

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL HIERARCHY: ATTRIBUTION OF CHARISMA TO CLOSE AND DISTANT LEADERS

Dana Yagil*
University of Haifa

This study examined the attribution of charisma to socially close and distant leaders. Respondents were 554 Israeli combat soldiers who completed five questionnaires describing their perceptions of either their platoon commander or their battalion commander. The results showed that the attribution of charisma to socially close leaders is related to the ascription of extraordinary traits to the leader and to the perception both of the leader as a behavioral model and of his confidence in the individual. The attribution of charisma to distant leaders was related to a willingness to accept the leader's ideas, the perceived confidence of the leader in the group, the ascription of extraordinary traits to the leader, and a general positive impression of the leader. The results are discussed with regard to the influence of situational variables on the attribution of leadership qualities.

According to Weber (1947), charisma is an attribution given to an outstanding leader by his followers. Willner (1984) also argued that charisma should be defined in terms of people's perceptions of and responses to a leader. "It is not what the leader is but what people see the leader as that counts in generating the charismatic relationship" (Willner, 1984, p. 14). In a similar vein, Conger and Kanungo (1987) base their model of charismatic organizational leadership on the assumption that the followers observe the leader's behavior and interpret his or her actions as expressions of charismatic qualities. The attribution-based explanations of charismatic leadership raise questions about the leaders' position in the organizational hierarchy and the significance of their social distance from subordinates.

* Direct all correspondence to: Dana Yagil, Department of Human Services, Faculty of Social Welfare & Health Studies, University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel; e-mail: dyagil@research.haifa.ac.il.

Several writers contend that a leader's social distance from followers influences their perception of the leader and, consequently, might determine the attribution of charisma. Katz and Kahn (1978), for example, believe that a psychological distance between leader and subordinates is a necessary condition for the existence of charismatic leadership. Since leaders who function as direct supervisors are constantly evaluated by the followers, the former are "very human and very fallible and their subordinates cannot build an aura of magic about them...Day to day intimacy destroys illusions" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 546).

On the other hand, distant leaders can maintain a simplistic, yet magical image accompanied by a strong emotional attachment. The influence of top-level charismatic leaders is enhanced by their explicit dominance in the formation of organizational policy. A similar argument was presented by Hollander (1978), who stated that charismatic leadership was less likely to emerge in complex organizations because the close contact of superiors and subordinates prevented the maintenance of the magical properties that are necessary components of charisma.

According to other writers, charisma can be found at various organizational levels and is not necessarily confined to top-level leaders. In fact, several writers argue that the research on transformational and charismatic leadership is biased, since it focuses mainly on the relationship between leaders and their immediate followers (Shamir, 1995; Yammarino, 1994). From a theoretical perspective, Shils (1965) argues that in the organizational model described by Weber as the Rational-Legal system, charisma is not only attributed to the leaders at the top of the hierarchy, but it is also distributed among the entire hierarchy of roles. According to Bass (1988), charisma is a phenomenon of interpersonal relationships and is not confined to state leaders or to managers at the top of organizations, although it is more salient at the higher levels. Indeed, Bass found that subordinates frequently described their direct supervisors, who were often at middle or even low organizational levels, as charismatic leaders who inspired them and stimulated loyalty to the organization (Bass, 1985). Furthermore, Bass says that national leaders like Lenin and Lyndon Johnson had immediate subordinates who worshipped them, and concludes: "...social distance between leader and follower is not essential for the maintenance of the charismatic relationship" (Bass, 1988, p. 62).

Close and Distant Leadership and Charisma Attribution

The argument that charisma attribution is influenced by the leader's distance from followers does not necessarily imply that charisma is attributed only to distant leaders. The present study examines whether charisma might be attributed to both close and distant leaders. It is proposed that charisma attribution is related to different perceptions of the leader's traits, differences in attitudes toward the leader's message and behavior, and differences in the followers' perception of the leader's confidence in them (Yagil, 1992).

Recently, Shamir (1995) presented a set of propositions as well as the results of an exploratory study of the differences between close and distant charismatic leaders. Shamir's subjects were asked to refer to charismatic leaders in their close social environment and to charismatic leaders with whom they do not have any direct relationship. The results indicated that compared to close leaders, perceptions of distant leaders were more prototypical, rhetorical skills were attributed to them more frequently, and the subjects were more aware of their achievements. In referring to figures of charismatic leaders in

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات