

Role of Supervisor Personality and Procedural Knowledge about Professional Conduct as Predictors of Prosocial Feedback Delivery*

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Implicit trait policy (ITP) theory argues that the relationship between personality and behavior is mediated by implicit trait policy, or effectiveness beliefs that people hold about trait-expressive behaviors in social situations. Also, ITP theory argues that personality affects people's ITPs, such that they are likely to hold stronger effectiveness beliefs about behaviors that express their own personality than behaviors that do not. The current study applied these the ITP theory perspectives explained above in the context of feedback delivery in organizational settings to test the hypothesis that supervisor agreeableness is related to prosocial feedback (e.g., showing empathy and kindness in providing performance feedback) through its relationship with effectiveness beliefs about prosocial behavior at work (i.e., prosocial ITP). Based on the data that were collected from a sample of supervisors (N = 248), we found that supervisor agreeableness was related to prosocial feedback delivery only through its relationship with prosocial ITP.

Key words : feedback delivery, personality, implicit trait policy, performance management

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Feedback delivery, which refers to feedback providers' intentions and demeanor in communicating feedback information, is an important contributing factor to the feedback environment of an organization—the overall organizational support for feedback seeking behavior (Steelman et al., 2004; Whitaker et al., 2007). Namely, research has consistently shown that providing feedback in a manner that shows empathy and concern towards the well-being and fair interpersonal treatment of the feedback recipient, which we call prosocial feedback delivery, is essential to maintaining the feedback recipient's motivation towards task-related goals and feeling of self-efficacy (Baron, 1988, 1990). For example, it has been shown that employees report stronger motivation to use the feedback information and perceive lower cost of seeking feedback to the extent that employees perceive that they were treated with respect by their supervisors in receiving performance feedback (VandeWalle et al., 2000). Prosocial feedback delivery is especially important in delivering negative feedback. Namely, it has been shown that negative feedback, which tends to be associated with negative reactions like dissatisfaction with the feedback information, defensiveness, and reluctance to use feedback information (Niemann et al., 2014; Sargeant et al., 2008), was more likely to be received positively to the extent that feedback was thought to be delivered in an empathetic and interpersonally just manner (higher satisfaction

with the feedback information, motivation to use the feedback information, motivation to seek more feedback, positive affect following negative feedback episode; Leung et al., 2001; Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004; Young et al., 2017).

Considering the positive effect that prosocial feedback delivery has on the outcomes of feedback, understanding the factors that predict prosocial feedback delivery is of important practical value to organizations. This is especially true as performance management practices that emphasize on-going feedback exchanges in place of traditional performance appraisals are gaining attraction among organizations (Adler et al., 2016). Amidst this change, companies like Adobe, Dell, Gap, and Microsoft have eliminated or substantially reduced their use of formal performance appraisal in favor of supporting informal performance management behaviors that are directly related to employee performance and engagement (e.g., communicating on-going behavioral expectations, regular informal feedback exchanges on specific tasks, short-term goal setting; Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Capelli & Tavis, 2016; Culbert & Rout, 2010; Cunningham, 2014). Based on the evidence presented above regarding the relationship between prosocial feedback delivery and feedback outcomes, it is evident that the ability to deliver feedback in a considerate and interpersonally just manner is essential to successful implementation of informal performance management practices in organizations.

Personality as Predictor of Feedback Delivery

The goal of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the individual difference factors that are associated with prosocial feedback delivery. Based on the theory of individual differences in job performance (Motowidlo et al., 1997; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994), we argue that feedback provider's personality will meaningfully predict knowledge about effective feedback delivery behavior, which will subsequently predict feedback delivery behavior. Below, we describe the theoretical underpinnings for this general hypothesis.

Traditional theories of job performance (Campbell et al., 1996; Campbell et al., 1993; Hunter, 1983) posit that declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and skills related to effective job performance, as well as motivation to perform, directly determine job performance, and individual differences in stable dispositional characteristics (such as cognitive ability and personality) are related to job performance indirectly through their effect on the direct determinants of job performance mentioned above. Based on the theory that job performance construct should be distinguished into two distinct dimensions: task performance and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), Motowidlo et al. (1997) built on previous theories of job performance by proposing that the kinds of job knowledge that are presumed

to determine contextual performance is different than the kinds of job knowledge that are presumed to determine task performance. Specifically, Motowidlo et al. (1997) proposed that contextual knowledge, which refers to the knowledge of facts and procedures that pertain to interpersonal, social, and organizational matters, are major determinants of contextual performance, whereas task knowledge, which refers to technical knowledge about the facts and procedures related to the organization's technical core, are major determinants of task performance. Furthermore, Motowidlo et al. (1997) proposed that personality should play a central role in the kinds of contextual knowledge that one develops, whereas cognitive ability should determine the amount of job knowledge that one can obtain.

