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Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Perceived Meaning in Work

Denise Jones
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Walden University

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Denise Jones

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Perceived Meaning in Work

by

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MBA, National Louis University, 2002

BS, National Louis University, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Organizational Psychology

Walden University

February 2019

Abstract

Researchers have conducted correlational studies on transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work; however, researchers have not used an experimental design to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work. The purpose of this study was to determine whether reading information on transformational leadership, which focused on charisma and individualized consideration, influenced participants' hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work. The quantitative study included a 2 x 2 between-subjects design in which information on the independent variables of charisma and individualized consideration was manipulated in a description of a hypothetical leader. The dependent variable was the hypothetical judgment of meaning in work based on the hypothetical description of the leader. The study was a randomized experiment including survey data from 106 participants. Data were analyzed using a 2-way ANOVA. Findings showed reading information on charisma significantly increased participants' perceived meaning in work whereas reading information on individualized consideration decreased participants' perceived meaning in work. Findings may help organizations hire transformational leaders who possess charisma and have the ability to develop followers to become future leaders.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the individuals who contributed to my success during the development of this research project. I would like to thank my children, my daughters, Dr. Priscilla and Akilah, and my son, Stephen Clinton. Thank you for encouraging me to achieve my goal even through the challenging times during this process. I would like to extend a special thank you to my daughter, Akilah, for giving me two precious grandsons, Aidan and Ashton. They brought joy to my heart. A special thanks to my six-year-old grandson, Aidan. He often woke me up at night saying, “NeNe, wake up, you got to do your homework.” You all have truly been instrumental throughout my educational journey, and I could not have made it without you. A special dedication is given to my parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, and all the girls around the world who aspire to reach higher academically. You can achieve what you are willing to work hard to obtain.

What I look forward to the most as I finish my dissertation is continuing to help affect the lives of others, reading books for leisure, and taking a vacation without feeling guilty.

In loving memory of my two nephews, DeShaun J. Sawyers (18) and Johntae T. Adams (16).

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My heartfelt thanks to my dissertation committee: Dr. Brad Bell, Dr. Craig Marker, and Dr. Anne Morris. I appreciate your guidance, patience, and support throughout this process. A special thanks to Dr. Brad Bell for thoroughly reviewing my manuscript during every step of this journey. Thank you for your feedback and recommendations; it made my research better and developed me as a scholar practitioner. It is my hope that this research makes a huge impact for leaders and their teams.

Last, I acknowledge and thank my family for tirelessly supporting and encouraging me. Despite the long hours and seemingly sleepless nights, you all motivated me to finish what I started. I am grateful for each of you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction to the Problem

Transformational leadership is an important component in affecting followers' behavior and performance (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). Transformational leadership represents a style of leadership that influences people to implement plans and collaborate to attain goals (Bass, 1985). Weber and Burns (as cited in Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) described transformational leadership as instilling pride, respect, and trust, which motivates followers to perform beyond expectations. Givens (2008) reviewed the effects of a transformational leader's behavior on organizational outcomes as well as the outcomes for followers. There were six personal outcomes examined that linked the behavior of the transformational leader to followers' commitment to the organization. The influence of the transformational leader was also shown through the positive impact on the organization (Givens, 2008). Barling, Weber, and Kelloway (1996) looked at one region of one of the five largest banks in Canada and found transformational leadership to be connected to outcomes linked to the organization and employees' dedication. The results of the study showed managers who receive training in transformational leadership can influence followers. Sparks and Schenk (2001) interviewed respondents who had distributorships and recruits to examine whether transformational leadership could bring out the most in the recruits and their job satisfaction. The evidence showed transformational leadership may influence followers to find meaning in their work and exceed expectations. Cooke and Walker (2013) conducted a study at a retreat with a diverse group of professionals with nursing and midwifery backgrounds, and found that

transformational leadership was positively correlated to high levels of morale and performance among followers.

From a social change perspective, transformational leadership has been linked to followers' perceived meaning in work (Walumbwa, Christensen, & Muchiri, 2013). Hackman and Oldham (1980) stated there was an interest in studying work meaningfulness. Hackman and Oldham identified one of two ways to determine whether employees were fulfilled in their jobs: (a) by employees serving the greater good of the company or (b) by connecting with the right people to have substantial relationships. Findings showed that when employees find meaning in their work, they are more active in their role (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Yukl (2010) identified leadership in the workplace as another factor that affects employees' ability to find meaning in their work. Through the display of characteristics such as charisma and individualized consideration, transformational leaders can affect their organizations by coaching and mentoring followers, listening to followers' concerns, and delegating tasks that enhance followers' confidence to reach their potential and improve their sense of worth, all of which influences followers' outlook on meaningful work (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Previous studies on transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work were correlational in nature, whereas the current study was designed to enable causal inferences. The experimental design in this study was original and did not include pilot testing. The study was designed to determine whether reading information on transformational leadership influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work for followers. This chapter contains the background of the study, statement of the

problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions (RQs) and hypotheses, theoretical foundation for the study, nature of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions and scope, and limitations and delimitations of the study.

Background of the Study

Transformational leadership has been the most studied form of leadership since the late 1990s (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The study of transformational leadership has evolved throughout the years though there remain areas that have not been fully addressed (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013) stated transformational leadership can have a positive impact on followers by influencing their level of performance while also diminishing their creativity to make them more reliant on their leaders. Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) stated charismatic and transformational leadership has played an integral role in influencing the volume of research on leadership. This experimental study was designed to expand the understanding of the relationship between transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work among followers.

Transformational leaders build relationships with followers that encourage them to do what they deem impossible (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2014) shared that transformational leaders affect followers by the way they communicate the company's vision. Furthermore, Arnold (2017) stated that among the 40 studies reviewed, the outcomes indicated transformational leadership has a positive effect on well-being. After reviewing several studies, Arnold determined that further research was needed to focus on the conditions in which transformational leadership affects the well-being of followers. According to García-Morales, Lloréns-

Montes, and Verdú-Jover (2008), followers gain insight into their effectiveness to the organization through the transformational leader. Bass (1998) found that transformational leadership has a greater impact on employees' satisfaction with their leaders. The transformational leader can motivate employees to exceed targets (Bass, 1998). Cheng, Yen, and Chen (2012) showed that transformational leaders connect followers' feelings, mental state, and conduct, which increases their job performance. Transformational leadership better serves employees and organizations than transactional leadership (Odetunde, 2013). A transactional leader focuses on compliance by using rewards and punishment with employees (Odetunde, 2013).

A review of the literature showed a lack of experimental studies addressing the effect of transformational leadership on perceived meaning in work. The current study allowed for causal inferences in contrast to previous studies that were correlational. The study addressed whether reading information on transformational leadership influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work for followers. This study may be the first to demonstrate that reading information on certain attributes of transformational leadership may influence a judgment of perceived meaning in work.

Statement of the Problem

Transformational leadership was introduced by Burns in the late 1970s and expanded in the late 1980s by Bass. Transformational leadership has been the most studied type of leadership for over 20 years (Sosik & Jung, 2010). Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) identified transformational leadership to be significant for the contributions made in leadership. In organizations, it is important for leaders to encourage employees

to help achieve the company's goals (Hookham Williams & Alshahrani, 2017).

Transformational leadership inspires change in followers based on the company's vision and the personal values they possess (Bass, 1999).

In the mid-1980s, the concept of charismatic-transformational leadership emerged (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Seltzer and Bass (1990) stated transformational leadership occurs when leaders move followers from thinking about their own needs to thinking about the mission of the group. Seltzer and Bass also suggested that further research is necessary to understand how charisma relates to employees' fulfillment and their leader's efficiency. Cooke and Walker (2013) determined that transformational leadership and knowledge translation were a good formula for success. Cooke and Walker held a retreat for nurses and midwives, and results showed the participants received encouragement using the characteristics connected with transformational leadership. Breevaart et al. (2014) suggested that transformational leaders influence their followers to exceed expectations, which improves financial outcomes for organizations.

According to Penna (2006), when employees feel valued at work, it can be beneficial to both the employees and the employer by creating a sense of belonging in which the employees find meaning in the work and perform at higher levels. Walumbwa et al. (2013) suggested the connection between transformational leadership and meaningful work needs additional empirical data to support the relationship (i.e., job characteristics, leader's management of meaning and follower's values). Bass (1985) linked theories on transformational leadership to employees finding meaning in their work that exceeds finances.

Kim and Yoon's (2015) results were in alignment with several scholars' findings on the importance of leadership. Kim and Yoon conducted their study with senior leaders and supervisors within local governmental agencies and asked followers to assess the level of transformational leadership their leaders displayed. The findings showed agencies should plan to encourage their senior leaders to use transformational leadership (Kim & Yoon, 2015).

