Thus, Hypotheses H2a and H2b were supported. Table 2 presents these results.

### 5.3. Mediation analysis

To explore our second set of hypotheses regarding the mediating effect of judgment, we conducted a bias-corrected bootstrap mediation test with 95% confidence interval (5,000 bootstrap samples) using PROCESS software on SPSS (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). This model has several advantages compared to other methods used for testing mediation in the literature. First, we are able to conduct both direct effect and indirect effect simultaneously, using a unified statistical test (Hayes, 2017). Second, the purpose of our study is to examine the indirect effect of humility on emotional and social competencies through the mediating role of judgment. PROCESS is based on regression analysis which is the method often used to examine causal relationships between study variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Previous studies have used regression analysis for testing the causal relationship between character dimensions and competencies. In one study, Cheung and Lee (2010) examined the effect of character education on the development of social competencies using regression analysis. Third, the method uses bootstrapping. Bootstrap confidence interval methods have higher power and are able to detect indirect effects even in small sample sizes (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Fourth, other methods used for testing mediation such as the Sobel test are based on the assumption of the normality of the sampling distribution for the indirect effect. This assumption is violated most of the time (Hayes, 2017).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was not used for testing the hypotheses due to several reasons. First, SEM requires a large sample size, especially in conditions where there is a high number of interconnected and correlated indicator variables. Some studies recommend a minimum sample size of 200 to provide an acceptable basis for estimation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Tanaka, 1993). In this study, there are several latent and measured variables including, judgment, humility, and categories of emotional and social competencies. Emotional and social competencies include four main categories of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Each of these four categories has several measured variables that are multi-dimensional and interconnected in nature. As the model becomes more complex with several indicator or measured variables, higher sample sizes are required to be able to use SEM. In particular, when there are several constructs in the model (seven constructs or more), a minimum sample of 300–500 is

generally recommended (Hair et al., 2014). Since our study had a sample of 165 (<200), SEM is not considered a good method for hypotheses testing.

Second, structural equation modeling is a combination of exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Many hypotheses can be either tested in a simpler way with the use of regression-based models or tested with the use of more complex techniques such as SEM (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Compared with regression analysis, SEM is more complex and has several assumptions such as the assumption of normality. SEM is also highly sensitive to the violations of these assumptions. As the sample size decreases, the model becomes more sensitive to the violations of its assumptions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Considering these factors and our sample size, we used PROCESS analysis for testing our mediation hypotheses. In the next section, the results of our analysis are reported.

#### 5.4. Results for emotional competencies

Emotional competencies fall into two main categories of self-awareness and self-management. Table 3 shows the results of the mediation test of judgment on self-awareness. The results of the mediation test for self-awareness showed that humility had a significant positive effect on judgment (Effect = 0.42, 95% CI [0.31, 0.53]), and judgment had a significant positive effect on self-awareness (Effect = 0.04, 95% CI [0.02, 0.06]). The direct effect of humility on self-awareness was significant (Effect = 0.02, 95% CI [0.00, 0.04]). In addition, the indirect effect of humility on self-awareness through judgment was significant (Effect = 0.02, 95% CI [0.01, 0.03]). This is the proof that judgment partially mediates the relationship between humility and self-awareness. Based on these results, hypotheses H3a was supported.

The results of the mediation test for self-management showed that humility had a significant positive effect on judgment (Effect = 0.42, 95% CI [0.31, 0.53]), and judgment had a significant positive effect on self-management (Effect = 0.03, 95% CI [0.02, 0.05]). The direct effect of humility on self-management was significant (Effect = 0.02, 95% CI [0.01, 0.03]). In addition, the indirect effect of humility on self-management through judgment was significant (Effect = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01, 0.02]). This is the proof that judgment partially mediates the relationship between humility and self-management. Based on these results, hypotheses H3b was supported. Table 4 shows the results of mediation test of judgment on self-management.

**Table 3. OLS regression bias-corrected analysis of humility on judgment and self-awareness**

		Conf. Interval			
Judgment regressed on:		B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
	Constant	12.25	3.07	6.19	18.31
	Humility***	0.42	0.06	0.31	0.53
$R^2 = 26.07$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).					
		Conf. Interval			
Self-awareness regressed on:		B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
	Constant	1.51	0.41	0.71	2.31
	Humility	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.04
	Judgment***	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.06
$R^2 = 20.24$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).					

