



# Relationship between benevolent leadership and the well-being among employees with disabilities

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## ABSTRACT

Through their empathy, care and nurturance, benevolent leaders can help employees with disabilities surmount their disability stigma and smile at their work and work environment. The primary aim of our research is to examine how benevolent leadership contributes to the well-being of employees with disabilities. The participants in our study comprised employees with disabilities from firms located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Our results revealed the relationships between benevolent leadership and the three components of the well-being among employees with disabilities including perceived discrimination, job satisfaction and need for recovery. Disability inclusive climate was also found to mediate these relationships. Moreover, attachment anxiety acted as an enhancer for the effects of disability inclusive climate on the well-being while attachment avoidance was found to attenuate these effects except for the impact on need for recovery.

## 1. Introduction

Employees with disabilities are a ‘largely untapped human resource’ for organizations (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008, p. 256) albeit the evidence demonstrates no significant performance and productivity differences between people with disabilities and those without disabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008). People with disabilities still have on average lower levels of employment, job security, income, pay satisfaction, job satisfaction, and overall quality of work life than people without disabilities (Konrad, Moore, Ng, Doherty, & Breward, 2013; Schur et al., 2017; Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2013; Shantz, Wang, & Malik, 2018; Wubulihassimu, Brouwer, & Van Baal, 2015). In the Vietnamese context, Disabilities Law 2010 and its clauses on benefits for organizations that hire people with disabilities have had some influence on human resources (HR) policies of organizations (Nguyen, 2016). However, there still have been challenges for many of them to socially include and foster the well-being among employees with disabilities (Nguyen & Thu, 2015; Voice of Vietnam (VOV), 2016). Work-related well-being alludes to “the overall quality of an employee’s experience and functioning at work” (Grant et al., 2007, p. 52). Since well-being is a crucial indicator of the effective social inclusion of employees with disabilities into an organization and its work activities (Cavanagh et al., 2017), there is a need for scholars and practitioners to decipher more antecedents behind the well-being of employees with disabilities (Ababneh, 2016; Cavanagh et al., 2017; Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016).

Leaders play an important role in helping their subordinates with

disabilities to affectively and behaviorally self-manage and experience well-being (Kensbock & Boehm, 2016). Nonetheless, most research models of the leadership-employee outcomes relationship in the disability management literature have been investigated in Western contexts and tended to look at universal leadership styles such as transformational leadership (e.g., Kensbock & Boehm, 2016; Parr, Hunter, & Ligon, 2013). The current leadership literature reflects a shift toward the contextual approach to leadership (Oc, 2018). Cubero (2007) also stresses the advantages of contextual leadership style as an organizational model for managers that matches the intricate needs of workers with disabilities. Our research explores the role of benevolent leadership in nurturing a sense of well-being among employees with disabilities since this leadership style is of relevance to the Vietnam-based workplace context of the study subjects as well as in fostering positive attitudinal and behavioral responses among employees with disabilities.

Benevolent leadership alludes to leaders’ demonstration of individualized, holistic concern and care for followers’ welfare in both the work domain and personal lives (Wang & Cheng, 2010). Rooted in Confucian-based cultures with other-oriented values (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Wang & Cheng, 2010) including Vietnam (Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017), benevolent leadership is likely to influence attitudinal responses among employees with disabilities living and working in such a context. Moreover, in comparison with universal leadership styles such as transformational leadership and servant leadership, benevolent leadership reflects a more balance between ethical, transformational,

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and social concerns (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013), with which benevolent leaders care for employees with disabilities from the call of the community as well as from their own compassion and ethical sensitivity (see further details in the literature review). Bringing center-stage concerns for the well-being of others (Chen, Eberly, Chiang, Farh, & Cheng, 2014), benevolent leaders tend to explore and help fulfill needs of employees with disabilities such as self-esteem, socialization, and performance goal achievement (Medina & Gamero, 2017). By fulfilling these needs through their care, nurturance, and support (Chan, 2017), benevolent leaders can activate positive psychological affective state and well-being in employees with disabilities who tend to have negative self-perceptions and affect (Hashim & Wok, 2014).

Moreover, leaders may influence employee attitudes and affect not only in a dyadic fashion but also by creating a team climate (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017). Schur, Kruse, Blasi, and Blanck (2009) found that employees with disabilities reported positive attitudes in work sites that they perceived as fair, suggesting that worksite climate makes a significant difference for employees with disabilities. Dwertmann and Boehm (2016) also reported the moderating effect of inclusive climate for the relationship between supervisors and subordinates with disabilities. Our research takes a step further to examine disability inclusive climate, rather than climate for inclusion in general, as a mediator for the relationship between benevolent leadership and the well-being of employees with disabilities.

In addition, every individual is a black box with many variables that may influence their responsiveness to the climate that their leader cultivates (Boatwright, Lopez, Sauer, VanDerWege, & Huber, 2010). The degree to which individuals desire to build affectionate bonds or their attachment styles (Bowlby, 1980; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007) may influence their responsiveness to disability inclusive climate. Consequently, attachment styles of employees with disabilities may serve as boundary conditions for the effects of team-level disability inclusive climate on their well-being. These boundary conditions also distinguish our research from prior studies that have focused on boundary conditions such as disability status (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016) or disability-related attributes of employees with disabilities including lack of social or interpersonal competence, task competence, emotional adjustment, and potency or strength (Stone & Colella, 1996).

In response to the recent calls for exploring more levers behind the work-related outcomes especially the well-being among employees with disabilities (e.g., Cavanagh et al., 2017), we conduct this study to examine how benevolent leadership can foster the work-related well-being of employees with disabilities in terms of their perceived discrimination, job satisfaction and need for recovery. Our research model can contribute to the disability management literature in multiple ways. First, our research advances the research stream on the well-being of employees with disabilities by adding benevolent leadership to the fledgling but limited antecedent set of this employee outcome (Kensbock & Boehm, 2016). Turning to benevolent leadership that fits in with the Vietnamese Confucian-based culture (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Luu, 2018) and is of relevance in addressing the needs of employees with disabilities, our study distinguishes itself from prior research that has focused on universal leadership styles such as transformational leadership (e.g., Kensbock & Boehm, 2016; Parr et al., 2013) as an antecedent for the outcomes among employees with disabilities.

Second, our research explains the relationship between benevolent leadership and the well-being of employees with disabilities by drawing on the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1988). This theory elucidates how a benevolent leader's caring and nurturing treatments as a crucial source of resources can influence the attitudes and affect of employees with disabilities, thereby fostering their well-being.

Third, our research examines the role of disability inclusive climate in mediating the nexus between benevolent leadership and the well-being of employees with disabilities. Fourth, it also seeks to understand how disability employees with different attachment styles respond to

the disability inclusive climate and develop different levels of well-being. Last, our study offers further contextual insights by investigating the well-being of employees with disability in Vietnam-based organizations. Since Vietnamese Disabilities Law 2010 and clauses on disability employment in Employment Law 2012 still have had modest effects on organizations' HRM policies (Nguyen, 2016), the role of benevolent leadership in activating the well-being of employees with disabilities becomes more salient within organizations in the Vietnamese context.

## 2. Literature review and hypothesis development

### 2.1. Benevolent leadership and well-being

#### 2.1.1. Well-being

Grant et al. (2007, p. 52) define work-related well-being as “the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work”. Well-being among employees with disabilities can be viewed as comprising perceived discrimination and psychological well-being (Grant et al., 2007; Johnson & Joshi, 2016). Perceived discrimination refers to a sense of unfair treatment or unjustified actions that deny equal and fair treatment (Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Johnson & Joshi, 2016). Psychological well-being consists of fulfilment of potential and finding meaning and purpose in work (reflected through job satisfaction) and employees' experience of stress (gauged via need for recovery) (Grant et al., 2007). Need for recovery, a crucial indicator of work stress (Pace et al., 2013), refers to the extent that a work task engenders a need to recuperate from work induced effort.

#### 2.1.2. Benevolent leadership

Benevolence is viewed as a philosophic belief in the human inclination to do good, kind, or charitable acts (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). Benevolent leaders lead employees through care, nurturance and support (Farh & Cheng, 2000). According to Karakas and Sarigollu (2013), benevolent leaders have ten attributes encompassing self-awareness, integrity, wisdom, hope, ethical sensitivity, spiritual depth, positive engagement, community responsiveness, calling, and stewardship. The benevolent leadership model is conceptually distinct from other values-based leadership models such as transformational, ethical, and servant leadership since: (a) it has an explicit focus on creating positive change especially in values in human systems; (b) it balances ethical, transformational, and social concerns of leaders; (c) it provides leaders guidance on how to create virtuous and compassionate teams or organizations (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013).

Benevolent leadership seems to be relevant in influencing employees with disabilities for some reasons. In Stone and Colella's (1996) model, two important factors from supervisors that influence responses among employees with disabilities include supervisors' personality and expectancies about employees with disabilities. Personality traits that employees with disabilities expect in their leaders include empathy, emotional adjustment, and tolerance for ambiguity (Stone & Colella, 1996). Moreover, employees with disabilities tend to have high levels of help-seeking behaviors (Kulkarni, 2013) and seek their leaders' support to enhance their repertoire of intrapersonal and interpersonal resources (Baumgärtner, Böhm, & Dwertmann, 2014). Benevolent leaders demonstrate empathy and care especially toward people in difficulties as well as provide support and encouragement for them to surmount their disadvantages and expose their potential (Zhang, Huai, & Xie, 2015). With such personality traits and positive expectancies about employees with disadvantages, benevolent leaders tend not to stereotype employees with disabilities as lacking social or interpersonal competence, task competence, emotional adjustment, and potency or strength (Fichten & Amsel, 1986). They, on the contrary, acknowledge their strong points such as concern for others, warmth or integrity (Stone & Colella, 1996; Wright & Cunningham, 2017) and alleviate or remove their view of themselves as low performers or failures. Benevolent

leaders believe that employees with disabilities are potential in their own way and can contribute to the organization, as well as help enhance their perception of their value to the group and the value of their contributions (Zhang et al., 2015). Benevolent leadership may hence reduce perceived discrimination and need for recovery among employees with disabilities as well as facilitate their discovery of the meaning in their work and contributions.

Additionally, benevolent leaders take care of employees in terms of not only workplace issues but also family issues to create the best work-life balance as they can for their employees (Gumusluoglu, Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, & Scandura, 2017). People with disabilities may have family issues that stem from stereotypical biases from their family members toward their disabilities. Benevolent leaders' care and sharing about these issues may yield a strong attachment of employees with disabilities to their leader and workplace, leading to increased job satisfaction.

### 2.1.3. Benevolent leadership and well-being among employees with disabilities: The conservation of resources perspective

From the discussion above, we anticipate that benevolent leadership may exert effects on perceived discrimination, job satisfaction, and need for recovery among employees with disabilities. Since one crucial aspect of work experience for employees with disabilities is resource gain they can experience from the support of their supervisors (Colella & Varma, 2001; Meacham, Cavanagh, Shaw, & Bartram, 2017), we shed light on the nexus between benevolent leadership and the well-being among employees with disabilities by drawing upon the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1988). Recent scholarly attention has been devoted to the roles of resources, especially from leaders, and the COR theory as an explanatory framework for employee well-being (Nielsen et al., 2017; Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015).

The COR theory discusses individuals' investment, development, and conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 2001), which refer to personal attributes, energies or conditions that an individual values (Hobfoll, 1988). The COR theory further holds that since lack or loss of resources may induce negative psychological effects, individuals are inclined to avoid or minimize resource loss and seek to acquire new resources (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). Therefore, due to experiencing lack of resources and negative psychological impacts resulting from their disabilities, employees with disabilities may have stronger inclination to appreciate and treasure resources from the organization and draw upon them to engage in activities to sustain the resource pool. Benevolent leadership can serve as one of the organizational sources of resources (care, nurturance, and support) (Gumusluoglu et al., 2017) for employees with disabilities. With an ample pool of resources, employees may feel their working days meaningful and interesting and may have lower stress levels or lower need for recovery after work. Lack of support from leaders as a resource may result in work stress and health issues among employees (Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015).

Moreover, the more benevolent leaders interact with their employees with disabilities, the more they discover in employees with disabilities such as their warmth, concern for others, and integrity (Stone & Colella, 1996; Wright & Cunningham, 2017) and the more caring affect and attitudes they radiate toward employees with disabilities. Employees with disabilities also discover more caring affect as a resource from benevolent leaders via such interactions. They then share affective rhythms and become affectively attached to each other, which may further activate resource-seeking behaviors among subordinates with disabilities, leading to a self-perpetuating cycle of relational acceptance (Kulkarni, 2013). As a result, employees with disabilities become affectively entrained and committed to their work setting and to the leader, and more satisfied with their work.

Furthermore, employees with disabilities with strong needs for social inclusion (Medina & Gamero, 2017) are more prone to perceive care and nurturance from benevolent leaders as value-laden resources and develop positive attitudinal and affective responses (Cropanzano,

Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017) such as decreased perceived discrimination and increased job satisfaction. Individuals who experience value-laden resources also tend to have psychological contract fulfillment (Henderson, Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2008), fewer stress symptoms (Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009), and a higher level of subjective well-being (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008).

In light of the COR theory and some empirical proofs, we can anticipate that benevolent leadership can have positive relationship with job satisfaction and negative relationships with perceived discrimination and need for recovery among employees with disabilities. The ensuing hypotheses are consequently posited:

**Hypothesis 1a.** Benevolent leadership is negatively related to perceived discrimination of employees with disabilities.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Benevolent leadership is positively related to job satisfaction of employees with disabilities.

**Hypothesis 1c.** Benevolent leadership is negatively related to need for recovery of employees with disabilities.

## 2.2. Disability inclusive climate as a mediator

### 2.2.1. Disability inclusive climate and well-being

Team climate is defined as the shared perceptions of the team members in regards to what practices, procedures, and kind of behaviors are expected, supported, and rewarded in a setting (Schneider, 1990). Disability inclusive climate is a disability-friendly environment in which disability inclusive values are shared, care for colleagues with disabilities are anticipated, and employees with disabilities are not discriminated against and can receive and ask for support from members around them. In a work of Schur et al. (2009), employees with disabilities reported positive attitudes in work sites that they perceived as fair and supportive, indicating that worksite climate makes a meaningful difference for employees with disabilities. A link has been found between social climate and the well-being of employees with disabilities (Meacham et al., 2017). Our study hence expects the impact of disability inclusive climate on the sense of well-being among employees with disabilities.

Disability inclusive climate may alleviate disability stigma and negative self-perceptions among employees with disabilities. With low stigmatization regarding disability status, employees with disabilities may feel confident that self-disclosure will not undermine positive gains in employment advancement (Erickson, von Schrader, Bruyère, & VanLooy, 2014) and in turn develop a sense of self-esteem and well-being. Moreover, in a disability inclusive climate, employees without disabilities are more likely to rate their colleagues with disabilities as warm and competent and demonstrate positive and helping behaviors toward them (Nelissen, Hülshager, van Ruitenbeek, & Zijlstra, 2016), leading to their increased self-esteem, psychological security, and socializing.

Self-esteem that disability inclusive climate nurtures may promote work-related well-being (e.g., Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005). Self-esteem served as a crucial contributor to the well-being in employees with disabilities (Smedema, 2014). Organizational-based self-esteem was also found to positively relate to job satisfaction (Pierce, Gardner, & Crowley, 2016) and negatively relate to work stress (Lee, Joo, & Choi, 2013). People with disabilities tend to have a higher need for self-esteem than ones without disabilities (Smedema, 2014). Hence, when this need is fulfilled through the disability inclusive climate of the team, they are more inclined to find meaning in their work. In other words, working in a disability inclusive climate, employees with disabilities have their needs for psychological security, self-esteem, and socializing (Medina & Gamero, 2017) fulfilled, and develop a lower perception of discrimination, and a higher sense of psychological well-being.

Furthermore, in a disability inclusive climate, employees with

disabilities become more optimistic and in turn capable of facing up to challenging situations due to their ability to implement active coping strategies (Iwanaga, Yokoyama, & Seiwa, 2004). Consequently, they can adapt well at work (Luthans & Youssef, 2007), find meaning in it (Kluemper, Little, & Degroot, 2009) and have lower levels of need for recovery.

### 2.2.2. Benevolent leadership and disability inclusive climate

Disability management scholars acknowledge that leaders may influence attitudes and behaviors of employees with disabilities through cultivating an inclusive climate in their team (e.g., Nelissen, Vornholt, Van Ruitenbeek, Hülshager, & Uitdewilligen, 2014). Case studies on the effects of culture and climate on the employment experiences of employees with disabilities found strong evidence that leaders play a crucial role in disability inclusion (Erickson et al., 2014). Balancing ethical, transformational, and social concerns (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013), benevolent leaders tend to respond to the community call for the care for the disadvantaged such as people with disabilities. Benevolent leaders can hence create a fair and compassionate environment for employees with disabilities.

Leaders can foster a climate through role modelling their behaviors (Hunter et al., 2013). Benevolent leaders can nurture a disability inclusive climate by role modelling empathetic concerns and caring and supportive behaviors as well as spreading other-oriented values (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). Since individuals are prone to make the attempt to apply justice rules when they experience empathy toward others (Cropanzano, Massaro, & Becker, 2017), benevolent leaders, through role modelling of empathetic concerns (Zhang et al., 2015), can spread perceptions of justice and non-discrimination against members with disabilities in the workplace.

Moreover, in organizations aiming at becoming more inclusive, the treatment by colleagues is crucial for the workplace inclusion of people with disabilities (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Nelissen et al., 2016). Benevolent leaders can build benevolence and compassion among employees especially employees without disabilities, change their stereotypical biases toward colleagues with disabilities, and change them into other “benevolent leaders” on the work floor, who may in turn rate colleagues with disabilities as warm and competent and offer caring behavior to them (Nelissen et al., 2016), leading to the formation of a disability inclusive climate within the workplace.

In conjunction with the previous section on the link between disability inclusive climate and the well-being of employees with disabilities, we can expect the role of disability inclusive climate in mediating the relationships between benevolent leadership and the well-being among employees with disabilities:

**Hypothesis 2.** Disability inclusive climate mediates the relationships between benevolent leadership and perceived discrimination (H2a), job satisfaction (H2b), and need for recovery (H2c) among employees with disabilities.

### 2.3. Attachment styles as moderators

Attachment styles allude to individuals' inclination to build affectionate bonds with people around them (Bowlby, 1980). Managerial scholars have devoted attention to the role of attachment styles in the workplace as well as how they govern employees' attitudes, well-being, and behaviors (e.g., Albert, Allen, Biggane, & Ma, 2015; Wu, Parker, & de Jong, 2014). Two attachment styles that scholars have focused on are attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Attachment anxiety indicates an individual's negative view of the self (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005), hypervigilance to emotional and social cues from others (Fraley, Niedenthal, Marks, Brumbaugh, & Vicary, 2006), excessive need for assurance and support from others, preoccupation and anxiety with and about relationships, overdependence, and apprehension of rejection and abandonment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005, 2007). Attachment

avoidance, in contrast, mirrors an individual's negative view of others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), obsessive need for self-reliance, cognitive and emotional distance from others, and apprehension of dependence and closeness (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Employees will be at the highest level of secure attachment when they have low levels of both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, while they develop insecure attachment profiles if they reach high levels of both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

Individual characteristics and inclinations may serve as boundary conditions for psychological state of mind and attitudes of employees who are working under a team climate (Dumont, Shen, & Deng, 2017). Scholars have drawn attention to the effects of disability-related attributes among employees with disabilities such as lack of social or interpersonal competence, emotional adjustment, and potency or strength (Stone & Colella, 1996). Our research takes a step further to examine the moderating effects of attachment styles in disability employees since these styles may have certain relationship to disability-related attributes.

Working in the team climate of disability inclusion that the benevolent leader shapes, different employees with disabilities may express different attitudinal responses depending on their attachment styles. Attachment styles were found to play a moderating role for the effects of organizational factors on employee attitudes and behaviors (Luu, 2017). Employees high in attachment anxiety have the propensity to seek affective bonds with the team members (Schusterschitz, Geser, Nöhammer, & Stummer, 2011). Disability employees with high attachment anxiety may have an even stronger inclination to seek these affective bonds with managers and colleagues for some reasons. High in attachment anxiety style, people with disabilities may have stronger concerns for others (Stone & Colella, 1996; Wright & Cunningham, 2017). They also exhibit an excessive need for support and search for care from supervisors and colleagues so as to overcome their weaknesses such as lacking social or interpersonal competence, task competence, and emotional adjustment (Stone & Colella, 1996). Disability employees high in attachment anxiety expect a committed relationship and high levels of responsiveness and emotional rapport in such a relationship, which can help mitigate their apprehension of rejection and abandonment due to negative stereotypical biases from others. Thus, anxiously attached employees with disabilities may feel the fulfillment of the need for affective bonds when they find caring and supportive cues in a disability inclusive climate. As a result, in such a climate, anxiously attached employees with disabilities may have lower levels of negative self-perceptions and perceptions of discrimination, and become more affectively entrained to and satisfied with the work, and feel less psychologically distressed.

In contrast, high in attachment avoidance, employees with disabilities fear and avoid the closeness with people around them (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Avoidant employees with disabilities may attempt to create a distance from the team members and tend to have negative view of others (Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Albeit people with disabilities tend to have warmth and concern for others (Stone & Colella, 1996; Wright & Cunningham, 2017), some people with disabilities may develop negative view of others if they suffer from strong negative stereotypical biases from others including their family members and colleagues (Schur et al., 2017). They may doubt the caring treatments from others and express low empathy (Wei, Liao, Ku, & Shaffer, 2011). As a result, though they are working in a disability inclusive climate, they are still inclined to rely on themselves (Brennan et al., 1998) and become less affectively entrained to the work setting (Albert et al., 2015; Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017). Feeney and Noller (1990) also reported that avoidant employees are prone to have higher threshold levels for making commitments. The self-reliance, low affective entrainment, and low commitment may lead employees with disabilities to feel less satisfied with the work and more sensitive to work distress, as well as still carry perceptions of discrimination. In other words, for avoidant employees with disabilities,

