

Leader motives, charismatic leadership, and subordinates' work attitude in the profit and voluntary sector

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Abstract

This multimethod study examined leaders' motives, charismatic leader behavior, and subordinates' work attitude for CEOs ($N=73$) of small and medium-sized organizations in two sectors, namely, the profit and voluntary sector. Interviews with CEOs were coded for motive imagery. Direct reports rated CEO charismatic leader behavior ($n=125$) and their own work attitudes ($n=262$) using questionnaires. As expected, charismatic leadership was positively related to subordinates' positive work attitude. Perceived charismatic leadership was also positively related to coded power motivation. The tendency to use power in a morally responsible way was differentially related to charismatic leadership for CEOs of profit and voluntary organizations.

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1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, a considerable amount of theory and research has focused on charismatic or transformational leadership. Such leaders articulate an attractive vision for the organization and behave

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in ways that reinforce the values inherent in that vision. Followers become highly committed to the goal of the collective and perform beyond expectation (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; House, 1977). Many empirical studies and a number of metaanalyses demonstrate positive relationships between charismatic leadership and a wide range of outcome measures, ranging from financial measures of business unit performance to subordinates' attitudes, such as affective organizational commitment (e.g., see Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Fuller, Patterson, Hester, & Stringer, 1996; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001).

Many researchers concerned with charismatic leadership hold that personal characteristics or traits play an important role in the emergence of charismatic leadership (e.g., see Bryman, 1992; Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001; Jacobsen & House, 2001; Judge & Bono, 2000). House and Howell (1992) discussed personality traits that seem likely to differentiate charismatic leaders from noncharismatic leaders, including self-confidence, need for social influence, social responsibility, cognitive achievement orientation, energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. They concluded that research in this area was limited and fragmented. In response, various personality characteristics have recently been investigated in relation to charismatic leadership. This research shows that proactivity, locus of control, self-confidence, dominance, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience are related to charismatic leadership (e.g., see Crant & Bateman, 2000; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Judge & Bono, 2000; Ployhart, Lim, & Chan, 2001; Ross & Offermann, 1997).

A set of personal dispositions that, to date, has attracted less attention in charismatic leadership research is leaders' motives, such as the power motive and the tendency to use power in a morally responsible way, the affiliation, and the achievement motive. In research, these motives have received considerable support as predictors of general leader effectiveness (e.g., see Kirkpatrick, Wofford, & Baum, 2002; McClelland & Burnham, 1976, 2003; Spangler & House, 1991).

House integrated these motives into his theory of charismatic leadership by proposing that they may act as antecedents of charismatic leadership (e.g., see House & Aditya, 1997; House & Howell, 1992; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991). However, empirical evidence on this proposition is scarce. The available evidence comes from a study focusing on US presidents (House et al., 1991) and suggests that leaders' motives are indeed linked to perceived charisma. Whether such motives are also related to perceived charismatic leadership in different types of organizations is not yet clear. In addition, the methodology to assess motive structures (especially the tendency to use power in a morally responsible way) improved in recent years. Therefore, the present study adds to the literature by examining whether and how motives are related to perceived charismatic leader behavior and subordinates' positive work attitude in two types of organizations, namely, organizations in the profit and voluntary sector. In addition, rather than solely relying on survey measures, the study combines survey data with data derived from interviews.

2. Implicit motives

Over several decades, Atkinson (1958), McClelland (1975, 1985a, 1985b), and other researchers have investigated three basic motives: the power, the affiliation, and the achievement motive. These motives are drawn from Murray (1938) human motivation taxonomy and are suggested to represent the most important dimensions of human motivated behavior (Atkinson, 1958). The power motive is defined as the desire to have impact on other people to affect their behavior or emotions (Winter, 1992a). The

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