The gap in the literature was the lack of experimental studies addressing how transformational leaders affect followers' perceived meaning in their work. This study may be the first to demonstrate that reading information on certain attributes of transformational leadership may influence a judgment of perceived meaning in work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative experimental study was to determine whether reading information on transformational leadership, which focused on charisma and individualized consideration, influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work. A review of the literature provided a significant amount of empirical evidence to support a correlation between transformational leadership and finding meaning in work (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010). The concept of charismatic-transformational leadership emerged in the mid-1980s as a result of stagnation in the field (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Seltzer and Bass (1990) stated transformational leadership occurs when leaders move followers from thinking about their own needs to thinking about the mission of the group. Cooke and Walker (2013) determined that transformational leadership and knowledge translation were a good formula for success. Breevaart et al.

(2014) suggested transformational leaders influence their followers to exceed expectations, which improve financial outcomes for organizations.

This experimental study involved examining the behaviors that transformational leaders exhibit that set them apart from other leaders in influencing followers to find meaning in work. Johnson and Lord (2010) stated leaders can become abusive to followers when they view themselves as higher and become brash in their communications. Being able to identify the leadership characteristics of a transformational leader would be beneficial to positive outcomes (Johnson & Lord, 2010). Hershcovis and Barling (2010) stated offensive manners from leaders can be traumatic and damaging to followers. The independent variables (IVs) in this study were the information participants read on charisma and individualized consideration presented by the leader. The dependent variable (DV) was the hypothetical judgment of meaning in work.

Significance of the Study

This study may have been the first experimental study addressing transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work. Walumbwa et al. (2013) suggested the connection between transformational leadership and meaningful work needs empirical data to support the relationship (i.e., job characteristics, leader's management of meaning and follower's values). The gap in the literature was the lack of experimental studies addressing how transformational leaders affect followers' perceived meaning in their work. The significance of this study was in the ability to make causal inferences, in contrast to previous studies on transformational leadership and perceived

meaning in work that were correlational. The study was designed to address whether reading information on transformational leadership influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work for followers.

Organizations may be interested in how transformational leadership behaviors may influence followers' perceptions and the process of finding meaning in work. Charisma and individualized consideration are two leadership attributes that may influence followers' perceptions of meaning in work and encourage them to accomplish more (Walumbwa et al., 2013). From a social change perspective, transformational leadership has been linked to followers' perceived meaning in work (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Through the display of charisma and individualized consideration characteristics, transformational leaders can affect organizations by coaching and mentoring followers, listening to followers' concerns, and delegating tasks that enhance followers' confidence to reach their potential and improve their sense of worth, all of which influence their outlook on meaningful work (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Does reading information on charisma increase perceived meaning in work?

Research Hypothesis 1 – Reading information on charisma increases perceived meaning in work.

Null Hypothesis 1 – Reading information on charisma does not influence perceived meaning in work.

RQ2: Does reading information on individualized consideration increase perceived meaning in work?

Research Hypothesis 2 – Reading information on individualized consideration increases perceived meaning in work.

Null Hypothesis 2 – Reading information on individualized consideration does not influence perceived meaning in work.

Theoretical Foundation for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was the model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership theory has been one of the most widely used theories in both the public and private sectors. This theory also promotes innovation (Kim & Yoon, 2015). The model of transformational leadership focuses on the extent to which leaders influence their followers (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). The mediational model, presented by Walumbwa et al. (2013), was also part of the theoretical foundation. The model consists of four mediators: self-efficacy, job characteristics, relational identification, and self-concordant goals (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

There are four elements of the model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985): idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The first component of a transformational leader is idealized influence (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). A transformational leader leads by example with belief and boldness for others to follow (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). According to Bass (1990), charismatic leadership involves a natural ability to lead and to impart a sense of mission into followers. Inspirational motivation is the ability to provide followers with a clear understanding of the shared goals and their importance.

Transformational leaders focus on the best in people (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The intellectual stimulation of transformational leadership allows followers to use critical thinking skills in decision-making processes (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Fourth, the individualized consideration component of transformational leadership examines followers based on their individual needs and creates specific plans for development (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Combined, the elements make up the Bass model of charismatic-transformational leadership. This approach helped me establish whether followers were influenced by their transformational leaders to find perceived meaning in work.

