



# Integrating ethics and inclusion: How and when upper-level managerial leadership impact supervisory inclusiveness

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## Abstract

This study seeks to integrate behavioral ethics and organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion research in effort to extend our understanding of the workplace factors that impact the engagement of inclusive leadership. For this purpose, we rely on social information processing theory to explain how and when upper-level managerial leadership impacts middle-level supervisory inclusiveness. We clarify these baseline relationships by integrating the role of supervisor organization-based self-esteem and negative affectivity into our model. We test our conceptual model in a multi-source field study consisting of 124 supervisor-employee dyads. Our study finds that upper-level managerial ethical leadership positively impacts middle-level supervisor organization-based self-esteem and upper-level managerial abusive leadership negatively impacts supervisor OBSE. In turn, supervisor OBSE positively impacts supervisory inclusiveness. Additionally, we find that supervisor negative affectivity moderates these relationships. Specifically, the relationships between (1) upper-level managerial ethical leadership and supervisor OBSE and (2) upper-level managerial abusive leadership and supervisor OBSE are stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high compared to low. In summary, our first-stage moderated-mediation model is supported. We conclude by discussing implications, limitations, and future research.

**Keywords** Abusive leadership · Ethical leadership · Organization-based self-esteem · Social information processing · Supervisory inclusiveness

## Introduction

Organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) researchers have recently turned their attention to the importance of inclusive leadership (Randel et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2018; Rice et al., 2021). Specifically, inclusive leadership is defined “as a set of positive leader behaviors that facilitate group members perceiving belongingness in the work group while maintaining their uniqueness within the group as they fully contribute to group processes and outcomes” (Randel et al., 2018, p. 190). As a fairly novel concept, management researchers have primarily focused

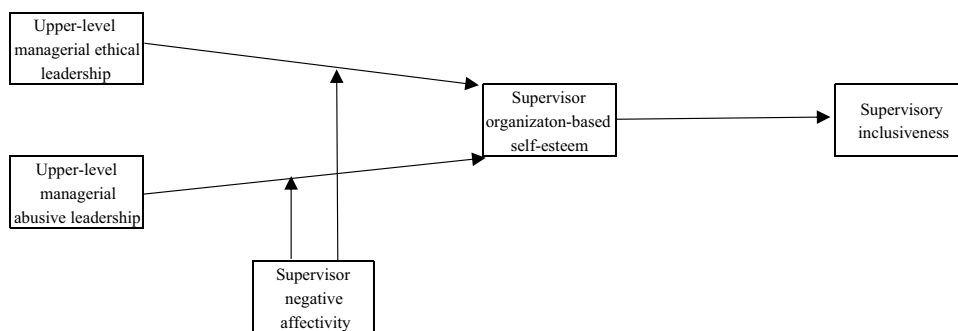
on identifying the outcomes of inclusive leadership. As such, this stream of research has demonstrated that inclusive leadership in the workplace positively impacts citizenship behavior and affective commitment (Rice et al., 2021), employee well-being (Choi et al., 2017), helping behavior (Randel et al., 2016), and innovative work behavior (Javed et al., 2019). Subsequently, our understanding of the workplace outcomes related to inclusive leadership has increased.

Although our knowledge regarding the outcomes associated with inclusive leadership has grown significantly, the research regarding its antecedents is more limited. Indeed, there are only a scarce amount of studies that focus on examining the antecedents of inclusive leadership. Beyond examining the impact of organizational inclusiveness on supervisory inclusiveness (Rice et al., 2021), very little is known about the antecedents of inclusive leadership. Subsequently, our understanding of the various workplace factors that impact inclusive leadership is incomplete. Given that inclusive leadership is tied to a number of positive outcomes (Choi et al., 2017; Randel et al., 2016), it is critical to understand what factors drive the engagement of inclusive

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**Fig. 1** Conceptual model

leadership. As such, the objective of our study is to increase our understanding of the workplace factors that impact the engagement of inclusive leadership. We specifically target inclusive leadership at the middle supervisory level because direct supervisors tend to be perceived as the main organizational representative in the eyes of employees (Liden et al., 2004; Tekleab & Taylor, 2003).

Given on our focus on supervisory inclusiveness, it is important to note that Rice et al. (2021) proposed that “supervisors look for cues from their employer regarding acceptable conduct within their organization” (p. 268) and supervisory inclusiveness is influenced by both prescriptive forms of morality “(i.e., demonstrating behavior that one thinks is required)” and proscriptive forms of morality “(i.e., avoiding behavior that one thinks is forbidden)” (p. 270). These two particular propositions suggest that supervisory inclusiveness is influenced by salient ethical and unethical cues in the workplace. To explain the impact of ethical and unethical environmental factors on supervisory inclusiveness, we ground our study in social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). To this end, we rely on social information processing theory to position upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level managerial abusive leadership as salient prescriptive and proscriptive ethical cues that influence middle-level supervisory inclusiveness.

Given our social information processing theory, we also integrate Salancik and Pfeffer’s (1978) theoretical proposition that environmental factors also shape workplace attitudes, which proceed behavior, such as supervisory inclusiveness. Thus, to clarify *how* upper-level managerial leadership impacts middle-level supervisory inclusiveness, we integrate supervisor organization-based self-esteem. We develop the argument that whereas upper-level managerial ethical leadership increases supervisor OBSE, upper-level managerial abusive leadership damages supervisor OBSE. In turn, OBSE, is an attitude that conveys a sense of feeling welcomed at work (Rice et al., 2020a, b) and a belief that one can make a positive difference (Pierce et al., 1989), this should impact supervisory inclusiveness. Additionally, research suggests individual

differences impact how individuals respond to various social information processing effects (Mawritz et al., 2014; Mechinda & Patterson, 2011; Thornton & Rupp, 2016). To account for these differences in responses to upper-level managerial leadership, we targeted supervisor negative affectivity. Specifically, individuals with high levels of negative affectivity, compared to their counterparts, react more strongly to environmental cues (Saks & Ashforth, 2000). Thus, we also explain the role of supervisor negative affectivity and *when* it alters the impact of upper-level managerial leadership on supervisor OBSE.

We seek to make four specific contributions with our study. First, by examining and establishing the impact of upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level managerial abusive leadership on supervisory inclusiveness, our study extends the literature that integrates behavioral ethics and diversity, equity, and inclusion research (e.g., Buttner & Lowe, 2017; Singh & Selvarajan, 2013). Second, given our focus on upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level managerial abusive leadership, our studies extend the management research to focus on *what type of leaders* are created by these type of leadership styles (e.g., Mawritz et al., 2012; Mayer et al., 2009). Third, our study increases our understanding of supervisor inclusiveness. We extend this stream of research by integrating the role of supervisor OBSE. Fourth, our research contributes to management research that focuses on explaining when negative affectivity alters individuals’ reactions to environmental cues. We find that supervisors with high levels of negative affectivity respond more intensely to upper-level managerial leadership. In summary, our study explains *how* and *when* upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level abusive leadership impact supervisory inclusiveness. Figure 1 depicts our conceptual model.

## Theory and Hypotheses Development

### The Impact of Upper-Level Managerial Leadership on Middle-Level Supervisory Inclusiveness

Given researchers have used social information processing theory to explain the effects of the leadership styles we focus on (e.g., Priesemuth et al., 2014; Wadei et al., 2021), we adopt this theoretical framework to explain the impact of upper-level ethical leadership and upper-level abusive leadership on supervisory inclusiveness. Upper-level ethical management can be described as middle-level supervisors' evaluations of the extent that their upper-level managers demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2005). Conversely, upper-level abusive management can be described as middle-level supervisors' evaluations of the extent to which their upper-level managers engage in a prolonged display of hostility (Tepper, 2000, 2007). We target upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level abusive leadership because upper-level ethical leadership likely operates as a salient prescriptive moral environmental cue and upper-level abusive leadership likely operates as a salient proscriptive moral environmental cue for middle-level supervisors. Management research also suggests that supervisory inclusiveness is likely influenced by behavioral ethics concepts (Dwertmann et al., 2016). This is because organizational DEI research is often intertwined with fairness and discrimination research (Ely & Thomas, 2001). For example, research suggests by reducing stereotyping and discrimination incidents, organizations can make workplace settings more equitable and inclusive (Dwertmann et al., 2016).

We also acknowledge the behavioral ethics research that proposes demonstrated prescriptive morality is an activation-based mechanism that guides individuals to focus on what we should do and demonstrated proscriptive morality is an inhibition-based mechanism that guides individuals to focus on what we should not do (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009). This suggests that prescriptive and proscriptive forms of morality run counter to each other. To this end, behavioral ethics researchers have also proposed that “ethical leadership and abusive supervision function in much the same way, but with opposite signs” (Palanski et al., 2014, p. 139). Thus, upper-level managerial ethical leadership should have an activating influence (i.e., positively impacting) on supervisory inclusiveness and upper-level managerial abusive leadership should have an inhibiting influence (i.e., negatively impacting) on supervisory inclusiveness. Correspondingly, supervisory inclusiveness refers to supervisors adopting an “integration perspective that views individuals' diverse backgrounds as an asset to

the successful implementation of the organizations' strategic tasks” (Rice et al., 2021, p. 269). Given workplace expectations and norms are guided by organizational leadership (Feldman, 1984; Masi & Cooke, 2000; Qu et al., 2015; Taggar & Ellis, 2007), we propose that middle-level supervisors engaging in inclusive leadership is likely due to social information processing effect.

We rely on two essential propositions of social information processing theory to explain our first set of hypotheses. First, Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) proposed that “the social information processing approach proceeds from the fundamental premise that individuals, as adaptive organisms, adapt attitudes, behavior, and beliefs to their social context and to the reality of their own past and present behavior and situation” (p. 226). Second, this particular theory proposes that individual behavior can best be understood by studying the “informational and social environment within which that behavior occurs and to which it adapts” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, p. 226). In other words, social information processing theory posits that “an individual's behavior is influenced by others and that individuals look to those around them for cues on appropriate ways to behave” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, p. 333). Subsequently, employees typically engage in behaviors that are aligned with organizational expectations and norms (Ambrose et al., 2021; Mawritz et al., 2014). This is because upper-level managerial leadership is a particularly powerful source of this information due to their power to control and influence key organizational resources and career advancement (Hu & Shi, 2015).

On the basis of the aforementioned theoretical propositions, we specifically argue that supervisors whose organizations are characterized by having salient upper-level managerial ethical leadership should receive social cues that indicate being just and non-discriminatory is appropriate behavior. Subsequently, this should activate supervisory inclusiveness. Conversely, supervisors whose organizations are characterized by having salient upper-level managerial abusive leadership should receive cues that indicate being unjust and disrespectful is appropriate behavior. Subsequently, this should inhibit supervisory inclusiveness. In other words, whereas upper-level managerial ethical leadership conveys that fair treatment is the expectation for organizational members (Brown et al., 2005; Xu et al., 2016), upper-level managerial abusive leadership conveys that mistreatment is acceptable (Mawritz et al., 2014; Tepper, 2007). As such, when middle-level supervisors experience upper-level managerial ethical leadership, they are more likely to lead inclusively. Conversely, when these supervisors experience upper-level abusive leadership, they are less likely to lead inclusively.

Empirical evidence supports our rationale. While drawing on social information processing theory, Mawritz et al. (2012) demonstrated that upper-level managerial abusive leadership positively influenced middle-level supervisory

abusive leadership. While also relying on social information processing theory, Mayer et al. (2010) demonstrated how ethical leadership negatively influenced employee misconduct. For this purpose, we propose that upper-level managerial ethical leadership should positively impact supervisory inclusiveness and upper-level abusive leadership should negatively impact supervisory inclusiveness.

*Hypothesis 1a:* Upper-level managerial ethical leadership is positively related to middle-level supervisory inclusiveness.

*Hypothesis 1b:* Upper-level managerial abusive leadership is negatively related to middle-level supervisory inclusiveness.

### The Impact of Upper-Level Managerial Leadership on Supervisor OBSE

Social information theory also proposes that a social context conveys information about what attitudes *should be* (Ambrose et al., 2021). As noted by Salancik and Pfeffer (1978), environmental “dimensions made salient can then affect the attitude formed” (p. 229). Echoing this proposition, Lue and colleagues (Lu et al., 2019) noted that “individuals look to the surrounding environment for cues and develop attitudes as a result of that information” (p. 509). As such, social information impacts attitude development based on the evaluation of workplace. Thus, according to social information processing theory, organizational members’ attitudes are directly influenced by organizational norms observed in the workplace (Mawritz et al., 2014; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Given “OBSE is a specific work-related attitude” (Tang & Ibrahim, 1998, p. 532), which is directly shaped by cues in the workplace (Gardner & Pierce, 2016; Pierce & Gardner, 2004; Pierce et al., 1989), we rely on social information processing theory to also explain the impact of upper-level managerial leadership on supervisor OBSE.

OBSE describes the degree to which an individual believes themselves to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member (Pierce et al., 1989). We focused on supervisor OBSE for two reasons. First, consistent with social information processing theory, it is a particular attitude tied to the workplace (Pierce et al., 1989; Tang & Ibrahim, 1998). Second, OBSE is commonly featured as an important attitude associated with ethical leadership (Rice et al., 2020b; Wen et al., 2021) and abusive leadership (Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Rice et al., 2020a). As such, management research also suggests that an individual’s self-esteem is especially susceptible to various environmental cues (Brockner, 1988). Notably, social interactions with leaders are generally understood in terms of social information used to convey an individual’s worth to the organization

(Ferris et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2019; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). Subsequently, scholars have concluded “manager behaviors have effects on OBSE” (Norman et al., 2015, p. 258).

Thus, on the basis of social information processing theory, we propose that upper-level managerial ethical leadership is a salient environmental factor that conveys to supervisors that they are viewed as valuable and important members who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Subsequently, this should positively impact supervisor OBSE. Conversely, upper-level managerial abusive leadership is a salient environmental factor that conveys to supervisors that they are viewed as irrelevant and unimportant members who do not deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. As such, this should negatively impact supervisor OBSE.

Empirical evidence found in management research supports our rationale. For example, management researchers have demonstrated that supervisory ethical leadership positively impacts employee OBSE (Rice et al., 2020b). Management scholars have also established that a negative relationship exists between abusive supervision and employee self-esteem (Farh & Chen, 2014; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Rice et al., 2020a; Vogel & Mitchell, 2017). We believe that these findings should hold between upper-level manager and middle-level supervisor interactions as they were found in supervisor-employee interactions.

*Hypothesis 2a:* Upper-level managerial ethical leadership is positively related to middle-level supervisor OBSE.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Upper-level managerial abusive leadership is negatively related to middle-level supervisor OBSE.

### The Mediating Role of Supervisor OBSE

In accordance with social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), we position supervisor OBSE as a mediator between upper-level managerial leadership and supervisory inclusiveness. This is because “attitudes serve to guide people’s behavior” (Armitage & Christian, 2003, p. 187). As such, Salancik and Pfeffer’s (1978) theory proposes that one social context (i.e., interactions with upper-level managerial leadership) influences work-related attitudes (i.e., OBSE), which in turn impact workplace behavior (i.e., supervisory inclusiveness). Notably, as OBSE increases within individuals, they believe that they can make a positive impact in their organizations (Pierce & Gardner, 2004) and make a difference (Pierce et al., 1989). Subsequently, they are likely to develop and maintain desirable workplace attitudes and work to improve the organization (Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Pierce et al., 1989). As noted by Chen et al. (2005), “high OBSE individuals will attach a high value to organizational membership” (p. 461). Therefore, we argue that as OBSE increases, supervisors are more likely to see



not only their value as organizational members, but also the value of other organizational members. Subsequently, we propose that they are more likely to lead inclusively. A substantial body of research has demonstrated that OBSE is associated with a variety of positive attitudes and behavior, such as commitment, citizenship behavior, and performance (Bowling et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2004), well-being (Pierce et al., 2016), and job satisfaction (Gardner & Pierce, 2016).

Of specific interest to our model is the work of Hsu and Kuo (2003). These scholars demonstrated that a positive relationship exists between OBSE and ethical and fair intentions. Moreover, McAllister and Bigley (2002) demonstrated a positive relationship exists between OBSE and organizational fairness, highlighting additional relevance to the fairness and discrimination implications of supervisory inclusiveness. Scholars have also linked OBSE to being supportive of others (Yang et al., 2018). This suggests as supervisor OBSE increases, supervisors feel welcomed in the workplace and also strive to make others feel welcomed. Thus, the combination of OBSE research and its empirical findings suggest a positive relationship should exist between supervisor OBSE and supervisory inclusiveness. However, we still maintain the argument that supervisor OBSE is influenced by upper-level managerial leadership. Thus, we position supervisor OBSE as a key mediator in effort to be consistent with prior studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2005; Farh & Chen, 2014; Ferris et al., 2012; Rice et al., 2020a; Yang et al., 2018). In following this logic, Rice et al. (2020a) demonstrated that abusive supervision impacted employee citizenship behavior via OBSE. For this purpose, we propose that supervisor OBSE links upper-level managerial leadership to middle-level supervisor behavior.