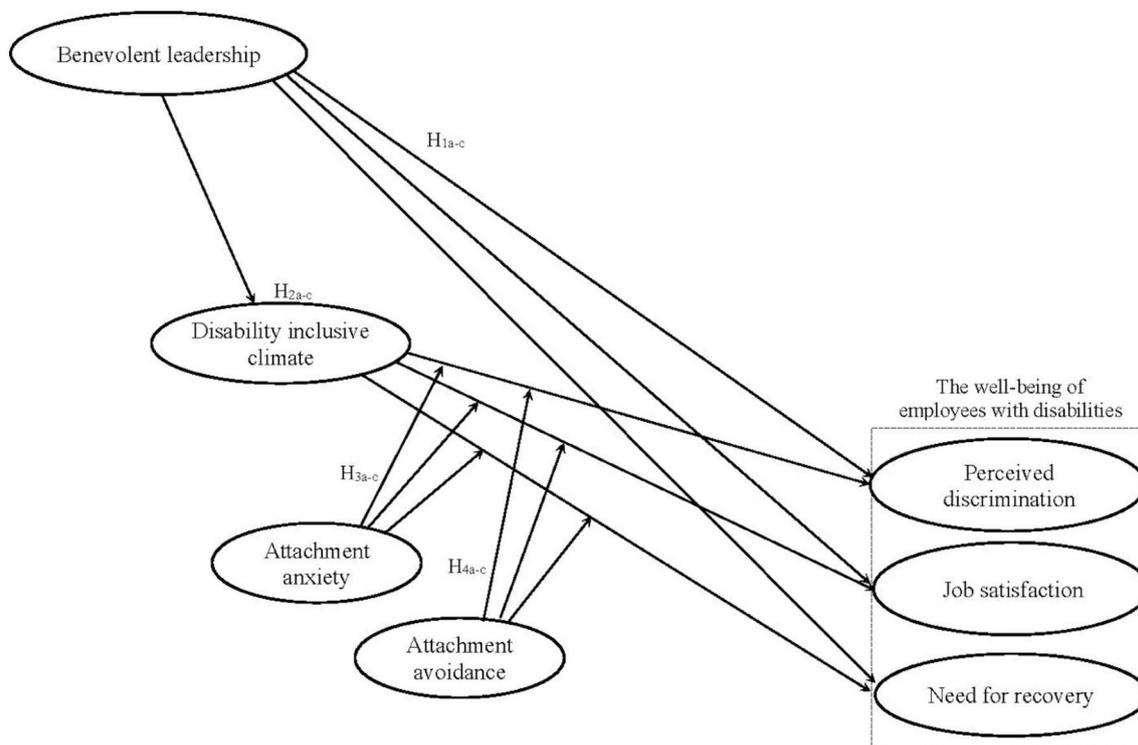


Fig. 1. Research model.

disability inclusive climate may exert less effect on their well-being. Linking these threads of discussion, we can expect that attachment anxiety may positively moderate the effects of disability inclusive climate on the aspects of well-being while attachment avoidance may negatively moderate such effects. The ensuing hypotheses are therefore postulated:

**Hypothesis 3.** Attachment anxiety positively moderates the relationships between disability inclusive climate and perceived discrimination (H3a), job satisfaction (H3b), as well as need for recovery (H3c) such that these relationships are stronger when employees with disabilities are higher in attachment anxiety.

**Hypothesis 4.** Attachment avoidance negatively moderates the relationships between disability inclusive climate and perceived discrimination (H4a), job satisfaction (H4b), as well as need for recovery (H4c) such that these relationships are less strong when employees with disabilities are higher in attachment avoidance.

Fig. 1 portrays the relationships among the constructs in our research model.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Sampling

The participants in our inquiry comprised employees with physical disabilities from the companies based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. We identified the companies that employed persons with disabilities under equal employment opportunity policy by contacting Department of Labor and People with Disabilities to obtain the list of companies registered with this department. We selected companies that had at least one department in which at least five full-time employees with physical disabilities were hired. Physical disabilities encompass conditions of a musculoskeletal or sensory nature, and chronic medical conditions such as chronic pain conditions, cardiovascular ailments, hearing and visual impairment, respiratory disorders, epilepsy, lupus

and many other seriously debilitating conditions (Carroll, 2004). People with disabilities were examined and tested on their capability to work by Division of Labor and People with Disabilities of local governments.

We contacted chief executives of those companies, explicated our academic purpose and solicited their participation with promise to return to them the research report summary. 84 companies that met our selection criteria agreed to participate. According to chief executives, employees were aware that certain members had a disability; nevertheless, specifics on their situation were not communicated to the staff by their supervisors albeit employees might observe some physical disabilities. We collected the list of employees with physical disabilities and their contact details, then telephoned them, invited their participation, and emailed survey packages to them. A package consisting of a questionnaire and its cover letter was emailed to each respondent. A reminder email was sent to the non-respondents after ten days.

The data were collected in two survey waves to attenuate the potential common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). In the first-wave survey (T1), employees with disabilities provided the data as regards benevolent leadership of their direct supervisors and disability inclusive climate. Two months following T1, the second-wave survey (T2) was conducted to harvest the data on attachment styles and well-being from employees with disabilities. Moreover, following Bashshur, Hernández, and González-Romá (2011), who estimated workplace climate from perceptions of both managers and members, we collected data on disability inclusive climate not only from employees with disabilities but also from their supervisors. Since chi-square and *t*-test revealed no significant divergences between responses on disability inclusive climate from these two types of data providers ( $\chi^2_{(2)} = 1.547, p = .512; t = 1.14, p = .236$ ), data from employees with disabilities were included into the analysis.

663 employees with disabilities participated in the T1 survey. In the T2 survey, questionnaires were distributed to employees with disabilities who took part in the T1 survey. 548 responses were then returned from employees with disabilities. Excluding responses with missing data and responses from the departments with under three employees with disabilities (Boadu, Dwomo-Fokuo, Boakye, &

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics of the company sample and employee sample.

	Number	%	Benevolent leadership mean scores
<b>Company sample</b>			
Responses per company			
1–5 responses	11	16.42	
6–10 responses	46	68.66	
11–15 responses	6	8.96	
16–20 responses	3	4.48	
21–25 responses	1	1.49	
Over 25 responses	0	0.00	
Ownership			
State-owned companies	12	17.91	3.19
Domestic family-owned companies	19	28.36	3.69
Domestic start-ups or cooperatives	15	22.39	3.49
Foreign-invested companies	21	31.34	3.64
Industries			
Textile and garment	14	20.90	3.33
Footwear	7	10.45	3.39
Electrics and electronics	11	16.42	3.61
Software	6	8.96	3.69
IT service	8	11.94	3.67
Handicraft	12	17.91	3.72
Others	9	13.43	3.45
<b>Employee sample</b>			
Gender			
Male	298	59.36	
Female	204	40.64	
Employee age			
18–20 years old	67	13.35	
21–25 years old	94	18.73	
26–30 years old	206	41.04	
31–40 years old	78	15.54	
41–50 years old	41	8.17	
Over 50 years old	16	3.19	
Employee education			
High school degree or lower	402	80.08	
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	93	18.53	
Master's degree or higher	7	1.39	
Employee organizational tenure			
1–3 years	138	27.49	
4–5 years	244	48.61	
6–10 years	67	13.35	
11–20 years	49	9.76	
Over 20 years	4	0.80	

Kwaning, 2014) led to the final sample of 502 employees with disabilities (response rate: 54.92%) from 98 departments from 67 companies with an average of 5.1 employees with disabilities per department.

This high response rate can be attributable to the fact that though the organizations sampled did not communicate specifics of disabilities to the rest of the staff, the researchers could obtain the list of employees with disabilities and approach them. HR managers also introduced the researchers to employees with disabilities via emails. The researchers' demonstration of commitment to anonymity and confidentiality for the responses might further contribute to a high degree of survey participation among employees with disabilities. In addition to questionnaire surveys, interviews with some employees with disabilities in some companies were conducted to have further understanding of disability inclusive climate at their workplace (see Appendix A for some interview responses).

