

May the situation be with you: Is Agreeableness a major predictor for successful leaders in different situations?

Gentil, A.¹, Moldzio, T.¹, Reiner A.² & Felfe, J.²

¹Moldzio & Partner – Institut für Personalauswahl (Institute for Personnel Selection)

²Helmut-Schmidt-Universität – Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg

Purpose: Many studies have demonstrated the important role of personality for job performance and leader success (e.g. Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001; Bono & Judge, 2004). Whereas emotional stability and conscientiousness were found to be good predictors for a multiplicity of job-related criteria (Barrick & Mount, 2009), the findings for agreeableness are inconsistent, even within studies (e.g. Barrick et al., 2001; Judge et al., 2002). However, meta-analyses have not considered the situational and motivational impact. The aim of this study is to examine these impacts on the relationship between agreeableness and leader success.

Design: Field-study within real assessments (N = 115 leaders). The relationship form of two differentiated agreeableness aspects (compassion und politeness), measured with a new occupational scale, was explored. Furthermore, the situational context (personnel selection or development) and the basic motive affiliation were analyzed with a moderated mediation analysis.

Results: First, the study shows only an U-shaped relationship form between compassion and leader potential. Second, the basic motive affiliation is a suppressor for the effect of compassion on leader potential. This result is shown in the subsample of selection processes only.

Limitations: Field-study allows no causal interpretation. Furthermore, the (sub)samples are small and preselected what limit the external validity.

Research implications: Forecast toward an experimental design (vignette-study) to underline the role of agreeableness. Leaders and professionals were asked to decide which leader (high/middle/low level in the aspects) is most successful.