

The Relationship Between Followers' Personality and Preferences in Leadership

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One hundred thirty-two working adults from a variety of organizations in South Texas, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses, completed the NEO-PI Big Five personality assessment, and the Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire. The Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire asks participants to answer 112 questions regarding behaviors that contribute to, or inhibit, the general idea of outstanding leadership. These questions can be scored as 21 dimensions of leadership. This study found that participant personality predicted 13 of the 21 dimensions of leadership. The Big Five personality trait of agreeableness was the most consistent predictor of attitudes concerning leadership.

INTRODUCTION

When studying leadership, several methods are common. One method is for followers or additional stakeholders to assess the behaviors of actual leaders. Typically these behaviors are treated as independent variables, and analysis is done on dependent variables, such as follower satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

An emerging type of leadership study is called implicit leadership. In this type of study, no actual leader is rated. Rather, the concept of desired, or outstanding leadership, is measured. In these types of studies, participants complete a survey concerning their prototypes of what constitutes outstanding leadership. There may be a second instrument, such as personality, in order to look at associations between the second construct, and the participants' implicit views of what constitutes outstanding leadership, or the leadership scores obtained may be analyzed for participant demographics.

To date, the largest study of implicit leadership was the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE study) (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). This study surveyed over 17,000 participants worldwide regarding what contributed to the

participants' concepts of outstanding leadership. The 17,000 participants were from 62 countries or societies.

The primary focus of the GLOBE study was to analyze how cultural preferences predicted leadership preferences. While this study added significantly to the body of literature related to implicit leadership, the study did not report how participants' personalities impacted their views of leadership. This present study builds upon the findings of the GLOBE study by analyzing how participants' personalities impacts implicit leadership views.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Project GLOBE

GLOBE measured six higher-order dimensions of leadership. *Charismatic/value-based leadership* is the ability to inspire, motivate, and expect high performance outcomes from others based on firmly held core values. *Team-oriented leadership* emphasizes effective team building, and an implementation of a common purpose, or goal, among team members. *Self-protective leadership* consists of ensuring the safety, and security of the individual and group, through status enhancement and face saving endeavors. *Participative leadership* reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making, and implementing decisions. *Humane-oriented leadership* reflects supportive, considerate leadership, but also includes compassion, and generosity factors. *Autonomous leadership* reflects independent and individualistic leadership attributes.

To simplify interpretation of global differences, the GLOBE study created clusters of countries. The ten clusters created were Eastern Europe, Latin America, Latin Europe, Confucian Asia, Nordic Europe, Anglo, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Germanic Europe, and the Middle East. Table 1 provides the means for each global cluster, and the higher-order dimensions of leadership.

TABLE 1
LEADERSHIP PREFERENCES FOR 10 GLOBAL CLUSTERS CLT LEADERSHIP
DIMENSIONS

Societal Cluster	CV	TO	P	HO	A	SP
Eastern Europe	5.74	5.88	5.08	4.76	<u>4.20</u>	3.67
Latin America	5.99	<u>5.96</u>	5.42	4.85	3.51	3.62
Latin Europe	5.78	5.73	5.37	4.45	3.66	3.19
Confucian Asia	5.63	5.61	4.99	5.04	4.04	3.72
Nordic Europe	5.93	5.77	5.75	<u>4.42</u>	3.94	<u>2.72</u>
Anglo	<u>6.05</u>	5.74	5.73	5.08	3.82	3.08
Sub-Saharan Africa	5.79	5.70	5.31	5.16	<u>3.63</u>	3.55
Southern Asia	5.97	5.86	5.06	<u>5.38</u>	3.99	3.83
Germanic Europe	5.93	5.62	<u>5.86</u>	4.71	4.16	3.03
Middle East	<u>5.35</u>	<u>5.47</u>	<u>4.97</u>	4.80	3.68	<u>3.79</u>

Note. CV – Charismatic/Value-Based, TO – Team Oriented, P – Participative, HO – Humane-Oriented, A – Autonomous SP – Self-Protective, CLT – Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory Dimensions

Items shown underlined and in bold represent the highest and lowest societal preferences for that dimension of leadership. In interpreting the scores, it is important to understand that the participants responded to 112 leadership behaviors on a Likert scale that ranged from one to seven. A rating of one was actually a very strong, negative rating, indicating that the respondent believed this leadership

behavior greatly inhibited a person from being an outstanding leader. A rating of seven, on the other end of the Likert scale, represented a belief that this leadership behavior greatly contributed to a person being an outstanding leader. Scoring options of two or six represents factors which somewhat inhibited, or somewhat contributed, to outstanding leadership. Scoring options of three or five represents factors which slightly inhibited, or slightly contributed, to outstanding leadership. The middle Likert choice of four represents that this behavior had no impact on a person being an outstanding leader. Table 1 illustrates that charismatic/value based leadership, and team-oriented leadership are desired attributes in leaders worldwide.