Previous studies have shown support for Motowidlo et al.'s (1997) theory. For example, Schmit et al. (1996) found that retail employees' extraversion was related to their customer service knowledge, which in turn predicted customer service performance. Bergman et al. (2008) found that financial sales agents' level of openness was related to customer relations knowledge, which in turn, predicted service performance. Similarly, Motowidlo et al. (2013) found that the level of conscientiousness in a sample of undergraduate students was predictive of knowledge about effective and ineffective behaviors in service encounter contexts, which in turn was related to performance in simulated

service encounters. Martin-Raugh et al. (2016) presented findings from two studies involving undergraduate students demonstrating that agreeableness predicted prosocial behavior in role-play exercises (difficult interpersonal situations that physicians may encounter at work) through its effect on knowledge about prosocial behaviors at work. In these studies, there is a consistent line of evidence that personality indirectly predicts job performance behaviors that are considered contextual in nature (behaviors that include interpersonal and social interactions with others) through its effect on contextual job knowledge.

If we assume that prosocial feedback delivery constitutes a type of contextual performance, in that it encompasses behaviors that support the social and psychological core of an organization (by contributing to improved feedback environment and improved well-being of feedback recipients), we can also assume that feedback providers' personality would predict prosocial feedback through contextual knowledge about feedback delivery. The mediating factor between the relationship between employee personality and contextual performance, which constitutes knowledge about how to behave in social contexts at work, is called implicit trait policy.

Implicit Trait Policy Theory

Motowidlo and colleagues (Motowidlo, 2003; Motowidlo et al., 2006) proposed that some personality traits come to affect behavior at

work because people are dispositionally inclined to develop behavioral effectiveness beliefs that are consistent with their own personality. In other words, personality is said to affect people's implicit beliefs about the general effectiveness of trait expressive behaviors, such that people are more likely to believe that work behaviors that reflect their own personality are generally more effective than behaviors that do not. Motowidlo and colleagues labeled this belief about relations between trait expression and effectiveness in work situations as a person's implicit trait policy (ITP; Motowidlo et al., 2006). Then, when an effective resolution to a problematic social situation demands an expression of a particular trait, individuals who possess that trait are more likely to correctly believe (possess correct ITPs) and therefore know about how to behave effectively in that situation. This knowledge, in turn, is presumed to mediate the relationship between personality and behavioral effectiveness in a problematic work situation (Motowidlo et al., 2006).

The central proposition of the theory underlying the current study follows the ITP theory (Motowidlo et al., 2006). That is, if personality affects people's beliefs about the effectiveness of trait expressive behaviors, in the context of work organizations, individuals with prosocial behavioral tendencies are more likely to form stronger beliefs about the importance of prosocial behaviors for work effectiveness. Then, these beliefs about the effectiveness of prosocial

behaviors, which we call prosocial ITPs, are likely to incline people to behave prosocially at work. In the current study, we apply this theory to examining whether individual differences in ITPs about prosocial behavior at work is associated with expression of prosociality in performance feedback context. Specifically, we contend that individual differences in prosocial personality traits should serve as determinants of people's beliefs about the importance of prosocial behavior for work effectiveness (prosocial ITPs). In turn, individuals who have stronger prosocial ITPs should demonstrate higher level of prosociality in delivering performance feedback.

Measuring the Relationship between Personality and Implicit Trait Policy

The ITP hypothesis about the relationship between personality and perceived effectiveness of trait expressive behaviors is thought to be an important contributing factor that affects how people respond to situational judgment test (SJT) items (Lievens & Motowidlo 2016; Martin-Raugh & Kell, 2021; Motowidlo et al., 2006). Traditionally, it has been widely assumed that SJTs capture context-dependent knowledge that is not generalizable to predicting behaviors that are outside of the contexts that are described in the SJT items (Krumm et al., 2015; Motowidlo et al., 1990). However, it has been suggested that when SJTs contain generic situational or behavioral descriptions that are broadly applicable

across job contexts, the responses are largely driven by people's general beliefs about the utility of behavioral acts for work effectiveness that are generalizable across different jobs and job contexts (Krumm et al., 2015; Motowidlo & Beier, 2010; Motowidlo et al., 2006). In fact, studies have shown that situational descriptions in many SJT items had little or no effect on test-takers' ability to solve them (Krumm et al., 2015) and that the absence of situational descriptions did not meaningfully affect the criterion-related validity of SJT scores for predicting global job performance criteria (e.g., task performance, organizational citizenship behavior; Schäpers et al., 2020), providing support for the argument that SJTs can be designed to measure context-independent beliefs that predict behavior within domains that are common across occupations.

Following this logic, it is reasonable to suggest that behavioral episodes of prosociality (or antisociality) can be considered generic behavioral descriptions that are broadly applicable across jobs and job contexts. Then, responses about the perceived effectiveness of prosocial or antisocial behavioral episodes in work situations that are described in SJT items are likely to be driven by people's general beliefs about the utility of prosocial behaviors for work effectiveness that is generalizable across different jobs and job contexts.

Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence presented above, Motowidlo et al.

(2016) developed a context independent SJT of prosocial ITP called “Opinions about Professional Conduct” (OPC). The items presented in the OPC were derived from previous single-response SJTs that described critical incidents of prosocial and antisocial behaviors in different occupations, including physicians (Ghosh et al., 2015; Kell et al., 2014), attorneys (Yu et al., 2012), community service volunteers (Crook et al., 2011; Motowidlo et al., 2009), and human factors engineers (Kortum & Motowidlo, 2006; Motowidlo et al., 2013). The behaviors that were described in each of these SJTs occurred in different occupations under different contexts, but they commonly describe behaviors that involve expression of prosociality (or antisociality) towards others. Thus, regardless of the context in which the behavioral episodes took place, people’s judgments of the effectiveness of the behaviors should be driven by their general beliefs about the utility of prosocial (or antisocial) actions for work effectiveness (i.e., prosocial ITP; Motowidlo et al., 2016).

Study Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence presented above, we developed several hypotheses regarding relationships between personality, prosocial ITP, and feedback delivery behavior. The first hypothesis pertains to the relationship between prosocial personality and prosocial ITP. Namely, individuals who are high

on agreeableness are described as being kind, generous, cooperative, and concerned about the well-being of others (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Applying the ITP theory principle, we can expect that agreeable individuals are more likely to develop stronger beliefs about the effectiveness of agreeable work behaviors (e.g., showing compassion and respect towards others) and develop stronger beliefs about the ineffectiveness of disagreeable work behaviors (e.g., being unfriendly and volatile in interacting with others). That is, agreeable individuals are likely to develop stronger beliefs about the importance of altruistic and considerate behavior for work effectiveness, which we define as prosocial ITP.

Hypothesis 1: Agreeableness will positively predict prosocial ITP.

Second, ITP theory posits that people’s prosocial ITP is a direct determinant of their inclination to behave prosocially in work contexts (Motowidlo et al., 2016; Motowidlo et al., 2006). Applying this theory to performance feedback, we hypothesize that prosocial ITP will positively predict prosocial feedback delivery.

Hypothesis 2: Prosocial ITP will positively predict prosocial feedback delivery.

Third, Motowidlo and colleagues (Motowidlo, 2003; Motowidlo et al., 2006) argued that some personality traits are related to job performance

through their effect on correct belief, or knowledge, about how to behave effectively in that job situation. Accordingly, we hypothesize that prosocial ITP will mediate the relationship between agreeableness and prosocial feedback delivery.

Hypothesis 3: Prosocial ITP will mediate the relationship between agreeableness and prosocial feedback delivery.

Method

Sample

We recruited working adults in the U.S. and the U.K. with supervisory experience to participate in the study. Participants were recruited from Prolific (prolific.co), a crowdsourcing behavioral research platform. Participants who met the participation criteria and gave informed consent completed the study online by completing the measures described in the section below. After completing the study, participants were provided with a debriefing form explaining the purpose of the study. Participants received monetary compensation for their participation (£6.50 \approx \$8.80).

We conducted a power analysis for the hypothesized simple mediation effect using WebPower package in R (Zhang et al., 2021) to determine the sample size for our study.

Based on a review of previous studies that have examined the mediating effect of ITP on the relationship between personality and work behavior (e.g., Martin-Raugh et al., 2016), we set the correlations between the predictor and the mediator and correlations between the mediator and the outcome at $r = .30$. Under these conditions, the power analysis showed that at least 175 participants are needed to find a significant indirect effect with .80 power. We recruited 300 participants to ensure adequate power after data attrition due to various reasons (e.g., incomplete responses, lack of effort). The specific criteria used for data screening are described in more detail later. Of the recruited sample, data from 248 participants were included in the analyses. Participants worked in a wide variety of industries (e.g., healthcare, IT, marketing, retail). The mean age of the sample was 36.0 years ($SD = 11.2$) and consisted of more females ($n = 159$; 64.6%) than males.

Measures

Big Five Personality Traits

The 50-item version of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992) was used to measure Big Five personality traits. Participants indicated how accurately the statement in each item describes themselves on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate). The coefficient alpha for the Big Five personality

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations between the Study Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Agreeableness	3.83	0.55	<i>.79</i>						
2. Conscientiousness	3.66	0.70	<i>.39**</i>	<i>.85</i>					
3. Extraversion	3.14	0.81	<i>.15*</i>	<i>.21**</i>	<i>.90</i>				
4. Neuroticism	2.94	0.85	<i>-.38**</i>	<i>-.41**</i>	<i>-.44**</i>	<i>.89</i>			
5. Openness	3.79	0.68	<i>.17**</i>	<i>.03</i>	<i>.15*</i>	<i>-.02</i>	<i>.82</i>		
6. Prosocial ITP	6.11	0.64	<i>.32**</i>	<i>.17*</i>	<i>-.02</i>	<i>-.08</i>	<i>.21**</i>	<i>.95</i>	
7. Feedback delivery	4.67	1.57	<i>.02</i>	<i>-.04</i>	<i>-.08</i>	<i>.09</i>	<i>.15*</i>	<i>.31**</i>	<i>.92</i>

Notes. *N* ranged between 197 and 243. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; Prosocial ITP = prosocial implicit trait policy. Coefficient alpha reliability (and interrater reliability for feedback delivery) values for each variable is provided in the diagonal in italics.

p* < .05, *p* < .01

scales ranged between .79 and .90 (values for each scale are provided in Table 1). The items and scoring key for the NEO-PI-R are available at <https://ipip.oro.org/newNEODomainsKey.htm>.

Prosocial ITP

The Opinions about Professional Conduct scale (OPC; Motowidlo et al., 2016) described earlier was used to measure participants' prosocial ITP. The OPC consists of 40 items. As mentioned above, each item on the OPC lists specific prosocial or antisocial behavior that people working in a variety of professional contexts have displayed on the job. Participants were asked to judge how effective each of the listed behaviors are on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very ineffective) to 7 (very effective). The alpha coefficient for the OPC scale was .95. The items and scoring key for OPC are available in Motowidlo et al. (2016).

Prosocial Feedback Delivery

Prosocial feedback delivery was measured by evaluating the degree to which the feedback that participants provided in response to ineffective performance episodes contained empathy and consideration for the emotional welfare of the feedback recipient. We provided participants with three critical incidents describing ineffective employee performance episodes. The critical incidents were adapted from Becker's (2005) situational judgment test of employee integrity, which consists of 20 scenarios, each describing a problematic workplace situation and four possible behavioral responses to the situation. We read each scenario carefully and chose three scenarios (including behaviors that was described in the behavioral response options, if necessary) that described a critical incident of a manager dealing with an ineffective performance episode of her/his employee. Participants were asked to read each

critical incident carefully, then assuming that they were the direct manager of the employee described in the critical incident, provided feedback to the employee about the performance episode in a text format (see Appendix A for the critical incidents that were used for this study). Participants were asked to write what they would say to the employee in verbatim, using at least 50 words.

Two undergraduate research assistants who were blind to the purpose of the study carefully read and evaluated each feedback using three items in the feedback delivery dimension of the Feedback Environment Scale (FES; Steelman et al., 2004). These items measure the level of empathy and concern that feedback provider has shown towards the welfare of the feedback recipient (see Appendix B for the items used). The items were on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The interrater reliability, calculated as the correlation between the total score on the prosocial feedback delivery ratings for each participant provided by the two raters, was .92. We used the average of the two raters' ratings as the participants' score on prosocial feedback delivery.

Data Screening

We used several methods to identify potential low quality data. We were especially interested in identifying insufficient effort responders (e.g.,

randomly or invariantly responding to the study measures). We employed three unobtrusive methods for identifying potential random and invariant response behaviors: attention check items, response time, and individual response variability (DeSimone & Harms, 2018).

First, we identified 10 respondents who did not correctly respond to any of the three attention check items (e.g., "Please respond to this item by selecting option [x]") that were randomly placed in the study surveys. Out of these respondents, one person failed multiple attention check items and was removed from the analysis. We carefully considered the responses for the other respondents who failed one of the attention check items and found that most of them ($n = 7$) provided opposite response to the failed attention check item (for example, answering "somewhat inaccurate" instead of "somewhat accurate"). Also, they were not flagged in the other random response behavior detection methods and provided sufficient responses to the feedback delivery items. Based on these observations, we decided to retain the data for respondents who only failed one of the attention check items, considering the possibility that they may have misread the attention check item instructions and that they provided sufficient responses to the other study measures.

Second, we flagged data from participants who finished the study too quickly as potential low quality data. In our pilot study, we collected responses from 30 undergraduate

students. Participants in the pilot study typically took about 30 to 40 minutes to complete the study. Using this timeframe as the benchmark, we carefully examined the responses from respondents who completed the study in less than 15 minutes for any evidence of random responding, long string responding (unusual consecutive identical response), and other evidence of carelessness. We flagged data from 51 respondents (14 respondents who skipped large parts of the study, and 37 respondents who provided careless feedback, such as using much fewer than the required 50 words or not providing feedback altogether) and removed them from the analysis.

Finally, we calculated the individual response variability (IRV; Dunn et al., 2018) for each participant on the IPIP and the OPC. IRV is the standard deviation of responses to items on a questionnaire and is calculated for each respondent. Lower IRV is associated with less variance in item responses and suggests that respondent may have engaged in invariant responding, like long string response. Like response time, there is no clearly defined criteria for determining insufficient effort responding based on IRV value. In part, this is because the range of IRV values is expected to vary depending on several features of the scale, such as the number of items, proportion of items that are positively vs. negatively worded, the number of available response options, and the number of dimensions that are measured by the

scale (DeSimone & Harms, 2018; DeSimone et al., 2015). Following Dunn et al., (2018), we chose to focus on respondents in the lowest 10% of IRV values for IPIP and OPC scores (although Dunn et al. (2018) admit that their choice to flag 10% of the sample was an arbitrary decision, citing unavailability of data on typical rates of insufficient effort responding). One participant had an IRV of zero on the OPC by evaluating all prosocial behavioral episodes as very effective (i.e., indicated the highest score) and all antisocial behavioral episodes as very ineffective (i.e., indicated the lowest score). However, we did not think it would be appropriate to label extreme response style on a scale as careless responding. Also, this respondent was not flagged in any other methods for identifying careless responding and showed large variance in IPIP scale scores (top 10% in IRV for IPIP). Thus, we decided not to remove this respondent's data from the analysis. The data used for study analysis is available for download online (https://osf.io/azcv6/?view_only=95da55ca04e84857b36fd0db0b4cd087).

Analysis

We tested the hypothesized indirect (mediation) effect using the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982). Indirect effects can be quantified as a single number for which confidence intervals and significance tests can be calculated. Specifically, the effect of a given independent variable (X)

on a given dependent variable (Y) via its effect on a given mediator variable (M) can be quantified as a product of the simple regression coefficient for X predicting M (i.e., path a) and the partial regression coefficient for M predicting Y controlling for the effect of X (i.e., path b). Dividing the product of the two regression coefficients (ab) by its standard error and comparing this value to a standard normal (z) distribution calculates the statistical significance of ab , for which the null hypothesis is $ab = 0$ (Sobel, 1982). Confidence intervals for indirect effects can also be estimated based on the critical value from the standard normal distribution corresponding to the desired Type I error rate times the standard error of ab . The mediation analyses were conducted using lavaan package in R.

Results

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between the study variables are provided in Table 1. Among the Big Five personality traits, agreeableness showed the strongest correlation with prosocial ITP ($r = .32, p < .01$), followed by openness ($r = .21, p < .01$) and Conscientiousness ($r = .17, p = .01$). We did not anticipate finding a meaningful correlation between openness and prosocial ITP, but the prosocial ITP's correlations with agreeableness and conscientiousness are consistent with the

relationships that are expected under the ITP theory that individual differences in beliefs about the effectiveness of trait expressive behaviors in work settings should be determined (in part) by individual differences in the relevant personality traits. In the context of this study, the correlations showed that prosocial ITP was positively associated with people's dispositional tendency to be kind to others (agreeableness) and their tendency to be responsible, organized, and meticulous (conscientiousness). In general, the Big Five personality traits were weakly correlated with prosocial feedback delivery. Openness showed statistically significant correlation with prosocial feedback delivery, but the magnitude of the correlation was relatively modest ($r = .15, p = .04$). Conversely, Prosocial ITP, which we hypothesized as being the direct determinant of prosocial feedback delivery, showed stronger correlation with prosocial feedback delivery ($r = .31, p < .01$).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that agreeableness would significantly predict prosocial ITP. This was supported by a significant relationship between agreeableness and prosocial ITP ($\beta = .33, p < .01$). Hypothesis 2 predicted that prosocial ITP would predict prosocial feedback delivery. This was supported by a significant relationship between prosocial ITP and prosocial feedback delivery ($\beta = .36, p < .01$). Hypothesis 3 predicted that prosocial ITP would mediate the relationship between supervisor agreeableness and prosocial feedback delivery.

Results showed that agreeableness had a significant indirect effect on prosocial feedback delivery through prosocial ITP ($\beta = .12, p < .01$), providing support for Hypothesis 3 (see Table 2).

Additional Analyses

In addition to agreeableness, we explored whether the other four traits would predict prosocial feedback delivery through prosocial ITP.

Table 2. Simple Mediation Analysis Results

Variable	β	SE	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Agreeableness				
<i>a</i>	.33**	.06	.20	.45
<i>b</i>	.36**	.07	.23	.50
<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>	.12**	.03	.05	.18
Conscientiousness				
<i>a</i>	.21**	.07	.07	.34
<i>b</i>	.34**	.07	.21	.47
<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>	.07*	.03	.02	.13
Extraversion				
<i>a</i>	.06	.07	-.09	.20
<i>b</i>	.34**	.07	.21	.47
<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>	.02	.03	-.03	.07
Neuroticism				
<i>a</i>	-.12	.07	-.27	.02
<i>b</i>	.34**	.07	.21	.47
<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>	-.04	.03	-.09	.01
Openness				
<i>a</i>	.19**	.07	.05	.33
<i>b</i>	.31**	.07	.18	.45
<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>	.06*	.03	.01	.11

Note. *N* = 182. All estimates are in standardized terms. *a* = path *a* estimate (relationship between Big Five personality traits and prosocial ITP); path *b* estimate (relationship between prosocial ITP and prosocial feedback delivery); *a* × *b* = indirect effect estimate. SE = standard error; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01

Sobel test results showed no significant indirect effects for extraversion and neuroticism ($\beta = .02$, $p = .46$, and $\beta = -.04$, $p = .12$, respectively). However, we did find a significant indirect effect for conscientiousness ($\beta = .07$, $p = .02$) and openness ($\beta = .06$, $p = .03$) (see Table 2).

Discussion

Prosocial feedback delivery is an important contextual factor that contributes to creating a positive feedback environment in organizational settings (Steelman et al., 2004). As more organizations move away from traditional annual performance appraisal towards performance management systems built around continuous developmental feedback exchanges between supervisors and employees (e.g., providing support and information that enhance employee job performance, communicating performance objectives, helping employees set effective goals; Adler et al., 2016), the current study is concerned with a timely topic that can usefully inform the implementation of feedback-oriented performance management practices by identifying the psychological factors that predict effective feedback delivery behaviors associated with positive feedback outcomes. In doing so, the current study also makes contributions toward improving our understanding of the psychological mechanism that underlies prosocial feedback

delivery (and prosocial behaviors in work contexts in general).

The current study focused on ITP theory as a guiding framework for examining how supervisor personality comes to affect feedback delivery. One of the major premises of ITP theory is that personality plays a central role in the development of one's beliefs about trait expressive behavior for work effectiveness. Namely, ITP theory posits that personality affects people's implicit beliefs about the general effectiveness of trait expressive behaviors such that people are more likely to believe that behaviors that reflect their own personality are generally more effective than behaviors that do not. Consistent with the premises of this theory, we found that supervisor agreeableness, which describes the dispositional tendencies to be kind, affectionate, and caring for others, meaningfully predicted their beliefs about prosocial behavior towards others for work effectiveness.