*Hypothesis 3:* Supervisor OBSE is positively related to supervisory inclusiveness.

*Hypothesis 4a:* Supervisor OBSE mediates the relationship between upper-level managerial ethical leadership and middle-level supervisory inclusiveness.

*Hypothesis 4b:* Supervisor OBSE mediates the relationship between upper-level managerial abusive leadership and middle-level supervisory inclusiveness.

### The Moderating Influence of Supervisor Negative Affectivity

We acknowledge that supervisors process social information differently. Specifically, management scholars have proposed that “negative affective states significantly influence the way social information is processed” (Demirtas et al., 2017, p. 186). To account for individual differences, we position negative affectivity as a key moderator. Negative affectivity is the tendency to experience a wide range

of negative emotions (Kaplan et al., 2009). Thus, negative affectivity correlates with negative moods and emotional states, such as fear and anxiety (Watson et al., 1988). As such, they are more likely to worry that they are not accepted or do not belong (Johnson & Morgeson, 2005). Subsequently, workplace attitudes and behavior, such as OBSE, “will act as a mechanism to increase a sense of worth for those high in negative affectivity that is consistent with their self-view (i.e., being a good organizational member)” (Stoner & Gallagher, 2011, p. 1800). This is because individuals with high negative affectivity, in comparison to those low in negative affectivity, are more likely to define themselves on the basis of treatment experienced in social settings (Johnson & Morgeson, 2005) and more fearful about facing a new workplace (Erdheim et al., 2006). This suggests that supervisors with higher levels of negative affectivity are more likely to base their OBSE on the treatment they receive from their environmental cues. On the other hand, supervisors with lower levels of negative affectivity should be more consistent in their belief of being a valued organizational member, which is consistent with prior research (e.g., Erdheim et al., 2006; Johnson & Morgeson, 2005; Stoner & Gallagher, 2011).

Notably, Stoner and Gallagher (2011) demonstrated that although the positive relationship between organizational identification and job performance was consistent for employees with lower levels of negative affectivity, this particular positive relationship was stronger for employees with higher levels of negative affectivity. As such, we propose that the relationships between (1) upper-level managerial ethical leadership and supervisor OBSE and (2) upper-level abusive leadership and supervisor OBSE, are stronger for supervisors with high levels of negative affectivity rather than low. Consistent with our preceding arguments, we also suggest that the indirect effects of upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level abusive leadership on middle-level supervisory inclusiveness through supervisor OBSE is stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high compared to low.

*Hypothesis 5a:* The relationship between upper-level managerial ethical leadership and middle-level supervisor OBSE is stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high compared to low.

*Hypothesis 5b:* The relationship between upper-level managerial abusive leadership and middle-level supervisor OBSE is stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high compared to low.

*Hypothesis 6a:* The relationship between upper-level managerial ethical leadership and middle-level supervisory inclusiveness via supervisor OBSE is stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high compared to low.

*Hypothesis 6b:* The relationship between upper-level managerial abusive leadership and middle-level supervisory inclusiveness via supervisor OBSE is stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high compared to low.

## Methodology

### Research Design and Data Collection Procedure

Given our proposed hypotheses, we designed our study as a multi-source field study. We used Qualtrics (online surveys) to collect data from supervisor-employee pairs from a variety of organizations in various industries<sup>1</sup> located in the southeastern United States. Students served as organizational recruits for supervisor-employee dyads. This methodological approach is in line with previous dyadic research (e.g., Bonner et al., 2016; Rice et al., 2020b) and collecting multi-source data reduces the concern of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The surveys were completed in a two-month time period. Employees were responsible for submitting the employee survey and supervisors were responsible for submitting the supervisor survey. Following prior studies (Letwin et al., 2016), we took a number of steps to ensure that the surveys were completed by the appropriate individuals. Specifically, participants were informed that their responses were confidential and we highlighted the significance of honesty in the research process as this helps with our effort to obtain trustworthy and reliable data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). IP addresses and time records were also collected and verified to assess if they were submitted at various times and on distinct computers. In total, 316 participants received surveys and 188 immediate supervisors and 206 direct reports submitted surveys. Prior to analyzing our data, we removed suspicious data, such as if a participant failed to properly respond to an instructionally-specified statement. We used listwise deletion method to eliminate missing data. Subsequently, our final sample size was 248 usable surveys. Therefore, our analyses were based on 124 matched dyads. Given the dyadic nature of our data and our hypotheses, we use LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) to conduct CFAs and linear regression and PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) to test our hypotheses.

<sup>1</sup> Industry was coded as a categorical variable and it did not significantly impact our model. The category breakdown was the following: 1 = Finance/Insurance/Real Estate, 2 = Science/Engineering/Architecture, 3 = Computer/Information Systems, 4 = Education/Training/Library, 5 = Healthcare, 6 = Community/Social Services, 7 = Art/Design/Entertainment/Sports, 8 = Transportation/Logistics, 9 = Retail, 10 = Manufacturing/Construction, 11 = Restaurants/Food Services/Grocery, 12 = Other

### Sample Demographics

The majority of employees were female (56%). The breakdown of ethnicities represented was: 8% African American/Black, 4% Asian American/Asian, 68% Caucasian/White, 16% Hispanic American/Latinx, and 4% other. On average, employees were 25 years old ( $SD = 7.23$ ) and had four years of organizational tenure ( $SD = 4.53$ ). The majority of supervisors were male (57%). The breakdown of ethnicities represented was: 10% African American/Black, 2% Asian American/Asian, 65% Caucasian/White, 18% Hispanic American/Latinx, 1% Native American, and 4% other. Supervisors, on average, were 38 years old ( $SD = 11.79$ ) and had an average of eight years of organizational tenure ( $SD = 6.81$ ).

The employee questionnaire contained measures of middle-level supervisory inclusiveness, current tenure with supervisor, industry, and demographics. The supervisor questionnaire contained measures of upper-level managerial ethical leadership, upper-level abusive leadership, OBSE, negative affectivity, and demographics. Following Becker's (2005) suggestions, we targeted gender and ethnic similarity within dyads, supervisor organizational tenure, and employee tenure with current supervisor as control variables. Prior studies suggest these variables can influence our model (Bacharach et al., 2005; Harrison et al., 1998; Rice et al., 2020b).

### Measures

Unless otherwise noted, our variables were based on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree).

**Upper-Level Managerial Ethical Leadership** The 10-item ethical leadership scale developed by Brown et al. (2005) was used as the measurement. Supervisors responded to statements, such as “My manager makes fair and balanced decisions.”

**Upper-Level Managerial Abusive Leadership** In line with prior research (e.g., Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), we used the five-item scale developed by Tepper (2000) as the measurement for abusive management. Supervisors responded to statements, such as “My manager puts me down in front of others.”

**Middle-Level Supervisory Inclusiveness** Consistent with prior research (e.g., Rice et al., 2021), we used the four-item scale developed by Pugh et al. (2008) as the measurement for supervisory inclusiveness. Employees responded to statements such as “My supervisor makes it easy for people from diverse backgrounds to fit in and be accepted.”

**Table 1** Scale reliabilities, bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Upper-level managerial ethical leadership	5.79	1.02	<b>.94</b>								
2 Upper-level managerial abusive leadership	1.59	.85	-.61**	<b>.92</b>							
3 Supervisor organization-based self-esteem	6.35	.64	.45**	-.44**	<b>.95</b>						
4 Supervisor negative affectivity	1.33	.54	-.18	.38**	-.29**	<b>.89</b>					
5 Supervisor inclusiveness	6.21	.81	.23*	-.26**	.31**	-.26**	<b>.87</b>				
6 Supervisor organizational tenure	7.96	5.74	.12	-.07	.14	-.15	-.07	–			
7 Employee tenure with supervisor	2.37	3.03	-.02	.15	.04	.05	.07	.19*	–		
8 Gender similarity within dyad	–	–	.01	-.01	-.12	.06	-.01	-.04	.15	–	
9 Ethnic similarity within dyad	–	–	-.03	.02	-.09	.07	.11	.15	-.10	.01	–

\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ;  $N = 120$ ; reliabilities are along the diagonals. Gender similarity – 1 = similar, 2 = dissimilar; Ethnic similarity – 1 = similar, 2 = dissimilar

**Supervisor Organizational-Based Self-Esteem (OBSE)** The 10-item scale developed by Pierce et al. (1989) was used as the measurement for OBSE. Supervisors responded to statements such as “I can make a difference around here.”

**Supervisor Negative Affectivity** The PANAS scale developed by Watson et al. (1988) was used as the measurement for negative affectivity. Supervisors responded to the negative items such as their general feelings regarding being distressed, jittery, nervous, and scared on a five-point scale.

## Study Results

Prior to testing our hypotheses, we examined the data for common method variance using two procedures. First, we conducted a Harman single factor test. This procedure resulted in seven factors with eigenvalues higher than one and no factor explained the majority of the variance (Williams et al., 1989). Second, we ran multiple confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) via LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006). The CFA results revealed that our five-factor model was a good fit ( $\chi^2 = 1542.82$ ,  $df = 692$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $GFI = .94$ ;  $AGFI = .93$ ;  $NFI = .90$ ;  $SRMR = .04$ ). Our five-factor model's  $\chi^2$ /degrees of freedom ratio was 2.23, which is below the threshold of 3 that suggests a good fit (Kline, 2005). Our five-factor model was also superior to an alternative four-factor model that combined upper-level managerial ethical leadership and abusive leadership ( $\chi^2 = 1542.82$ ,  $df = 696$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $GFI = .91$ ;  $AGFI = .90$ ;  $NFI = .87$ ;  $SRMR = .05$ ) and a three-factor model that combined upper-level managerial ethical leadership, abusive leadership, and supervisor OBSE ( $\chi^2 = 1542.82$ ,  $df = 699$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $GFI = .80$ ;  $AGFI = .77$ ;  $NFI = .76$ ;  $SRMR = .07$ ).

Scale reliabilities, bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations are located in Table 1. Two distinct analyses were conducted for each hypothesis (i.e., with and without control variables). As the results were fairly similar,

we report the clean results (i.e., without control variables) (Becker, 2005). Regression was used to test Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, and 3. The results revealed significant relationships between upper-level managerial ethical leadership and middle-level supervisory inclusiveness, ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ), upper-level managerial abusive leadership and middle-level supervisory inclusiveness, ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), upper-level managerial ethical leadership and supervisor OBSE ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ), upper-level managerial abusive leadership and supervisor OBSE ( $\beta = -.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and supervisor OBSE and supervisory inclusiveness ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Subsequently, Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, and 3 respectively were supported. The regression results with and without control variables for these specific hypotheses can be found in Tables 2 and 3.

PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) was used to test the remaining hypotheses. The results revealed significant indirect effects of upper-level managerial ethical leadership (indirect effect = .09,  $LCI = .023$ ;  $UCI = .198$ ) and upper-level managerial abusive leadership (indirect effect =  $-.11$ ,  $LCI = -.233$ ;  $UCI = -.019$ ) on middle-level supervisory inclusiveness through supervisor OBSE. Zero did not appear in the confidence intervals. Thus, Hypotheses 4a and 4b received support. We conducted supplementary mediation analyses via the Sobel test. Given the liberal testing criteria of bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure (Fritz et al., 2012), we also report the more conservative Sobel test (MacKinnon et al., 1995). The Sobel test revealed support for Hypothesis 4a (Effect = .09,  $Z$ -value = 2.45,  $p < .05$ ) and 4b (Effect =  $-.11$ ,  $Z$ -value =  $-2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as well (Tables 4 and 5).