The company sample reflects mixed industries including textile and garment (14 companies), footwear (7), electrics and electronics (11), software (6), IT service (8), handicraft (12), and others (9). Descriptive statistics of the company sample and employee sample were presented in Table 1. As Table 1 exhibits, benevolent leadership reached the highest level among domestic family-owned companies and stayed at

the lowest level among state-owned companies. When it comes to industries, leaders in handicraft, software, and IT service businesses demonstrated higher levels of benevolent leadership than those in footwear and textile industries.

### 3.2. Measures

Respondents indicated their perceptions on scale items on a five-point Likert scale of 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree' unless otherwise indicated. The scales were translated into Vietnamese in the light of Schaffer and Riordan's (2003) back translation approach. Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, and Farh's (2004) 11-item scale was used to assess benevolent leadership. Work-related well-being was assessed in terms of perceived discrimination, job satisfaction, and need for recovery (Grant et al., 2007; Johnson & Joshi, 2016). Perceived discrimination was measured through 12 items derived from James, Lovato, and Cropanzano's (1994) Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination Inventory with the modification of the language to speak to disabilities (e.g., I have sometimes been unfairly singled out because of my disability). Job satisfaction was gauged through three items from Anderson, Coffey, Liu, and Zhao (2008) and Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013). Need for recovery was assessed using Van Veldhoven and Broersen's (2003) 11-item scale (1 = 'never', 5 = 'always'). Disability inclusive climate was measured using an eight-item scale developed from McKay, Avery, and Morris (2008) and Wolfson, Kraiger, and Finkelstein (2011). A short-form scale from Wu and Parker (2017) adapted from Collins and Read's (1990) Adult Attachment Scale was employed to gauge attachment anxiety style (four items) and attachment avoidance style (six items).

### 3.3. Control variables

Control variables include employee age (years), employee gender (0 = male, 1 = female), employee education (high school degree or lower = 1, bachelor's degree or equivalent = 2, and master's degree or higher = 3), and employee organizational tenure (years). Functional limitation of employees with disabilities was also controlled due to its impact on their affective and behavioral responses (Brown, Moloney, & Ciciurkaite, 2017). Functional limitation was measured via Brown et al. (2017) 19-item index (1 = easily, 5 = unable to do) that rates difficulties associated with the performance of daily living activities (e.g., personal hygiene, eating), instrumental activities (e.g., housework, shopping) and physical mobility (e.g., ability to stand from sitting, walking without aid).

## 4. Results

Due to the data nested within departments, the current study utilized multilevel structural equation modelling through MPlus 7.2 to conduct data analyses. Preacher, Zyphur, and Zhang's (2010) analysis further indicated the application of multilevel structural equation to overcome the limitations of conventional multilevel analyses in predicting mediation effects through multiple levels.

### 4.1. Measurement models

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results indicated a good fit between the hypothesized seven-factor model and the data ( $\chi^2/df = 287.31/157 = 1.83 < 2$ , TLI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.041, RMSEA = 0.037 (90% CI [0.032, 0.043])). It was a better fit than other, more parsimonious models such as the six-factor model collapsing benevolent leadership and disability inclusive climate ( $\chi^2/df = 348.29/162 = 2.14$ , TLI = 0.93, IFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.94, SRMR = 0.089, RMSEA = 0.095 (90% CI [0.088, 0.102])),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(5)} = 60.98$ ,  $p < .01$ ), the five-factor model collapsing benevolent leadership, disability inclusive climate, and attachment anxiety ( $\chi^2/$

**Table 2**  
Correlation matrix.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	CCR	AVE
1 Employee age	28.9	6.1	...													
2 Employee gender			0.01	...												
3 Employee education			0.03	0.01	...											
4 Employee organizational tenure	5.2	3.8	0.04	0.05	0.03	...										
5 Functional limitation	2.89	0.24	0.06	0.01	0.02	0.01	...									
6 Benevolent leadership	3.54	0.49	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.15*	0.02	(0.79)							0.85	0.62
7 Disability inclusive climate	3.47	0.54	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.17*	0.01	0.44***	(0.81)						0.77	0.65
8 Attachment anxiety	3.39	0.35	0.03	0.06	0.05	0.09	-0.03	0.21*	0.24*	(0.85)					0.82	0.72
9 Attachment avoidance	3.27	0.30	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.06	-0.17*	-0.18*	-0.16	(0.83)				0.79	0.68
10 Perceived discrimination	3.31	0.29	-0.03	0.03	-0.04	0.03	0.05	-0.26**	-0.31**	-0.19*	0.17*	(0.82)			0.83	0.67
11 Job satisfaction	3.49	0.42	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.06	-0.04	0.38***	0.46***	-0.14	-0.21*	-0.19*	(0.77)		0.81	0.59
12 Need for recovery	3.38	0.41	0.05	0.07	-0.04	-0.02	0.05	-0.23*	-0.28**	0.18*	0.22*	0.16	-0.13	(0.80)	0.78	0.64

CCR = Composite construct reliability, AVE = Average variance extracted. Values in parentheses display the square root of the average variance extracted. Standardized correlations reported \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.

df = 432.53/167 = 2.59, TLI = 0.89, IFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.88, SRMR = 0.110, RMSEA = 0.108 (90% CI [0.104, 0.113]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(10)} = 145.22, p < .01$ , the four-factor model collapsing benevolent leadership, disability inclusive climate, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance ( $\chi^2/df = 486.14/173 = 2.81, TLI = 0.84, IFI = 0.83, CFI = 0.83, SRMR = 0.121, RMSEA = 0.119$  (90% CI [0.114, 0.125]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(16)} = 198.83, p < .01$ ), the two-factor model collapsing all the three aspects of well-being into one factor and all its antecedents into the other factor ( $\chi^2/df = 583.77/183 = 3.19, TLI = 0.75, IFI = 0.77, CFI = 0.76, SRMR = 0.128, RMSEA = 0.132$  (90% CI [0.127, 0.139]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(26)} = 296.46, p < .01$ ), and the one-factor model by loading all variables on a single factor ( $\chi^2/df = 682.29/189 = 3.61, TLI = 0.63, IFI = 0.63, CFI = 0.64, SRMR = 0.144, RMSEA = 0.149$  (90% CI [0.141, 0.156]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(32)} = 394.98, p < .01$ ). These results provided support for the construct distinctiveness. In addition, discriminant validity was attained since the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct surpassed its correlations with the other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 2).

For enhancing the credibility of the cross-sectional findings, three alternative reversed models were fitted to the data. In these reversed models, aspects of employee well-being function as independent variables and precede disability inclusive climate, which, in turn, precedes benevolent leadership. The fit statistics of these models were worse than the fit of the hypothesized model: (1) (perceived discrimination as an independent variable:  $\chi^2/df = 399.37/163 = 2.45, TLI = 0.90, IFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.89, SRMR = 0.097, RMSEA = 0.101$  (90% CI [0.097, 0.106]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(6)} = 112.06, p < .01$ , Akaike's information criterion (AIC) = 2.1); (2) (job satisfaction as an independent variable:  $\chi^2/df = 447.19/165 = 2.71, TLI = 0.85, IFI = 0.86, CFI = 0.86, SRMR = 0.104, RMSEA = 0.107$  (90% CI [0.101, 0.112]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(8)} = 159.88, p < .01, AIC = 3.2$ ); and (3) (need for recovery as an independent variable:  $\chi^2/df = 424.76/164 = 2.59, TLI = 0.87, IFI = 0.87, CFI = 0.88, SRMR = 0.099, RMSEA = 0.105$  (90% CI [0.098, 0.109]),  $\Delta\chi^2_{(7)} = 137.45, p < .01, AIC = 2.7$ ). Furthermore, the model with the lowest AIC value tends to be the most favored (Bentler, 2004). Our hypothesized model hence provided a more apt representation of the data (AIC = 1.4) than did the reversed models.

The reliabilities of the constructs and scales were estimated through the composite construct reliability coefficients and AVE (Table 2). Composite reliabilities ranged from 0.77 (disability inclusive climate) to 0.85 (for benevolent leadership), above the 0.70 cutoff value (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). AVE ranged from 0.59 (for job satisfaction) to 0.72 (for attachment anxiety), exceeding the recommended benchmark of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

#### 4.2. Common method variance issue

Common method variance (CMV) bias was tested through the marker variable approach (Lindell & Whitney, 2001), in which a marker variable (i.e., attitude toward social media usage), which was theoretically unrelated to other variables, was included into the survey. In the current inquiry, all significant zero-order correlations remained significant after the marker variable was partialled out, indicating the low CMV risk in the dataset. Furthermore, the interaction effects in our research model could not be the artifacts of CMV but rather could purely be deflated by it (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010).

#### 4.3. Hypothesis testing

As Table 3 displays, benevolent leadership demonstrated the significantly negative association with perceived discrimination among employees with disabilities ( $\beta = -0.25, p < .01$ ) (hypothesis H1a), the significantly positive association with their job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.36, p < .001$ ) (hypothesis H1b), and the significantly negative association with their need for recovery ( $\beta = -0.22, p < .05$ ) (hypothesis H1c).

Benevolent leadership was positively associated with disability inclusive climate ( $\beta = 0.42, p < .001$ ), which was negatively related to perceived discrimination among employees with disabilities ( $\beta = -0.29, p < .01$ ), positively associated with their job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.45, p < .001$ ), and negatively related to their need for recovery ( $\beta = -0.26, p < .01$ ). The indirect effect of benevolent leadership on perceived discrimination via disability inclusive climate was  $-0.12$  (SE = 0.07,  $p < .01$ ). The 1000 bootstrap sampling result indicated that 95% confidence interval (CI) for the distribution of the product of coefficients ranged between  $-0.21$  and  $-0.04$ , not containing zero. Therefore, benevolent leadership indirectly influenced perceived discrimination through the mediation of disability inclusive climate, providing support for hypothesis H2a. Hypothesis H2b in regards to the indirect effect of benevolent leadership on job satisfaction via disability inclusive climate as a mediator was confirmed through the significant indirect effect (0.18 [0.07, 0.32], SE = 0.11,  $p < .01$ ). Hypothesis H2c that postulated the indirect effect of benevolent leadership on need for recovery via the mediation of disability inclusive climate also obtained the evidence of the significant indirect effect ( $-0.10$  [ $-0.18, -0.02$ ], SE = 0.04,  $p < .05$ ).

The interaction patterns of disability inclusive climate  $\times$  attachment styles were estimated by testing the relationships between disability inclusive climate and the aspects of well-being at high (one SD

**Table 3**  
Path results.

Hypothesis	Description of path	Path coefficient (Unstandardized)	Conclusion
<b>Controls</b>			
	Employee age	0.03	
	Employee gender	0.06	
	Employee education	0.04	
	Employee organizational tenure	0.05	
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	
<b>Paths</b>			
H1a	Benevolent leadership → Perceived discrimination	-0.25** (0.09)	Supported
H1b	Benevolent leadership → Job satisfaction	0.36*** (0.14)	Supported
H1c	Benevolent leadership → Need for recovery	-0.22* (0.08)	Supported
H2a–c	Benevolent leadership → Disability inclusive climate	0.42*** (0.17)	Supported
	Disability inclusive climate → Perceived discrimination	-0.29** (0.11)	Supported
	Disability inclusive climate → Job satisfaction	0.45*** (0.19)	Supported
	Disability inclusive climate → Need for recovery	-0.26** (0.07)	Supported
H3a	Disability inclusive climate × Attachment anxiety → Perceived discrimination	0.19* (0.06)	Supported
H3b	Disability inclusive climate × Attachment anxiety → Job satisfaction	0.23* (0.07)	Supported
H3c	Disability inclusive climate × Attachment anxiety → Need for recovery	0.16* (0.04)	Supported
H4a	Disability inclusive climate × Attachment avoidance → Perceived discrimination	-0.16* (0.05)	Supported
H4b	Disability inclusive climate × Attachment avoidance → Job satisfaction	-0.18* (0.06)	Supported
H4c	Disability inclusive climate × Attachment avoidance → Need for recovery	-0.12 (0.03)	Unsupported

Model fit:  $\chi^2 = 287.31$ ;  $df = 157$ ; TLI = 0.96; IFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.041; RMSEA = 0.037; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Standard errors are displayed in parentheses.

above the mean) and low (one SD below the mean) values of attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance (Dawson & Richter, 2006). Simple slope tests were conducted in light of Preacher, Curran, and Bauer's (2006) procedure. The interaction term of disability inclusive climate × attachment anxiety in predicting perceived discrimination was positively significant ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see Table 3). The interaction graph in Fig. 2a revealed that disability inclusive climate reduced perceived discrimination to a higher extent when attachment anxiety was high (simple slope = -0.59,  $p < .05$ ) than when attachment anxiety was low (simple slope = -0.17,  $p < .05$ ), providing further endorsement for hypothesis H3a on the role of attachment anxiety in strengthening the negative effect of disability inclusive climate on perceived discrimination.

The interaction term of disability inclusive climate × attachment anxiety in predicting job satisfaction was positively significant ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see Table 3). The simple slope graph in Fig. 2b demonstrated that disability inclusive climate enhanced job satisfaction at a higher degree when attachment anxiety was high (simple slope = 0.68,  $p < .05$ ) than when attachment anxiety was low (simple slope = 0.22,  $p < .05$ ), further supporting hypothesis H3b on the role of attachment anxiety as an enhancer for the positive link between disability inclusive climate and job satisfaction.

Moreover, as Table 3 exhibits, the interaction term of disability inclusive climate × attachment anxiety in predicting need for recovery was positively significant ( $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The plotted interaction in Fig. 2c indicated that disability inclusive climate diminished need for recovery to a higher degree when attachment anxiety was high (simple slope = -0.51,  $p < .05$ ) than when low (simple slope = -0.15,  $p < .05$ ), which further confirmed hypothesis H3c on the role of attachment anxiety in increasing the negative effect of disability inclusive climate on need for recovery.

The interaction term of disability inclusive climate × attachment avoidance in predicting perceived discrimination was negatively significant ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see Table 3). The plotted interaction in Fig. 3a demonstrated that disability inclusive climate reduced perceived discrimination at a lower degree when attachment avoidance was high (simple slope = -0.16,  $p < .05$ ) than when attachment avoidance was low (simple slope = -0.49,  $p < .05$ ), providing further evidence for hypothesis H4a on the role of attachment avoidance in attenuating the negative effect of disability inclusive climate on perceived discrimination.

Likewise, as presented in Table 3, the interaction term of disability inclusive climate × attachment avoidance in predicting job satisfaction was negative and significant ( $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The plotted interaction in Fig. 3b revealed that disability inclusive climate augmented job satisfaction to a lower extent when attachment avoidance was high (simple slope = 0.19,  $p < .05$ ) than when low (simple slope = 0.61,  $p < .05$ ), which provided further support for hypothesis H4b on the role of attachment avoidance as an alleviator for the positive effect of disability inclusive climate on job satisfaction.

Nonetheless, the interaction term of disability inclusive climate × attachment avoidance in predicting need for recovery was non-significant ( $\beta = -0.12$ ,  $p > .10$ ) (see Table 3). As a result, no empirical support was found for hypothesis H4c on the role of attachment avoidance in attenuating the negative effect of disability inclusive climate on need for recovery.

From further post hoc analysis, functional limitation was found to interact with benevolent leadership to further promote job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and further mitigate perceived discrimination ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as well as need for recovery ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### 5. Discussion and implications

Our research results provided evidence for the relationships between benevolent leadership and perceived discrimination, job satisfaction, and need for recovery among employees with disabilities. Disability inclusive climate was also found to mediate these relationships. Moreover, disability employees' attachment anxiety enhanced the positive effect of disability inclusive climate on job satisfaction as well as the negative effects of disability inclusive climate on perceived discrimination and need for recovery. On the contrary, disability employees' attachment avoidance reduced the positive effect of disability inclusive climate on job satisfaction and its negative impact on perceived discrimination. Nonetheless, no empirical support was found for the role of attachment avoidance in attenuating the negative effect of disability inclusive climate on need for recovery.

Through these findings, our research makes some contributions to the disability management literature. First, albeit disability management scholars highlight the roles of human resource management and leadership in fostering the well-being of employees with disabilities (Yang & Konrad, 2011), disability management research has seemed to draw more attention to human resource management than leadership

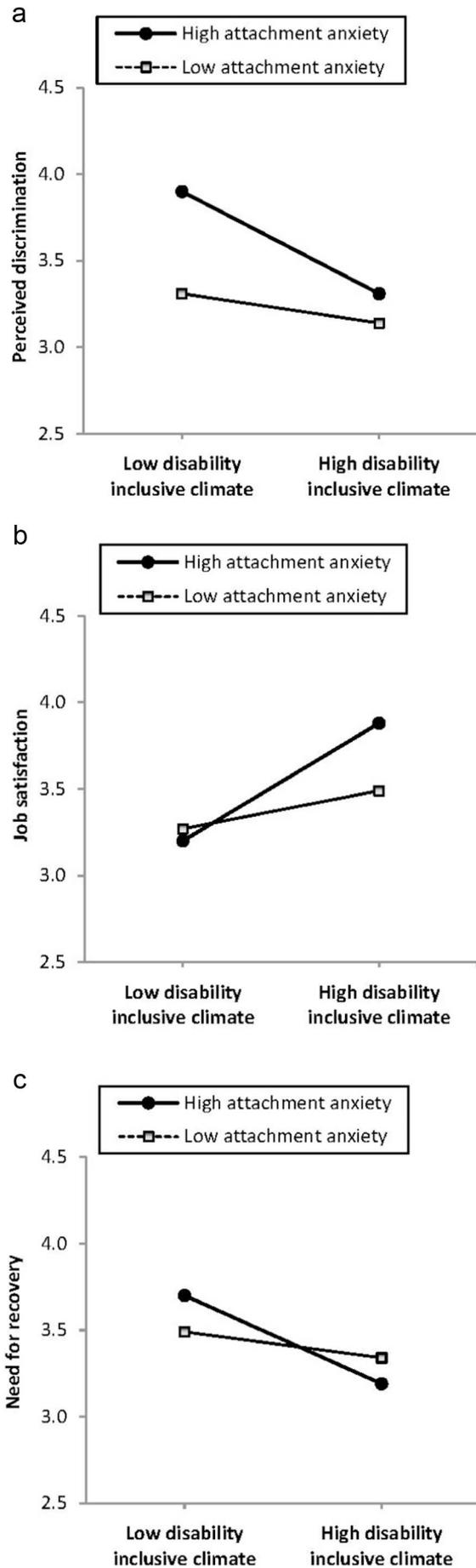


Fig. 2. a. Moderating effect of attachment anxiety for the relationship between disability inclusive climate and perceived discrimination  
 b. Moderating effect of attachment anxiety for the relationship between disability inclusive climate and job satisfaction  
 c. Moderating effect of attachment anxiety for the relationship between disability inclusive climate and need for recovery.

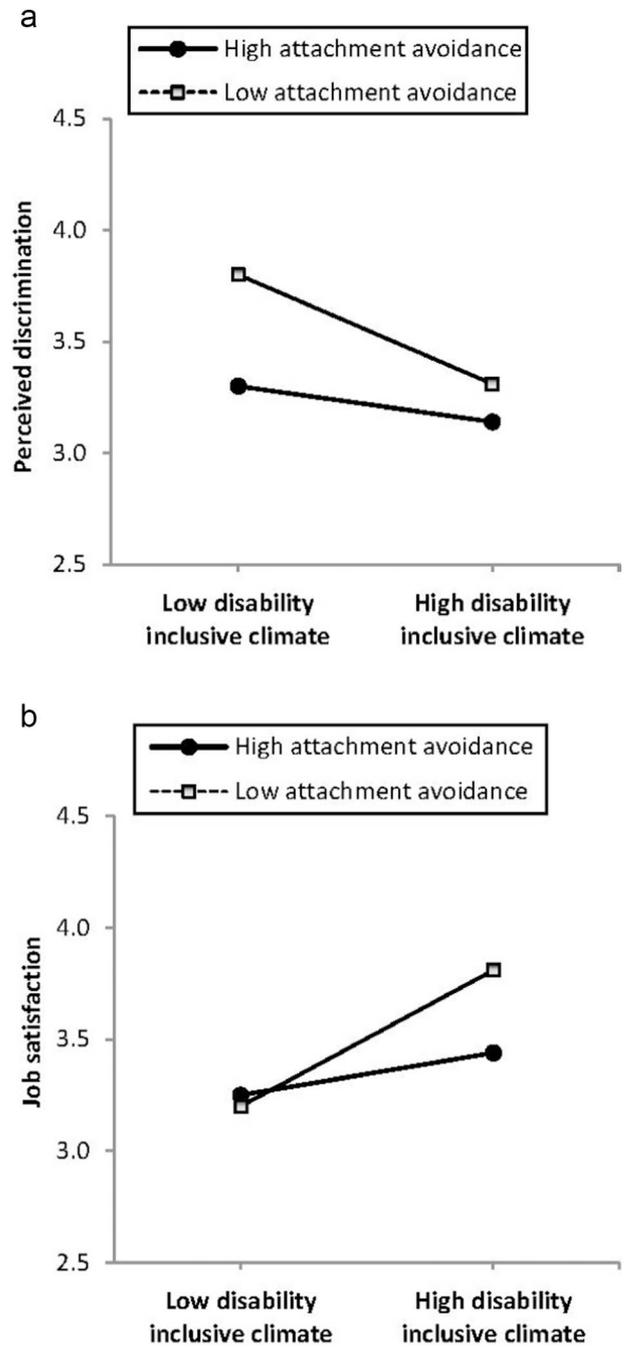


Fig. 3. a. Moderating effect of attachment avoidance for the relationship between disability inclusive climate and perceived discrimination  
 b. Moderating effect of attachment avoidance for the relationship between disability inclusive climate and job satisfaction.

(Cavanagh et al., 2017; Yang & Konrad, 2011). In response to recent calls such as by Yang and Konrad (2011) and Kensbock and Boehm (2016) for more empirical inquires on the role of leadership in disability management, our study adds benevolent leadership to the fledgling but limited antecedent set of the well-being among employees with

disabilities.

The research stream on the nexus between leadership and the well-being of employees with disabilities has tended to investigate the effects of universal leadership styles such as transformational leadership (e.g., Parr et al., 2013). The current study takes a step further to mine the impact of benevolent leadership that is both relevant to the study context and specific in fostering attitudinal and psychological responses among employees with disabilities. With empathy, care and nurturance toward members especially those in difficulties (Chan, 2017), benevolent leaders may respond to the expectation among Vietnam-based employees with disabilities of leaders as “moral gentlemen” who, in the Confucian value framework, tend to help the disadvantaged (Burton, 2015). Moreover, benevolent leadership mirrors the balance among ethical, transformational, and social concerns, while universal leadership styles such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, or ethical leadership reflect one or two of such concerns (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013). Hence, benevolent leadership appears more relevant to the needs of employees with disabilities in that benevolent leaders display the responsiveness to the call of community (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013) such as for supporting people with disabilities, provide them with fair treatment, explore their potential, fulfill their needs for psychological security, self-esteem, and socializing (Medina & Gamero, 2017), change their negative self-view and transform them into employees with self-esteem, self-confidence, and engagement.

Second, drawing upon the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1988) as an explanatory framework for the relationships between benevolent leadership and the well-being among employees with disabilities, our study extends the application of this theory to a new domain, that is disability management. Our study also responds to the recent scholarly attention toward the roles of resources, especially from leaders, and the COR theory in explaining employee well-being (Nielsen et al., 2017; Rahimnia & Sharifrad, 2015). With ethical, transformational, and social concerns (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013), benevolent leaders tend to actively provide resources (care, nurturance, and support) for employees with disabilities in their response to the call of the community to help the disadvantaged as well as in their attempt to help employees with disabilities “transform” themselves into confident and effective contributors in the workplace. Such a source of resources may influence employees with disabilities to build their own resource pool, experience a gain spiral and develop a sense of well-being.

Third, our research provides evidence for disability inclusive climate as a mediated pathway for the impact of benevolent leadership on the well-being of employees with disabilities. This mediation mechanism is in line with recent scholarly views that the management should influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees with disabilities via the cultivation of social inclusion (Meacham et al., 2017). With empathetic and social concerns, benevolent leaders contribute to shaping a virtuous and compassionate workplace environment (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2013) especially for disadvantaged groups such as employees with disabilities. Moreover, in comparison with distal factors such as human resource policies that involve personnel decision making, inclusive climate is more effective in attenuating sources of discrimination in day-to-day work relationships (Nishii, 2013).

The mediating role of disability inclusive climate distinguishes the current inquiry from prior research that has tended to consider inclusive climate as a moderator, rather than a mediator (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016), for the relationship between supervision and the outcomes among subordinates with disabilities. Our study also differentiates itself from previous inquiries that have revolved around individual mediators such as self-esteem (Kensbock & Boehm, 2016; Smedema, 2014) or self-efficacy (Luthans et al., 2005) albeit these two personal resources may not be strongly fostered without the influence of the group's disability inclusive climate.

Fourth, our research advances the research stream on the well-being of employees with disabilities by investigating boundary conditions for the effects of disability inclusive climate on their well-being. Since

employees with disabilities may come to a workplace with a certain degree of psychological insecurity (Medina & Gamero, 2017), our research investigated how their attachment styles – attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance – acted as boundary conditions. While prior research has focused on the negative direct and indirect effects of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on employee well-being (Wei et al., 2011), our research takes a step further to delve into the role of attachment anxiety as an enhancer and attachment avoidance as an alleviator for the effects of disability inclusive climate on disability employees' well-being. In a disability inclusive climate under the benevolent leadership, anxiously attached employees' need for affective bonds (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005) can be fulfilled. They thus become more empathetic and affectively entrained to the work and the work setting (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017) as well as feel less discriminated against and psychologically distressed. On the contrary, with the inclination to avoid the closeness (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), avoidantly attached employees with disabilities may find it hard to become socially included and may have lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of sensitivity to discrimination. Nonetheless, attachment avoidance was not found to lessen the negative effect of disability inclusive climate on need for recovery. This implies that despite detaching themselves from their team and being more sensitive to discrimination, avoidant employees with disabilities can suppress the experience of distress when they perceive a certain degree of empathy from people around them (Colle & Del Giudice, 2011) in a disability inclusive climate.

Fifth, the post hoc test results demonstrated that employees with higher functional limitation from physical disabilities had stronger perceptions and responsiveness toward benevolent leadership and form higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of perceived discrimination and need for recovery. Recent research in disability management has just examined the predictive role of functional limitation for employee outcomes (Brown et al., 2017). Our study thus advances this research stream by exploring the interaction effects of functional limitation and benevolent leadership on the well-being of employees with disabilities.

Last, this study provides contextual insights to the research stream on disability employees' well-being by investigating its underlying mechanisms in the Vietnamese business setting. In the Vietnamese context, where Disabilities Law 2010 still has had a modest influence on human resources policies of organizations (Nguyen, 2016), the role of benevolent leadership seems more crucial and pronounced in cultivating inclusive climate as well as stimulating the well-being and potential among workers with disabilities. Our findings can hence be generalizable to contexts that share cultural values and the degree of Disability Law effectiveness with Vietnam. Furthermore, contextual insights into benevolent leadership across industries and ownership types can guide practitioners to appropriate actions to shape benevolent leadership in their organizations.

## 6. Limitations and future research paths

Our research contains some limitations that should be overcome on the future research paths. In order to mitigate the complete reliance on the researchers speaking for a vulnerable, disenfranchised and marginal group of employees, future research should apply the mixed-methods approach, which can provide a more comprehensive landscape of the issue at hand in comparison to either qualitative method or quantitative method alone (Kensbock & Boehm, 2016). Future research should also examine cross-lagged relations between the independent and dependent variables. With the time-lagged research design, the current research is incapable of providing information about cause-and-effect relationships (Kasl & Jones, 2003) though the hypothesized model demonstrated a higher model-data fit parameter than did the reversed models.

In addition, self-reported data could be susceptible to CMV threat

(Podsakoff et al., 2012). CMV bias in our research is however not a grave concern through the marker variable test (Lindell & Whitney, 2001), the interaction effect tests (Siemsen et al., 2010), and the collection of data at different study waves (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Albeit there emerged no significant divergence between perceptions of supervisors and employees with disabilities toward disability inclusive climate in the current research, future research can further mitigate the concern about CMV risk if disability inclusive climate is assessed through perceptions of employees without disabilities.

Future research should explore other antecedents as well as other mechanisms behind the well-being of employees with disabilities. The joint effects of benevolent leadership and disability inclusive HR practices should be examined in future research models. Further research should also investigate individual mediation mechanisms such as job resources or personal resources. Some other individual attributes such as emotional intelligence and prosocial motivation may influence the responsiveness of employees with disabilities to benevolent leadership and disability inclusive climate. These individual variables may hence play moderating roles in future models of the well-being among employees with disabilities.

### Conflict of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### Appendix A. Employee perceptions of disability inclusive climate (through interviews with some employees in some organizations)

“As with all other employees, employees with disabilities obtain full job support. If any colleagues with disabilities feel they are struggling in their work role, they can talk to their supervisor for assistance through additional training or arrange another role for them”  
(an employee with disability in an electronics state-owned company)

“In my organization, buddy systems are integrated into the team. When employees start their job, they are given a buddy. The buddy helps them engage in social functions irrespective of their disabilities”  
(an employee with a disability in a software company)

“Team members treat colleagues with disabilities like everyone else doing their job to the best of their ability and don't make a spectacle of them”  
(an employee with a disability in an IT service company)

“I can talk to my colleagues about my work and tasks and they tell me how to do things. They also help me learn what I need to after my training”  
(an employee with a disability in an electronics joint-venture company)

“Team members are largely involved in the workplace interactions with colleagues with disabilities”  
(an employee with a disability in a handicraft start-up)

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