Another major aspect of ITP theory is the emphasis on the role of effectiveness beliefs about trait expressive behaviors (i.e., ITPs) as direct determinants of behavioral expression of those traits in work contexts. Moreover, to the extent that those behavioral effectiveness beliefs are accurate (i.e., actions associated with behavioral effectiveness beliefs are effective), it can be said that individuals who possess those beliefs are more knowledgeable about how to behave effectively in work contexts. In the context of feedback delivery, because prosocial

feedback delivery has been shown to be associated with positive feedback outcomes (e.g., feedback acceptance, willingness to use feedback information, more feedback seeking behavior), it can be said that supervisors who believe that prosocial actions are generally more effective than antisocial actions in work contexts are also more likely to correctly believe, and therefore know that effective feedback delivery demands expression of prosociality.

Overall, the current study results provide support for the theoretical framework that personality directly affects procedural knowledge represented by ITPs that underlie effective contextual performance behavior, such as prosocial feedback delivery. This implies that people tend to show trait expressive behaviors in work contexts not necessarily because they are dispositionally inclined to behave in trait expressive ways (i.e., personality directly determines behavior) but because they are more likely to develop stronger effectiveness beliefs about trait expressive behaviors that lead to expression of those behaviors in work contexts (i.e., personality indirectly determines behavior through ITPs).

However, some of the results that were found in the current study are not fully explained by the ITP theory. Namely, in addition to agreeableness, we also found that supervisor conscientiousness and openness were associated with stronger effectiveness beliefs for prosocial work behavior. Because behaviors associated with

conscientiousness and openness are not directly associated with interpersonal prosociality, the dispositional fit perspective that underlies ITP theory does not explain why supervisor conscientiousness and openness would predict stronger effectiveness beliefs for prosocial work behavior.

Instead, there could be other way(s) through which employee personality might lead to development of effectiveness beliefs for prosocial work behaviors. Namely, in addition to ITPs, employees might gain specific on-the-job experiences that allow them to develop effectiveness beliefs for certain behaviors in certain work situations (Motowidlo & Beier, 2010). According to Motowidlo and colleagues (Motowidlo & Beier, 2010; Motowidlo et al., 2006), two components make up procedural knowledge as measured by SJT scores: 1) general domain knowledge about effectiveness of trait expression (i.e., ITPs); and 2) specific knowledge related to specific tasks on the job. ITPs represent general knowledge because they describe a general rule that individuals have about the utility of trait expressive behaviors across a wide range of situations. For example, people who accurately believe that agreeable actions are generally more effective than disagreeable actions are likely to hold stronger effectiveness beliefs about agreeable actions regardless of job situations or job contexts. Conversely, specific job knowledge represents a more detailed knowledge that one has about the

kinds of work behaviors that are more (or less) effective in specific situations at work. For example, a supervisor may correctly believe that it is generally more effective to be agreeable when interacting with customers. However, s/he may also learn from experience that in some customer interaction situations, the best course of action involves expressing disagreeableness (e.g., dealing with abusive customers). Similarly, supervisors may learn through experience that feedback that causes emotional harm to employees can undermine their future performance, and thus, choose to provide feedback in a way that is socially beneficial (Lupoli et al., 2017).

Specific job knowledge is learned through specific incidents that people experience on the job that are guided by personality. Drawing from the idea that personality and interests guide people to apply their resources to learning different knowledge domains (Ackerman, 1996), Motowidlo and colleagues proposed that personality and interests may guide people toward certain situations and that they may engage in experiences that provide them with the opportunities to understand the value of the expression of those traits (Motowidlo & Beier, 2010).

Based on this theory, one can develop several hypotheses about how supervisor conscientiousness and openness might be associated with the development of (or opportunities to develop) effectiveness beliefs for work effectiveness. For example, the dutifulness aspect of

conscientiousness may motivate supervisors who are high on this trait to perceive a stronger sense of obligation to develop high-quality interpersonal relationships with their employees to facilitate communication with them and to meet employees' desire for supervisors who are considerate and easy to get along with (Oh & Berry, 2009). Also, dutiful supervisors are likely to develop a stronger commitment to their role as a helper, motivating them to engage in helping behavior (e.g., feedback to help improve job performance) towards employees (Marinova et al., 2013). As a result, they may carefully engage in different types of behaviors to find the best method of interpersonal interaction and learn that expression of prosociality works best for achieving those goals. For supervisors who are high on openness, because of their tendency to be receptive of the values of others and to be tolerant of diversity (McCrae, 1996), they may be more likely to find it important to be respectful to the employees when they are interacting with them. Research has also shown that people who are high on openness tend to be low on social dominance orientation and prejudice (Sibley & Duckitt, 2000), which suggests that supervisors who are more open may be more likely to value respect and fair interpersonal treatment of others when interacting with their employees. In turn, supervisors who are high on openness may experience situations that allow them to learn that expression of prosociality is useful for

effective communication with their employees.

Of course, these are merely hypotheses about how supervisor conscientiousness and openness might be related to acquisition of specific procedural knowledge about the effectiveness of prosocial work behavior that could be drawn based on the principles of the theories explained above. More evidence is needed to support whether the relationships between conscientiousness and openness with prosocial knowledge is generalizable in other samples and to understand more specifically how supervisor conscientiousness and openness might come to affect specific knowledge about prosocial feedback delivery.

Finally, we propose that procedural knowledge about effective feedback delivery should entail supervisors understanding the value of being effective coaches rather than the value of being effective evaluators of employees' performance (Murphy, 2020). Research has consistently shown that performance ratings are typically poor representations of employees' actual job performance (Murphy, 2008) and there is little evidence to suggest that efforts to improve the accuracy of performance ratings have had meaningful effect on improving performance appraisal (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Nonetheless, many organizations dedicate substantial amount of time and resources to evaluating each employee's performance and providing general feedback.

However, models of effective leadership

behavior (Avolio et al., 2009; Bass & Bass, 2008) are less concerned with the evaluative procedures that are often embodied in the traditional performance management systems (Murphy, 2020). Rather, leadership theories suggest that leadership effectiveness centers around two key behaviors: consideration (showing support and friendliness, respecting and sharing concern for others' feelings) and initiating structure (providing directions to organizational members for accomplishing key tasks and responsibilities of the group and individuals within that group). Thus, as communicating with employees becomes an increasingly central role of supervisors with the increased emphasis towards on-going feedback exchanges as a major part of performance management systems, supervisors' knowledge that pertains to effective communication with employees should become increasingly more important for effective supervisor performance in managing employees' job performance and motivation.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Findings from the current study should be considered with a few limitations in mind, each of which offers avenues for future research. First, because the current study was conducted in the absence of real-world organizational context that can affect supervisors' performance management behaviors in practice. For better or worse,

organizations are social by nature, and this aspect of organizations can affect how supervisors approach feedback delivery, just as they have been shown to do so in performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Spence & Keeping, 2011). Although such context was absent in the current study, we argue that it does not diminish the primary implication of our findings, which is that people's general principles about behavioral effectiveness can guide their behavior regardless of context. Specifically, in the current study, it was supervisors' context-independent effectiveness beliefs about prosocial work behavior that predicted prosocial feedback delivery. Thus, although the dependent variable of interest in this study was prosocial feedback delivery in general, ITP theory would suggest that supervisors' general effectiveness beliefs about prosocial work behavior would predict prosocial feedback delivery in any organizational context. In other words, although context may meaningfully affect supervisors' feedback behavior, our theory that supervisors with higher prosocial ITPs are likely to show stronger prosociality in feedback delivery is likely to hold regardless of context. For example, supervisors might express more prosociality in providing feedback to employees they are close with, but supervisors who have higher prosocial ITPs are likely to show even more prosociality in those contexts than supervisors who have lower prosocial ITPs. Nevertheless, the effect of context

on supervisor feedback behavior is an important research topic that is highly relevant to practice that should be explored further in future research.

Second, there are challenges associated with online panel-based research that could pose threats to the validity of research conclusions for this study (e.g., careless responding, high attrition rates, social desirability bias; Aguinis et al., 2021). Although many of these challenges also apply to other data collection methods and we underwent careful data screening to minimize these threats, self-misrepresentation, which describes the possibility of panel participants misrepresenting self-reported demographics to be eligible for study participation, could be particularly problematic. Namely, there is a possibility that a subset of the participants may not have met the criterion for participation (i.e., have no managerial experience) but misrepresented their experience to participate in the study.

However, we argue that managerial experience (or lack thereof) of the participants does not pose serious threat to the core conclusion of the current study, which is that personality can affect work-related behavior through its effect on general domain knowledge about the effectiveness of trait expressions. This is because, as we mentioned, general domain knowledge about effectiveness of trait expressive behaviors can be learned through general socialization processes and not dependent on exposure to work

situations. Therefore, one does not necessarily have to have actual managerial experience to believe that prosocial behaviors are generally effective in work contexts. Nonetheless, further research should be conducted with an offline sample of supervisors to ensure the generalizability of the current study findings, and more specifically, to understand the effect that personality can have on specific job knowledge about feedback delivery and its effect on feedback delivery behavior, which is more difficult to assess using an online sample.

Third, our dependent variable did not involve actual feedback behavior but a verbatim description about what they would say in feedback context. This distinction is potentially significant because some supervisors may correctly believe (and therefore know) that prosocial actions are effective in work contexts, but this belief may not always translate into prosocial feedback delivery (just as we know that eating healthy and exercising are effective for our health, but not all of us engage in those behaviors on a regular basis). There might be various reasons for this. For example, in addition to our earlier discussion about the potential effect that context could have on feedback, some supervisors may lack the necessary skills needed to engage in effective feedback exchange with their employees (e.g., social skills). However, it is likely that those with stronger effectiveness beliefs for prosocial actions at work are more likely to engage in prosocial work behavior (such

as prosocial feedback delivery). Nevertheless, it would be useful for future research to cross-validate our findings with actual feedback behavior as the dependent variable.

Fourth, future research should examine whether prosocial ITPs predict prosocial behavior in other organizational behavior domains. In the current study, our focus was on predicting prosocial feedback delivery because we were interested in understanding the factors that predict effective feedback behavior. However, prosocial behavior that facilitates cooperation and collegiality among employees is a desirable feature that many organizations value and seek to promote among their employees, and thus, it would be useful for future research to explore whether prosocial ITPs could reliably predict prosocial behavior in work contexts in general.