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 4. OLS regression bias-corrected analysis of humility on judgment and self-management**

		Conf. Interval		
Judgment regressed on:	B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Constant	12.25	3.07	6.19	18.31
Humility***	0.42	0.06	0.31	0.53
$R^2 = 26.07$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).				
		Conf. Interval		
Self-management regressed on:	B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Constant	1.05	0.28	0.49	1.60
Humility	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03
Judgment***	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.05
$R^2 = 33.53$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).				

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### 5.5. Results for social competencies

Social competencies consist of social awareness and relationship management. The results of the mediation test for social awareness showed that humility had a significant positive effect on judgment (Effect = 0.42, 95% CI [0.31, 0.53]), and judgment had a significant positive effect on social awareness (Effect = 0.03, 95% CI [0.02, 0.05]). The direct effect of humility on social awareness was significant (Effect = 0.03, 95% CI [0.02, 0.04]). In addition, the indirect effect of humility on social awareness through judgment was significant (Effect = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01, 0.02]). This is the proof that judgment partially mediates the relationship between humility and social awareness. Thus, hypotheses H4a was supported. Table 5 shows the results of the mediation test of judgment on social awareness.

The results of the mediation test for relationship management showed that humility had a significant positive effect on judgment (Effect = 0.42, 95% CI [0.31, 0.53]), and judgment had a significant positive effect on relationship management (Effect = 0.04, 95% CI [0.02, 0.05]). The direct effect of humility on relationship management was significant (Effect = 0.42, 95% CI [0.31, 0.53]). In addition, the indirect effect of humility on relationship management through judgment was significant (Effect = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01, 0.02]). This is the proof that judgment partially mediates the relationship between humility and relationship management. Based on these results, hypotheses H4b was supported. Table 6 shows the results of the mediation test of judgment on relationship management.

**Table 5. OLS regression bias-corrected analysis of humility on judgment and social awareness**

		Conf. Interval		
Judgment regressed on:	B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Constant	12.25	3.07	6.19	18.31
Humility***	0.42	0.06	0.31	0.53
$R^2 = 26.07$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).				
		Conf. Interval		
Social awareness regressed on:	B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Constant	1.19	0.33	0.54	1.85
Humility	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.04
Judgment***	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.04
$R^2 = 28.98$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).				

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 6. OLS regression bias-corrected analysis of humility on judgment and relationship management**

		Conf. Interval			
Judgment regressed on:		B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
	Constant	12.25	3.07	6.19	18.31
	Humility***	0.42	0.06	0.31	0.53
$R^2 = 26.07$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).					
		Conf. Interval			
Relationship management regressed on:		B	SE B	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
	Constant	0.89	0.29	0.32	1.47
	Humility	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.04
	Judgment***	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.05
$R^2 = 37.83$ ( $p < 0.001$ ).					

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Theoretical contributions

In recent years, humility has been widely considered by scholars in different disciplines as one of the important virtues of individuals. The role of humility on judgment, decision-making, and performance has been addressed in several disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, and more recently in management and leadership. In management and leadership literature, a new line of research has burgeoned that focuses on character dimensions (i.e., virtues) and their relationship with competencies and successful performance. Humility has been considered as one of the main dimensions of character. Previous studies have shown that it can have a significant impact on individual learning and development (Sturm et al., 2017). In addition, based on this research, stream judgment is a central dimension of character through which other dimensions of character direct thought and action.

Our study contributes to the recent literature by shedding light on the effect of humility on the development of emotional and social competencies through the mediating effect of judgment. While previous studies had highlighted the important role of humility on personal learning and self-development, none of the previous studies had examined the relationship between humility, judgment, and emotional and social competencies. In this study, we examined the effect of humility on emotional and social competencies, both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of judgment. These results are consistent with the previous studies that had highlighted the important role of humility as one of the main dimensions of character (Crossan et al., 2017; Owens & Hekman, 2012; Owens et al., 2013). Humility had a significant effect on emotional and social competencies. In addition, judgment mediated this relationship. Thus, humility had a positive influence on judgment. Better judgment positively influenced the development of emotional and social competencies.