Charismatic/value-based leadership, however, can be further clarified by considering fundamental or first-order dimensions. These include (a) *Visionary Charisma* - having foresight, being prepared, and able to plan ahead (b) *Inspirational Charisma* - being enthusiastic, positive, a morale booster, and a motive arouser (c) *Self-Sacrificing Charisma* - being a risk taker, self-sacrificial, and convincing (d) *Integrity* – soundness of moral character (e) *Decisive* – displaying no or little hesitation (f) *Performance-Oriented* – the desire to achieve highly on external indicators of success. Team-oriented leadership can be further divided into (a) *Collaborative Team Leadership* - being group-oriented, collaborative, loyal, and consultative and (b) *Team Integrator* - being communicative, a team builder, informative, and an integrator (c) *Diplomatic* – using or marked by tact and sensitivity when dealing with others (d) *Malevolent* (reversed-scored) – having or exhibiting ill will (e) *Administratively Competent* – the capacity or authority to manage or direct the affairs of public or private office.

Personality and Leadership Perceptions

The literature on follower personality and perceptions of leadership generally indicates that the more extraverted, agreeable and conscientious followers are, the higher they rate leaders as transformational. Conversely, the more neurotic followers are, the lower they rate leaders as transactional.

Felfe and Schyns (2006), in a study of undergraduate students, found that the more extraverted the participants, the more they recognized, and reacted positively to transformational leadership. However, no relationships were found for the personality traits of neuroticism, occupational self-efficacy, and need for structure. Bono, Hooper, and Yoon (2012) found positive relationships between follower agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness for ratings of transformational leadership. Schyns and Sanders (2007) also found positive relationships between follower extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness for ratings of transformational leadership. Surprisingly, neuroticism was positively related to the perception of transformational leadership.

Moss and Ngu's (2006) study found that extraversion, and conscientiousness correlated positively with transformational leadership, while agreeableness and openness to new experiences were negatively related with transactional leadership. In addition, agreeableness was inversely related to laissez-faire leadership, while neuroticism was positively related.

Do and Rhee (2007) examined followers' personalities, and whether personality influenced (positively or negatively) perceptions of transformational leadership. The investigators found that followers with high agreeableness perceived leaders as more transformational, and those with neuroticism perceived leaders as less transformational. However, no relationships were found between followers' extraversion, and perceived transformational leadership, or openness to new experiences, and perceived transformational leadership.

A 2010 study conducted by Felfe and Schyns in a financial service company found that followers who scored high in extraversion, and agreeableness rated their leaders higher on transformational leadership than other participants. Additionally, followers high in neuroticism rated leaders lower on the individualized consideration component of transformational leadership. Conversely, followers who were high in emotional stability rated their leaders high on individualized consideration, and for openness to new experiences, no relationship was found. Table 2 provides an overview of the literature on follower personality and perceptions of leadership.

TABLE 2
FOLLOWER PERSONALITY AND PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Positive Predictors of Perceptions of Transformational Leadership	
Extraversion	(Bono, Hooper, & Yoon, 2012; Felfe & Schyns, 2010; Schyns & Sanders, 2007; Felfe, & Schyns, 2006; Moss & Ngu, 2006)
Conscientiousness	(Bono, Hooper, & Yoon, 2012; Schyns & Sanders, 2007; Moss & Ngu, 2006)
Agreeableness	Bono, Hooper, & Yoon, 2012; Felfe & Schyns, 2010; Do & Rhee ,2007; Schyns & Sanders, 2007)
Negative Predictors of Perceptions of Transformational Leadership	
Neuroticism	Do & Rhee, 2007; Moss & Ngu ,2006)
Openness	Moss & Ngu, 2006)

PARTICIPANTS

One hundred thirty-two working adults from south Texas completed two instruments, the *NEO-PI Big-five* personality assessment, and the *Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire*. There were 81 females and 48 males in the study. There were 75 Hispanic, 30 Black, 12 white participants, and 15 who were of other ethnicities. The sample consisted of college-educated, full-time workers from a variety of business types, and sizes. The ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 58 with a mean of 40 years. Participants could best be described as mid-level managers, or leaders in their organizations.

INSTRUMENTS

Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire

The instrument used was the *Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire*. This instrument has been used by over 20,000 participants worldwide. To develop the *Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire*, two empirical pilot studies were conducted in 28 countries to assess the psychometric properties. In the first pilot study, the survey was distributed in 28 countries to people who had full-time work experience as a white-collar employee, or manager. Exploratory factor analysis, aggregation analysis, reliability analysis, and intra-class correlations were then conducted on the results of the surveys. A second pilot study was then conducted in 15 countries that did not participate in the first pilot study in order to replicate the scales in a different sample. The results confirmed the findings from the first pilot study and verified through aggregation tests the target level of analysis (House et al., 2004).

The GLOBE instrument consists of 112 questions. For each question, the participant is asked to rate to what degree that behavior or characteristic inhibits, or contributes to outstanding leadership. The rating scale ranges from one to seven. The instrument measures 21 first-order dimensions of leadership. The dimensions are: *Administratively Competent, Autocratic, Autonomous, Charismatic 1: Visionary, Charismatic 2: Inspirational, Charismatic 3: Self-Sacrifice, Conflict Inducer, Decisive, Diplomatic, Face Saver, Humane Orientation, Independent, Individualistic, Integrity, Malevolent, Modesty, Non-Participative, Performance Oriented, Procedural, Self-Centered, Status Conscious, Team 1: Collaborative Team Orientation, Team 2: Team Integrator, and Unique*. Definitions of each measure are provided (see Appendix A: Aspects of Leadership Measured by the *Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire*).

NEO-PI

The *NEO-PI* was developed by Costa and McCrae (1985). The 181-item questionnaire was developed through rational and factor analytic methods to measure the five major factors of personality including, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to new experiences, and extraversion. Items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree, and scales are balanced to control for the effects of agreement.

METHOD

An initial analysis was conducted in which 21 separate multiple regressions were run in which each dimension of leadership was regressed on the followers' Big-Five personality scores. Following this initial analysis both exploratory and confirmatory analyses were conducted on the 21 dimensions of leadership. These analyses identified four higher-order dimensions of leadership that were somewhat different than the six higher-order dimensions used in the *GLOBE* study. As a final analysis, structural equation modeling was used to analyze the inter-relationships among the five dimensions of personality and the four dimensions of leadership.

RESULTS

Multiple Dimensions of Leadership

Table 3 provides an overview of an initial analysis of the five measures of personality, and the 21 measures of leadership. In cases in which more than one dimension of personality was significant, a stepwise multiple regression was run using all five dimensions of personality as predictor variables. The results of the regression are shown in these cases, giving a sense of which dimensions of personality were the strongest predictors of that aspect of leadership. As Table 3 illustrates, participant agreeableness was the most frequent predictor of leadership preferences.

TABLE 3
DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS
TO PREFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP

Leadership Behavior	Association	O	C	E	A	N	Mean
Contributes to Outstanding Leadership							
Integrity	R				.21**		6.64
Performance Ori.	R	.18**					6.55
Admin. Comp.	R				.18**		6.31
Participative	R	.16*					6.22
Decisive	R		.21**				6.18
Team II	R	.15*		.21**	.27***		6.13
Humane Ori.	R				.17*		6.08
Modesty	R				.15*		5.86
Autonomous	R			-.23**		-.16*	4.62
Inhibits Outstanding Leadership							
Status Conscious	R	-.27***					4.30
Conflict Inducer	R				-.24**	.15*	3.47
Self-Centered	R				-.18**		1.94
Autocratic	R	-.15*			-.21*	.15*	1.86

Note. Only significant dimensions shown. $p < .10^*$, $p < .05^{**}$, $p < .01^{***}$.

Reduced Dimensions of Leadership

An exploratory factor analysis using the Principle Components Method with Varimax rotation was next conducted. Four components were found that had an Eigenvalue greater than one. Each component from the rotated model was then analyzed. The components are shown in Table 3. The first component, which was labeled *Charismatic, Value Based Team Leadership* had an Eigenvalue of 7.3 and explained 38.9% of the variance in scores. Table 4 shows that twelve scales loaded on this component with an Eigenvector score greater than 0.6 or less than negative 0.6. The second component was labeled *Self-Serving Leadership*. The third component was labeled *Bureaucratic Leadership*, and the fourth component *Directive Leadership*.

TABLE 4
PERSONALITY AND PREFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP
EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

	Charismatic, Value Based Team Leadership	Self-Serving Leadership	Bureaucratic Leadership	Directive Leadership
Administratively Competent	.693	-.088	.244	.251
Charismatic I: Visionary	.895	-.158	.045	.194
Charismatic II: Inspirational	.715	.186	.310	-.020
Charismatic III: Self-Sacrifice	.753	.151	-.280	-.016
Decisive	.628	.040	.346	.110
Diplomatic	.784	-.271	.068	.123
Humane Orientation	.747	-.201	.356	-.085
Integrity	.794	-.349	.176	-.037
Malevolent	-.863	.292	.051	-.077
Modesty	.698	-.376	.204	-.034
Team I: Collaborative Team Orientation	.547	-.245	.251	-.165
Team II: Team Integrator	.618	-.468	-.046	.142
Autocratic	-.259	.810	.120	.000
Self-Centered	-.381	.624	-.006	.004
Face Saver	.091	.835	.055	-.043
Proc_Beau	.257	.042	.769	.074
Status Conscious	.018	.126	.889	.148
Autonomous	.212	.061	.037	.061
Performance Oriented	.448	-.214	-.204	.619
Conflict Inducer	.030	.028	.351	.869
Participative	.480	-.405	-.125	-.015