Fifth, future research should examine whether supervisor prosocial ITPs contribute to actual changes in employees' job behaviors through prosocial feedback delivery. Previous models of feedback environment make a distinction between feedback quality and feedback delivery (e.g., Steelman et al., 2004; Whitaker et al., 2007). This is because although prosocial feedback delivery is useful for improving employees' reactions to the feedback information (e.g., satisfaction with feedback, motivation to use the feedback information), feedback is unlikely to lead to desirable changes in employee behavior if the feedback does not contain information that employees can use to address

the issue(s) s/he is facing on the job. In this regard, we can expect that feedback must be informative to produce desirable changes in employee behavior. Then, we might expect that the level of prosociality expressed in feedback can incrementally contribute to changing employee behavior, such that feedback that is both informative and prosocial is likely to be especially more useful for producing desirable changes in employee behavior compared to feedback that is only informative or only prosocial (i.e., interaction between feedback quality and prosociality).

Finally, future research may examine gender differences in prosocial ITP. In the current study sample, females ($M = 6.25$, $SD = .54$) scored higher on prosocial ITP than males ($M = 5.88$, $SD = .74$), $t(231) = 4.35$, $p < .01$, $d = -.59$. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Costa et al., 2001), in the current sample, females ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .53$) scored higher than males ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .60$) on agreeableness, $t(240) = 2.07$, $p < .04$, $d = -.28$, which according to the trait-based aspect of the ITP theory, should contribute to the gender difference in prosocial ITP. However, because of the prominent gender stereotype in our society that describe and prescribe females as being communal (Eagly & Wood, 1991), it is also possible that females may have had more social experiences in their everyday lives or in professional contexts where they were rewarded for interacting with others prosocially or punished for not interacting with

others prosocially, which is reasonably hypothesis to make based on previous research that has shown that females tend to face various backlash when their behavior is seen as violating gender norms (Bem, 1974), especially as they take on leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Through these experiences, females may have been inclined to develop stronger effectiveness beliefs about prosocial work behaviors or perhaps more likely, may have been inclined to develop stronger ineffectiveness beliefs about not being prosocial at work. Future research that examines how gender differences in socialization processes in everyday lives and in professional contexts contribute to gender differences in prosocial ITPs should be useful not only for furthering ITP theory, but also for improving our foundational understanding of factors that contribute to gender differences in organizational behavior.

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관리자의 성격과 직무환경에서의 사회적 행동에 대한 절차적 지식이 친화적 피드백에 미치는 영향

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Implicit trait policy(ITP) theory는 성격을 나타내는 행동의 효과성에 대한 개인의 판단, 즉 implicit trait policy에 의해 사람의 성격과 행동 간의 관계가 매개된다는 이론이다. 또한 ITP theory에 따르면 사람들은 일반적으로 자신의 성격을 나타내는 행동이 그렇지 못한 행동보다 더 효과적이라고 판단하기 때문에, 자신의 성격특성을 나타내는 행동을 통해 다양한 사회적 상황에 대처하는 경향이 있다고 설명한다. 본 연구에서는 ITP theory에서 제시하는 사람의 성격과 행동 간의 관계에 관한 가설을 조직에서의 피드백 상황에 적용하여 관리자의 우호성 (agreeableness)과 친화적 피드백(prosocial feedback; 피드백 수신자에게 친절을 보이고 공감하려는 태도) 간의 관계에서 이타적 직무행동의 효과성에 대한 개인의 판단, 즉 prosocial ITP의 매개효과에 대해 알아보았다. 이를 위해 관리자 248명을 대상으로 연구를 진행하였다. 연구 결과 prosocial ITP가 관리자의 우호성과 친화적 피드백 간의 관계를 매개하며, 관리자의 우호성과 친화적 피드백 간의 직접적 관계는 매우 약한 것으로 확인되었다.

주요어 : 피드백, 성격, implicit trait policy, 성과관리

Appendix A

Please read the descriptions about employee behavior on the job below. Read each description carefully and write your feedback to the employee for each description. Use at least 50 words.

You are a manager of a busy restaurant. Because you are a bit short on staff, you ask one of your servers to work tomorrow night. S/he scoffs at you and says, "I'd rather not, thanks." What would you say to the server?

You are a manager of a clothing store. One day, you overhear Angie, a veteran employee, telling a new clerk that because employees are paid minimum wage, most of them sometimes take home clothes for themselves. At closing time, you call Angie to your office to discuss this issue. What would you say?

You are the manager of a small factory. You walk past one of your employees working on a dangerous machine and smell beer on his/her breath. You call him/her over and say...

Appendix B

Feedback Environment Scale

Please read the participant's written feedback carefully and indicate how accurately the following statements describe his/her feedback on a scale ranging from 1 to 7, where...

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 = very inaccurate | 5 = slightly accurate |
| 2 = somewhat inaccurate | 6 = somewhat accurate |
| 3 = slightly inaccurate | 7 = very accurate |
| 4 = neither accurate nor inaccurate | |

Feedback Delivery

1. The participant was supportive when giving feedback.
2. The participant was considerate of the feedback recipient's feelings.
3. The participant did not treat the feedback recipient very well when providing performance feedback.