### 6.2. Managerial implications

Our study has several managerial implications. Considering the role of humility on improving judgment and personal development, managers should encourage their employees to increase their level of humility. Like other dimensions of character, humility can be learned and developed through setting goals, purposeful practicing, and self-reflection (Seijts et al., 2015). Practicing in life situations is one method of improving humility. This can be done by reflecting upon ways that one can act as a humble person under different life circumstances. One useful exercise is to practice having a realistic judgment of own contribution and the contributions of others under conditions of

success and failure. As another way, humble leaders and mentors can act as great examples. Reflecting upon their acts and trying to imitate their behavior under similar conditions can significantly improve one's level of humbleness. Managers should consider humbleness as one of the important characteristics of organizational mentors, especially when they are assigned to new organizational entrants. This can help in instilling the culture of humbleness among organizational members. In addition to these strategies, providing feedback to employees regarding their level of humility and recommending ways for improvement is also another way of improving humility.

Beyond its importance in the development of individuals, humility is one of the important factors that can increase competitive advantage of the firms (Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). The important role of humble leadership in organizational success has been highlighted in both academic research and in practical journals such as *Harvard Business Review* (Taylor, 2018) and *The Wall Street Journal* (Shellenbarger, 2018). In order to improve the level of humility in organizations, Vera and Rodriguez-Lopez (2004) recommend several mechanisms. Exemplary humble leadership practices as well as motivation, hiring, and promotion practices that foster humbleness, incorporation of humility in the firm's culture and strategy, and the explicit refutation of arrogant behaviors are some of the mechanisms that companies can use in order to increase humbleness among their members. The use of group versus individual decision-making has also been suggested as another strategy that can safeguard against overconfidence bias and foster humble decision-making in organizations (Bendoly, Donohue, & Schultz, 2006; Schmidt, Montoya-Weiss, & Massey, 2001).

### **6.3. Limitations and direction for future research**

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed in future research. One important limitation of this study is that common method variance of measurement by one person creates some degrees of bias on the relationship between the study constructs (Kline, Sulsky, & Rever-Moriyama, 2000; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Future studies using multi-method assessments or the use of measures from multiple sources would help reduce this bias. The second limitation is that this study has been conducted in one country, so cultural factors might influence the results. Future studies in other cultures can shed light on whether cultural factors might influence the relationship between humility, judgment, and competencies. The third limitation would be that individuals may not have a complete understanding of their personal characteristics. Therefore, the level of individuals' self-awareness might influence assessment of their own personal characteristics. It would be worthwhile to examine the moderating role of self-awareness on the relationship between humility, judgment, and competencies.

Finally, this study was conducted in a university setting. Although a large percentage of participants were employed or had work experience, it would be beneficial to conduct this study in an organizational setting as well. Humility, judgment, and competencies are important attributes of professionals, managers, and leaders. In future studies, we would like to repeat this study with business professionals, and people in managerial and leadership roles and compare the results with the results of the current study.

## **7. Conclusion**

Recent studies in psychology and management have highlighted the role of humility as a rich and multidimensional virtue of individuals. Based on this view, humility can provide an accurate evaluation of individuals' strengths and limitations and give them the ability to forget the self which results in other-enhancing instead of self-enhancing behavior (Morris et al., 2005; Tengney, 2000). Humility is now considered as one of the main dimensions of character that significantly contributes to both personal development and organizational performance (Crossan et al., 2017). Among organizational leaders, humility can act as an indicator of their "intrinsic desire to serve" (Collins, 2016, 2006; Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004; Morris et al., 2005, p. 1324). This perspective is in contrast with the traditional view to humility as a sense of low self-esteem and personal weakness (Exline & Geyer, 2004; Tangney, 2000).



Our study provides support for the importance of humility by finding a strong relationship between this element and emotional and social competencies. The results show that not only is there a strong relationship between humility and emotional and social competencies, but also this relationship occurs through the mediating role of judgment. Thus, humility improves personal judgment which in turn contributes to the development of emotional and social competencies.

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#### Note

1. We obtained LCIA by contacting SIGMA Assessment Systems Inc. in Canada (<http://www.sigmaassessmentssystem.com/assessments/leadership-character-insight-assessment/>).

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