PROCESS results revealed a positive and significant interaction effect between upper-level managerial ethical leadership and supervisor negative affectivity on supervisor OBSE ( $B = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and this interaction explained an additional 8 % of variance. Simple slopes analyses revealed that the positive relationship between upper-level managerial

**Table 2** Regression results for Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b with and without control variables

Outcome:	Supervisor inclusiveness				Supervisor organization-based self-esteem			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Supervisor organizational tenure	-.10	.01			.07	.01		
Employee tenure with supervisor	.11	.03			.05	.02		
Gender similarity within dyad	-.04	.15			-.12	.11		
Ethnic similarity within dyad	.11	.15			-.07	.11		
Upper-level managerial ethical leadership	.24**	.07	.23*	.07	.44**	.05	.45**	.05
R <sup>2</sup>	.08		.05*		.23**		.20**	
Durbin-Watson statistic	1.93		1.98		1.96		1.94	
Outcome:	Supervisor inclusiveness				Supervisor organization-based self-esteem			
Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
Supervisor organizational tenure	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Supervisor organizational tenure	-.10	.01			.08	.01		
Employee tenure with supervisor	.15	.03			.11	.02		
Gender similarity within dyad	-.04	.15			-.13	.11		
Ethnic similarity within dyad	.11	.15			-.06	.11		
Upper-level managerial abusive leadership	-.29**	.09	-.26**	.08	-.45**	.06	-.44**	.06
R <sup>2</sup>	.10*		.07**		.24**		.20**	
Durbin-Watson statistic	1.89		1.97		2.01		1.99	

\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; SE = standard error

**Table 3** Regression results for Hypothesis 3 with and without control variables

Variables	Supervisor inclusiveness			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Supervisor organizational tenure	-.11	.01		
Employee tenure with supervisor	.09	.02		
Gender similarity within dyad	.01	.15		
Ethnic similarity within dyad	.13	.15		
Supervisor organization-based self-esteem	.34**	.11	.31**	.11
R <sup>2</sup>	.14**		.10**	
Durbin-Watson statistic	1.88		1.91	

\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; SE = standard error

ethical leadership and supervisor OBSE was stronger at higher levels of supervisor negative affectivity (Effect = .37,  $t$ -value = 6.58, LCI = .258; UCI = .479) compared to lower levels (Effect = .14,  $t$ -value = 2.43, LCI = .025, UCI = .250). This analysis is depicted in Fig. 2. Thus, Hypothesis 5a received support. PROCESS results also revealed a negative and significant interaction effect between upper-level managerial abusive leadership and supervisor negative affectivity on supervisor OBSE ( $B = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and this interaction

also explained an additional 8 % of variance. Simple slopes analyses also revealed that the negative relationship between upper-level abusive leadership and supervisor OBSE was stronger at higher levels of supervisor negative affectivity (Effect =  $-.39$ ,  $t$ -value =  $-5.72$ , LCI =  $-.525$ ; UCI =  $-.250$ ) compared to lower levels (Effect =  $-.14$ ,  $t$ -value =  $-1.82$ , LCI =  $-.288$ ; UCI =  $.012$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 5b received support. This analysis is depicted in Fig. 3.

Significant conditional indirect effects were also revealed by PROCESS. Particularly, the conditional indirect effect of upper-level managerial ethical leadership on middle-level supervisory inclusiveness through supervisor OBSE was stronger when supervisor negative affectivity is high (boot effect = .13; boot LCI = .028; boot UCI = .253) compared to low (boot effect = .05; boot LCI = .013; boot UCI = .112). Additionally, the conditional indirect effect of upper-level managerial abusive leadership on middle-level supervisory inclusiveness through supervisor OBSE was stronger when supervisor conscientiousness is high (boot effect =  $-.12$ ; boot LCI =  $-.257$ ; boot UCI =  $-.020$ ) compared to low (boot effect =  $-.04$ ; boot LCI =  $-.116$ ; boot UCI =  $-.003$ ). As such, Hypotheses 6a and 6b received support. Moreover, Hayes (2015) proposed that “A bootstrap confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation that does not include zero provides more direct and definitive evidence of moderation of the indirect effect” (p. 11). Correspondingly, the results revealed significant indices of moderated



**Table 4** PROCESS results for Hypotheses 4a, 4b, 6a, and 6b with and without control variables

PROCESS (Model 4)								
Mediator = Supervisor organization-based self-esteem								
	Model 1				Model 2			
Outcome: Supervisory inclusiveness	Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot UCI	Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot UCI
Predictor: Upper-level managerial ethical leadership	.10	.05	.026	.207	.09	.04	.023	.198
Predictor: Upper-level managerial abusive leadership	-.11	.06	-.254	-.025	-.11	.05	-.233	-.019
	Direct effect	SE	LCI	UCI	Direct effect	SE	LCI	UCI
Predictor: Upper-level managerial ethical leadership	.09	.08	-.058	.245	.09	.07	-.066	.236
Predictor: Upper-level managerial abusive leadership	-.16	.09	-.344	.022	-.14	.09	-.321	.040
	Indirect effect	SE	Z-score		Indirect effect	SE	Z-score	
Sobel test: Upper-level managerial ethical leadership	.10	.04	2.56*		.09	.04	2.45*	
Sobel test: Upper-level managerial abusive leadership	-.11	.05	-2.40*		-.11	.05	-2.33*	
PROCESS (Model 7)								
Mediator = Supervisor organization-based self-esteem								
	Boot effect	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot UCI	Boot effect	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot UCI
Upper-level managerial ethical leadership								
-1 SD of supervisor negative affectivity	.05	.02	.012	.114	.05	.02	.013	.111
+1 SD of supervisor negative affectivity	.14	.06	.035	.255	.12	.06	.028	.253
	Boot effect	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot UCI	Boot effect	Boot SE	Boot LCI	Boot UCI
Upper-level managerial abusive leadership								
-1 SD of supervisor negative affectivity	-.05	.03	-.132	-.011	-.04	.03	-.116	-.003
+1 SD of supervisor negative affectivity	-.13	.06	-.277	-.025	-.12	.06	-.257	-.020

Model 1 conducted with control variables; Model 2 conducted without control variables; \*\* p < .01; \* p < .05; SE = standard error; LCI = lower confidence interval; UCI = upper confidence interval; 5000 bootstraps; 95% bias corrected

mediation regarding upper-level managerial ethical leadership (index = .09; boot LCI = .008; boot UCI = .217) and upper-level managerial abusive leadership (index = -.11; boot LCI = -.279; boot UCI = -.024), providing additional support for Hypotheses 6a and 6b.

### Discussion

In our study, we aimed to extend the supervisory inclusiveness literature by identifying likely antecedents of supervisory inclusiveness. We found that upper-level managerial ethical leadership was positively related to middle-level supervisory inclusiveness and upper-level abusive leadership was negatively related to middle-level supervisory inclusiveness. Our study also revealed that supervisor OBSE mediated the impact of upper-level managerial ethical leadership and upper-level managerial abusive leadership on supervisory inclusiveness. Furthermore, these relationships were stronger when supervisor negative affectivity was high

compared to low. Consequently, our findings have implications for social information processing theory, behavioral ethics (i.e., ethical and abusive leadership), organizational DEI (i.e., inclusive leadership), and OBSE research.

### Theoretical Implications

Our research contributes to the management literature that seeks to integrate behavioral ethics research with organizational DEI research. Although prior studies have focused on the role of employees' perceptions of diversity climate for majority and minority employees (e.g., Buttner & Lowe, 2017; Buttner et al., 2012; Singh & Selvarajan, 2013; Stewart et al., 2011), this stream has yet to examine and explain why leadership styles rooted in behavioral ethics literature (ethical leadership, abusive supervision) impact inclusive leadership. As such, we extend this literature as we found that upper-level managerial ethical leadership positively impacted middle-level supervisory inclusiveness and upper-level managerial abusive leadership negatively impacted

**Table 5** PROCESS results for Hypotheses 5a and 5b with and without control variables

Outcome:	Supervisor organization-based self-esteem			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	SE
Supervisor organizational tenure	.01	.01		
Employee tenure with supervisor	.01	.02		
Gender similarity within dyad	-.14	.10		
Ethnic similarity within dyad	-.13	.10		
Managerial ethical leadership	.22**	.05	.23**	.05
Supervisor negative affectivity	-.14	.10	-.16	.09
Managerial ethical leadership X Supv NA	.27**	.07	.27**	.07
R <sup>2</sup>	.35**		.33**	
ΔR <sup>2</sup> due to interaction	.08**		.08**	
Outcome:	Supervisor organization-based self-esteem			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	SE
Supervisor organizational tenure	.01	.01		
Employee tenure with supervisor	.01	.02		
Gender similarity within dyad	-.12	.10		
Ethnic similarity within dyad	-.09	.11		
Managerial abusive leadership	-.25**	.07	-.23**	.06
Supervisor negative affectivity	.04	.11	.03	.11
Managerial abusive leadership X Supv NA	-.27**	.08	-.29**	.08
R <sup>2</sup>	.31**		.29**	
ΔR <sup>2</sup> due to interaction	.06**		.08**	

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05; *B* = unstandardized coefficients; SE = standard error; 5000 bootstraps; 95% bias corrected

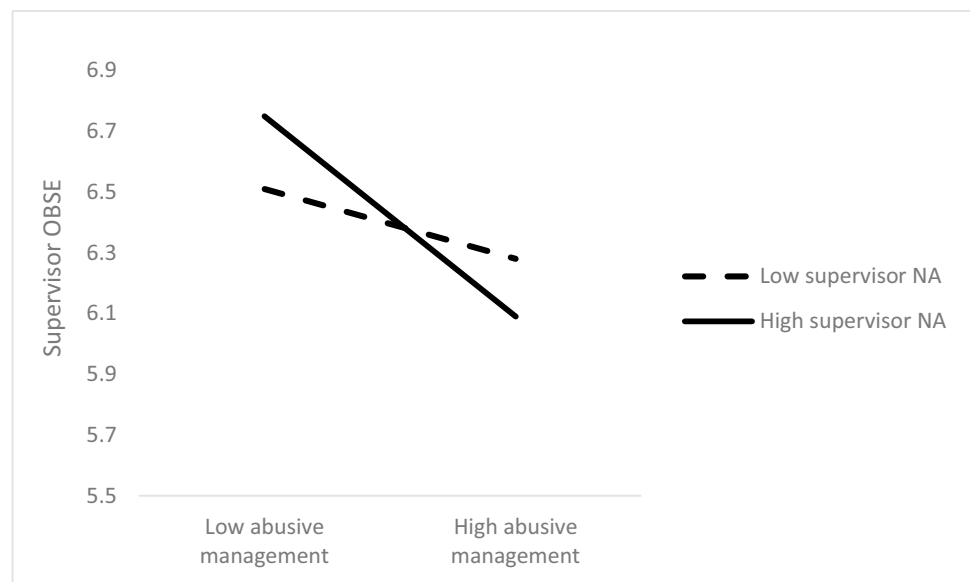
middle-level supervisory inclusiveness. In so doing, our findings affirm the proposition that supervisory inclusiveness is influenced by demonstrated prescriptive and proscriptive forms of ethicality (Rice et al., 2021).

Our findings also contribute to the work that focuses on *what type of leaders* are produced by upper-level managerial leadership styles. Whereas Mayer et al. (2009) found upper-level managerial ethical leadership produces middle-level supervisory ethical leadership, Mawritz et al. (2012) found that upper-level managerial abusive leadership produces middle-level supervisory abusive leadership. We extend this work to show that upper-level managerial ethical leadership likely activates supervisory inclusiveness and upper-level managerial abusive leadership likely inhibits supervisory inclusiveness. As such, our findings also add to the literature that focuses on identifying antecedents of supervisory inclusiveness by integrating social information processing theory into inclusive leadership research. Whereas Rice et al. (2021) relied on social cognitive theory to explain the relationship between organizational inclusiveness and supervisory inclusiveness via a trickle-down effect, we rely on social information processing theory to explain the relationships between (1) upper-level managerial ethical leadership and supervisory inclusiveness and (2) upper-level managerial abusive leadership and supervisory inclusiveness via supervisor OBSE. Thus, whereas prior studies (e.g., Rice et al., 2021) have focused on explaining main effects, we sought to integrate the role of likely mediating mechanisms. Specifically, the investigation of potential mediators is essential because a lack of understanding of mediating processes restricts a research area from developing (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Kenny, 2008) and restricts progression

**Fig. 2** Simple slopes graph for Hypothesis 5a



**Fig. 3** Simple slopes graph for Hypothesis 5b



of the critical insights of organization phenomena (Ambrose et al., 2021).

Our study also has implications for the growing body of research that examines the various boundary conditions of social information processing research (e.g., Ambrose et al., 2021; Mawritz et al., 2014; Newman et al., 2018; Thornton & Rupp, 2016). Whereas, Mawritz et al. (2014) found that supervision conscientiousness mitigated the relationship between supervisors' hostile climate perceptions and abusive supervision, we found that supervisor negative affectivity strengthened (1) the positive relationship between upper-level managerial ethical leadership and supervisor OBSE and (2) the negative relationship between upper-level managerial abusive leadership and supervisor OBSE. Therefore, we have a better understanding of the various boundary conditions regarding social information processing theory.

### Practical Implications

Our study has practical implications as well. First upper-level managerial leadership matters (Mayer et al., 2009). It is especially vital for managers and organizations to understand that if they want supervisors to lead inclusively, then it is important for managers to lead ethically. Conversely, if managers engage in abusive management, supervisors are less likely to lead inclusively. Managerial leadership styles are salient cues regarding whether or not supervisors lead inclusively. Another practical implication is that supervisors whom believe they are important organizational members are likely to become inclusive leaders. As they believe they are valued by the organization, they work to make other organizational members feel valued and welcomed. Subsequently, managers and organizations should be mindful as to how they can cultivate OBSE within all organizational

members. Conversely, when supervisors believe they are not worthy organizational members, they are less likely to make others feel welcomed.

### Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusion

As with any study, the limitations of our research should be noted. First, we do not have the ability to make causal inferences due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Although we note that MacKinnon et al. (2012) have suggested that model directionality can be hypothesized when a substantial amount of theory-based research exists on a topic and causality or directionality has been demonstrated by previous experimental and longitudinal studies. We believe that this is the case for our model as our directionality is consistent with extant research (e.g., Ferris et al., 2012; Mawritz et al., 2012; Mawritz et al., 2014; Mayer et al., 2009; Norman et al., 2015; Rice et al., 2020a). Nonetheless, our study should be understood in terms of relationships, not causality. Our data were collected via surveys, which suggests common method variance may be a potential concern as well. We believe this concern has been mitigated to a certain extent as we found multiple interaction effects in our study. As argued and demonstrated by research methodologists (Siemsen et al., 2010), "common method variance cannot create an artificial interaction" (p. 469). We also followed several remedies prescribed by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Notably, our data are multi-source, we assured participants that their responses were confidential, we conducted a Harman single factor test, and we examined variable distinctiveness and model fit via multiple CFAs.

In lieu of the limitations, we believe our study provides a solid foundation for future researchers. Specifically, the identification of antecedents of supervisory inclusiveness

represents an encouraging future avenue. The relationship between upper-level managerial leadership and supervisory inclusiveness warrants further examination. Although we framed supervisor OBSE as a mediator, other mediators should be identified. For example, research suggests that ethical leadership increases affective commitment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Correspondingly, affective commitment represents psychological engagement (Burris et al., 2008). As such, upper-level managerial ethical leadership may influence supervisory inclusiveness via supervisor psychological engagement. Conversely, does upper-level managerial abusive leadership stimulate psychological withdrawal, which in turn, adversely impact supervisory inclusiveness? An additional avenue could integrate deontology theory (Folger, 2001; Folger et al., 2013) into inclusive leadership research. Ethical leadership triggers duty orientation (Hannah et al., 2014). Conversely, abusive leadership undermines duty orientation. Therefore, it may be likely that supervisory inclusiveness is influenced by a leader's sense of duty orientation. Future researchers may also examine different potential first-stage, second-stage, and dual-stage moderators of our model. The relationship between supervisor OBSE and supervisory inclusiveness can be insightful for inclusive leadership research going forward. We can enhance our understanding by identifying the boundary conditions of this particular relationship. Another question that can be asked is how supervisor OBSE impacts supervisory inclusiveness. By addressing this specific question, we can uncover potential mediators regarding the relationship between supervisor OBSE and supervisory inclusiveness.

Our study explains how upper-level managerial leadership impact middle-level supervisory inclusiveness. This impact occurs when supervisors believe that they are valuable organizational members and can make a difference, which is strengthened as their level of negative affectivity increases. In summary, our understanding of supervisor OBSE and supervisory inclusiveness is enhanced by considering the interaction effects between upper-level managerial leadership and supervisor negative affectivity.

**Data Availability** Data not available due to ethical/legal restrictions, but survey instruments available on request from the corresponding authors.

## Declarations

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

**Conflict of Interest** No conflict of interest existed for any of the authors.

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