



Who Gets Hired? How Leadership Personality Shapes Attitudes Toward Mental Illness in the Workplace

Brandy Nelson

William James College, USA

Abstract

Mental illness affects a significant portion of the adult population, yet stigma and misunderstanding continue to shape workplace dynamics. Organizational leaders often hesitate to hire individuals with mental illness, largely due to limited education on how to support their needs effectively. This study explores the relationship between leadership personality traits and attitudes toward hiring individuals with mental illness, aiming to identify traits that correlate with more inclusive hiring practices. Three key challenges faced by employees with mental illness in the workplace are identified: (1) persistent stigma surrounding mental health, (2) leaders' avoidance of difficult conversations about mental illness, and (3) limited psychological resources available to employees for managing workplace stressors. To investigate these dynamics, the study examines four leadership personality types—Dominant, Inspiring, Supportive, and Conscientious—using a quantitative correlational design. Two instruments were employed: the DISC Personality Scale, commonly used in organizational settings, and a custom-developed Likert scale designed to assess leaders' attitudes toward hiring individuals with mental illness. Surveys were distributed to over 600 leaders across multiple industries. The resulting data were analyzed to determine whether specific personality traits are positively or negatively associated with inclusive hiring attitudes. Findings from this research may inform future workplace education initiatives and contribute to reducing stigma by identifying leadership traits that foster mental health inclusivity.

Keywords: Mental Health, Leadership, Personality traits, Quantitative research