Following the exploratory factor analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on each of the four dimensions. Each of the tested components had a *Goodness of Fit Index* greater than .90. As a final step to better understand the relationships among the participants' personalities and their attitudes about what contributes to, and inhibits outstanding leadership, a structural equation model was run using the five observed dimensions of personality, and the four latent variables of *Charismatic, Value-Based Team Leadership*; *Self-Serving Leadership*; *Bureaucratic Leadership*; and *Directive Leadership*. The significant correlations found as a result of a structural equation model (SEM) are provided (see Figure 1: Personality and Reduced Dimensions of Leadership). Among the dimensions of leadership, positive relationships were found among *Charismatic, Value-Based Team Leadership, Bureaucratic Leadership, and Directive Leadership*. These were, in turn, generally inversely related to *Self-Serving Leadership*.

Extraversion and Openness

The more extraverted and the more open to new experiences the participants' personalities, the more they believed *Directive Leadership* contributed to being an outstanding leader. Conversely, the more extraverted, and the more open to new experiences the participants, the less they believed *Bureaucratic Leadership* contributed to outstanding leadership, and the more they believed that *Self-Serving Leadership* inhibited outstanding leadership.

Agreeableness

Comparable to extraversion, the more agreeable the participants, the more they believed *Self-Serving Leadership* behaviors inhibited good leadership.

Neuroticism

Perhaps the most surprising finding from the SEM was that the more neurotic the participants' personalities, the more they believed both *Charismatic*, *Value-Based Team Leadership*, and *Directive Leadership* contributed to outstanding leadership. This connotes that good, quality-based leadership seems to appeal to followers across four of the five aspects of personality. Conscientiousness, the fifth personality dimension was not significant.

DISCUSSION

Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2004) conducted a meta-analysis involving 60 studies consisting of 222 correlations from 73 samples that studied leader personality. Their findings were that leader extraversion ($p = .31$) (where p = estimated corrected correlation) was the strongest correlate of effective leadership. Conscientiousness ($p = .28$), neuroticism ($p = -.24$), and openness to new experiences ($p = .24$) displayed the next strongest correlations (where p = estimated corrected correlation) with leadership. Agreeableness showed a relatively weak correlation with leadership ($p = .08$).

This current study found that the followers' personality trait of agreeableness was a consistently strong predictor of preferences regarding leadership. Followers' openness to new experiences was particularly incongruent with *Bureaucratic Leadership*. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that personality traits were positively related to *Charismatic*, *Value-Based Team Leadership* and *Directive Leadership*, and negatively related to *Bureaucratic Leadership* and *Self-Serving Leadership*. This tends to indicate that both good and bad clearly transcends follower's personality.

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APPENDIX

Aspects of Leadership Measured by the *Project GLOBE Leadership Questionnaire*

1. *Administratively Competent*: orderly, administratively skilled, organized, good administrator
2. *Autocratic*: autocratic, dictatorial, bossy, elitist
3. *Autonomous*: individualistic, independent, autonomous, unique
4. *Charismatic 1: Visionary*: foresight, prepared, anticipatory, plans ahead
5. *Charismatic 2: Inspirational*: enthusiastic, positive, morale booster, motive arouser
6. *Charismatic 3: Self-Sacrifice*: risk taker, self-sacrificial, convincing
7. *Conflict Inducer*: normative, secretive, intragroup competitor
8. *Decisive*: willful, decisive, logical, intuitive
9. *Diplomatic*: diplomatic, worldly, win-win problem solver, effective bargainer
10. *Face Saver*: indirect, avoids negatives, evasive
11. *Humane Orientation*: generous, compassionate
12. *Independent*: free from the influence, guidance, or control of another or others.
13. *Individualistic*: the action or principle of asserting one's independence and individuality.
14. *Integrity*: honest, sincere, just, trustworthy
15. *Malevolent*: hostile, dishonest, vindictive, irritable
16. *Modesty*: modest, self-effacing, patient
17. *Non-Participative*: to not share in something.
18. *Performance Oriented*: improvement-oriented, excellence-oriented, performance-oriented
19. *Procedural*: ritualistic, formal, habitual, procedural
20. *Self-Centered*: self-centered, non-participative, loner, asocial
21. *Self-protective* leadership focuses on ensuring the safety and security of the individual and group through status enhancement and face saving.
22. *Status Conscious*: status-conscious, class-conscious
23. *Team 1: Collaborative Team Orientation*: group-oriented, collaborative, loyal, consultative
24. *Team 2: Team Integrator*: communicative, team builder, informed, integrator

FIGURE 1
PERSONALITY AND REDUCED DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP

