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Personality and charismatic leadership

Robert J. House  ... Jane M. Howell

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Abstract

In this paper we review prior theory and empirical evidence relevant to the personality characteristics that differentiate charismatic leaders from noncharismatic leaders. We conclude from this review that charismatic leaders in present day complex organizations fit the stereotypical image of supportive, sensitive, nurturing, and considerate leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, rather than the traditional stereotype of aggressive, demanding, dominant and critical leaders such as Jim Jones or Field Marshall George Montgomery. We then present a review of research relevant to four traits that theoretically differentiate personalized (self-aggrandizing, non-egalitarian, and exploitive) charismatic leaders from socialized (collectively oriented, egalitarian, and nonexploitive) charismatic leaders. We conclude that the personality traits of the need for power, power inhibition, Machiavellianism, authoritarianism, narcissism, self esteem and locus of control are traits that are likely to differentiate personalized from socialized charismatic leaders.

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