Nature of the Study

This study was guided by a quantitative approach including a randomized experimental design. This method was selected because of the ability to make causal inferences. The participants read a hypothetical description of a leader. Information on the hypothetical leader's charisma and individualized consideration was independently manipulated in a detailed description of the leader in a 2 x 2 between-subjects design. The participants were asked to indicate how much meaning they believed they would find in their jobs if the leader in the description was their supervisor. The IVs were the information participants read on charisma and individualized consideration presented by the leader. The DV was the hypothetical judgment of meaning in work. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS. I conducted a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to address the research hypotheses. The population for this study was men and women who worked for organizations in the United States, reported directly to a

supervisor or leader, were at least 18 years of age, had been employed for a minimum of 6 months, and had completed the prescreening questions.

Definition of Terms

Charisma: Idealized influence (Bass, 1985).

Idealized influence: A leader who leads by example with belief and boldness for others to follow (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Individualized consideration: An attentive leader who guides followers while being available upon request (Bass, 1985).

Inspirational motivation: A transformational leader encourages followers to envision the direction in which the organization is heading through trust and relationship building (Kovjanic, Schuh, & Jonas, 2013).

Intellectual stimulation: A leader allow followers to use critical thinking skills in decision-making processes (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Leadership: An individual with a plan and strategy to achieve the desired goal (Northhouse, 2013).

Meaningful work: Deeper meaning in work beyond compensation (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007).

Transformational leadership: A leader who motivates followers to perform beyond what is expected to accomplish organizational goals (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015).

Assumptions

I ensured the volunteer participants had a clear understanding of the experimental study before the study began. I assumed the volunteer participants would provide honest and accurate responses.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

The focus of this quantitative study was the relationship between transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work. The study included hypothetical descriptive statements about a transformational leader to determine participants' perception of meaning in work. My role did not affect the outcome of the study through biases exhibited during the data collection process. Two of the most important delimitations were (a) the study only involved two elements of transformational leadership, and (b) the experimental study involved hypothetical judgments. There are four components to the model of transformational leadership theory and the focus in this study was on two of the four, which may have affected the results. The mood of the participants could have affected how they perceived and rated the leader in the hypothetical description. The population consisted of men and women who were working for organizations within the United States, reported directly to a supervisor or leader, were at least 18 years of age, had been employed for a minimum of 6 months, and completed the prescreening questions (Do you report to supervisor? Have you been employed for at least six months? and Are you at least 18 years of age?). It was unclear whether the findings of the experiment would be generalizable to actual leadership behaviors.

Summary

Organizations invest substantial resources in their leaders through professional development programs. The desired benefit of the investment is to keep the leaders in the organization. This chapter contained an introduction to the problem, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, theoretical foundation for the study, nature of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions and scope, and limitations and delimitations for the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature related to transformational leadership and followers' perceived meaning in work. The literature review was designed to support this study of whether reading information on transformational leadership influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work for followers. The review of the literature provided a basis for research on this topic.

Burns (1978) was the first to introduce the idea of transforming leadership. In the mid-1980s, leadership had grown stale and unexciting, and charismatic-transformational leadership reinvigorated research in the field (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Bass (1985) expanded the work of Burns and used “transformational” instead of “transforming.” The definition of transformational leadership is a leadership style in which followers are changed internally and externally through a charismatic leader. A transformational leader has vision, is attentive, is insightful, and implements change. As a result of the impact of charismatic-transformational leadership in the field, leaders continue to push research in this area (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). This chapter includes a discussion of the model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). This chapter is divided into the following sections: literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and the review of the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted a thorough search of the literature by choosing filters to limit the results to peer-reviewed journals, books, and government documents. To conduct this

review, I used the following databases and search engines: Expanded Academic ASAP, Emerald Journals, ProQuest Central, Sage Premier, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, SOCIndex, Thoreau, and Web of Science. The key terms and combinations used in databases and search engines were *transformational leadership, meaning, value, values, influence, influenced, influencing, impact, impacted, impacts, impacting, importance and work, workplace, business, businesses, company, companies, company's, corporation, corporations and corporate*. In addition, I narrowed the search using a date range of 1985 to 2017 to select empirical literature.

Theoretical Framework

The model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) is used to explain the behaviors of leaders, attitudes of employees, and perceptions that influence meaning in work. Transformational leadership theory is one of the most widely used theories in both the public and private sectors (Bass, 1985). This theory also promotes innovation (Kim & Yoon, 2015). According to Walumbwa et al. (2013), research studies showed transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work are linked based on the behaviors of the transformational leader. The model of transformational leadership focuses on the extent to which leaders influence followers (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

Walumbwa et al. (2013) described four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, in which the leader leads by example; inspirational motivation, reminding followers of the plan and process to achieve it; intellectual

stimulation, encouraging followers to use critical thinking skills in decision-making processes; and individualized consideration, looking at followers based on their individual needs and a creating specific plan for development.

Walumbwa et al. (2013) stated, transformational leaders lead by example, which enables followers to see themselves through the eyes of the leader and develop a higher purpose for their work. Transformational leaders provide work with moral purpose, which helps raise followers' level of allegiance (Arnold et al., 2007; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993) because followers believe they are a part of a larger goal than simply earning a paycheck (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Followers are motivated by transformational leaders who share a clear vision and mission that relates to the values they possess (Shamir et al., 1993). Transformational leaders who provide visionary and inspirational messages are instrumental in helping followers find more meaning in their work (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 261).

Walumbwa et al. (2013) suggested there are four potential mediators between transformational leadership and finding meaning in work for followers. The first is self-efficacy, which relates to followers believing in their abilities to perform the job (Walumbwa et al., 2013). According to Bandura (as cited in Walumbwa et al., 2013), when followers have confidence in their ability to perform, it enhances the meaning in their work, which affects the outcome of the organization. Also, transformational leadership may increase self-efficacy because it is linked to the follower's individual confidence (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Second, Walumbwa et al. used Hackman and Oldham's (1980) five core job characteristics model (i.e., variety, identity, significance,

autonomy, and feedback) to explain the affiliation between transformational leadership and finding meaning in work. *Variety* refers to the job requiring the use of different skills, *identity* refers to an employee seeing the job completed from the beginning to the end, *significance* is how the job affects the lives of others, *autonomy* is the freedom the job allows, and *feedback* refers to the information shared with an employee regarding his or her job performance (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Task variation provides the follower an opportunity to complete multiple projects that are not repetitive. Hackman and Oldham (as cited in Walumbwa et al., 2013) stated that when followers are performing their job responsibilities, they compare the work to their values and consider the influence it has on the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Followers look for autonomy from their transformational leaders because it represents that they are trusted to perform their jobs (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Feedback is essential for the follower because of the validity it provides on how well the job was performed (Walumbwa et al., 2013). When these job characteristics are present, followers find meaning in their work (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Third, Walumbwa et al. (2013) suggested relational identification is a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and finding meaning in work and occurs when the follower identifies with the personal characteristics displayed by the transformational leader. Fourth, Walumbwa et al. suggested self-concordant goals are a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and finding meaning in work. Transformational leaders may influence self-concordant goals by linking followers' personal values and goals to the work goals. When followers view work goals

and personal goals as the same, they are internally motivated and will put forth greater effort to attain those goals. When these four mediators are present, followers will find meaning in their work and exceed the expectations of the transformational leader (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Transformational leaders share the importance and purpose of work with followers through positive means (Bass, 1985) and transform followers by encouraging them to see the value in their work based on their relationship with the transformational leader (Sparks & Schenk, 2001, p. 849).

Transformational leadership requires charisma when it comes to providing followers with the company's vision and mission (Bass, 1985, 1990), which raises the followers' expectations to perform. Transformational leaders develop followers through individualized consideration of their uniqueness while providing coaching (Bass, 1985, 1990). Transformational leaders who exhibit positive behaviors contribute to the expected increase in meaning in work because it shows that followers' efforts are valued and appreciated (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Transformational Leadership

Barling et al. (1996) offered a view of transformational leadership connected to outcomes that are linked to the organization and the employees' dedication. Barling et al. completed a field experiment in which participants were randomly assigned a condition. The study took place in Canada and male and female managers were chosen to participate in the training and control groups (Barling et al., 1996). There were three different outcome variables: how followers perceived their leader, how committed followers were

to their branch, and the financial performance of the branch (Barling et al., 1996). The reliability of the subscales was satisfactory (Barling et al., 1996). The completed field experiment advanced the understanding of transformational leadership as the results supported its effectiveness (Barling et al., 1996). Barling et al. conducted pre- and posttests and results indicated followers of managers who completed training perceived their managers to be smarter than followers whose leaders received no training. The overall training affected followers' dedication and loyalty and led to financial gains for the organization (Barling et al., 1996). The results of this study show how transformational leadership affects genders, industries, and countries and the importance of transformational leaders to followers (Barling et al., 1996).

Bass (1999) shared how followers' identification can be enhanced through interactions with transformational leaders. There were several factors used with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) in a variety of entities and occupations (Bass, 1999). The original six-factor structure that includes three transformational and three transactional factors remains optimal. The transformational factors are inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, and the transactional factors are contingent reward, active management-by-exception, and passive management-by-exception. The results of Bass's study on transformational leaders and transactional leaders showed how the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire is incorporated and best used with elements of the model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1999). This study is relevant to the current study because it highlighted the factors

of transformational leaders that were identified in these leaders that are connected to followers in the organization.

Cooke and Walker (2013) reported that transformational leadership is linked to higher levels of morale and performance in followers. Their study took place at a retreat with a diverse group of academicians from a variety of nursing and midwifery backgrounds, and with diversity in expertise and experience. Cooke and Walker determined that transformational leadership and knowledge translation were a good formula for success. The participants were encouraged because of the characteristics their transformational leadership exhibited. The findings showed that transformational leadership skills and behaviors enhanced unity as the individuals were given assistance, authority and felt safe to share their thoughts and ideas in the decision-making process. This research supports the current study because it highlighted the nature of the behaviors transformational leaders possess. Based on how the transformational leader is displayed within the organization, followers are affected and connect with their leaders, which increases their performance.

Eisenbeiß and Boerner (2013) communicated with 76 research and development (R&D) companies for their study and 14 participated. They used a 20-item scale based on the MLQ to measure transformational leadership. Items were evaluated from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*almost always*). An example of an item is, “The leader gets me to look at problems from many different angles.” The results of the study connected transformational leadership and followers’ originality; however, there was a decrease because of leadership dependency. The overall relationship between the two was positive.

García-Morales et al. (2008) showed that transformational leadership influences followers' understanding of how they affect the organization's vision. The companies used in their study demonstrated high turnover in four sectors (i.e., food farming, manufacturing, construction, and services). A total of 900 chief executive officers, advisors, and educators were randomly selected to be interviewed for the study (García-Morales et al., 2008). The viewpoints shared by the leaders provided insight into how variables related (knowledge slack, absorptive capacity, tacitness, organizational learning) and how change provided an association between transformational leadership and production in the organization. The results showed the relationships between these variables.

Kovjanic et al. (2013) selected participants from various walks-of-life. The participants were selected via an online company, and 190 individuals between the ages of 28 and 36 years volunteered for the experiment. The followers imagined they were part of an R&D company and the leader would provide them with details of the experiment (Kovjanic et al., 2013). The difference in the experiment between transformational and non-transformational leadership was that one shared characteristics of a transformational leader and the other shared facts (Kovjanic et al., 2013). The final step was the manipulation check. The measurements used were from earlier studies to maintain consistency with the scales. The questionnaires were in two languages. The MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1995) was used for evaluating transformational leadership. There are four essentials of transformational leadership: vision, high expectations, confidence, and mentoring. The experimental test addressed followers' relationships with the

transformational leader and how they connected to the basic psychological needs and work engagement to enhance followers' work performance. The results showed improved followers' work outcomes are better when they are engaged in their work. The researchers also discovered that transformational leadership encourages work engagement through ability, understanding, and independence. Work engagement enhances followers' overall routine. This study is significant because it was conducted experimentally and online. The current study was also experimental, participants were found online, and there was a manipulation check. However, the focus was not on the same areas, but the followers were provided with descriptions of a hypothetical leader to determine whether they perceived meaningful work.

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Bommer (1996) stated that trust is a major trait required for transformational leaders to build relationships with followers. Podsakoff et al. selected participants from several large companies throughout the United States and Canada. Participants were selected from an extensive range of businesses, such as printing and automotive. The measures focused on behaviors such as job attitude, role perception, and performance. The sample included 1,539 employees, and matching performance data were collected from over 1,200 managers. The scale was designed to measure six key dimensions of transformational leadership: "articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, providing individualized support, and intellectual stimulation" (Podsakoff et al., 1996, p. 265). Podsakoff et al. examined associations with transformational leadership behaviors within the setting of Kerr and Jermier's (1978)

alternates for leadership. The results showed there were three leadership manners and five alternatives that correlated to followers trusting their leader. Two leadership manners showed individual support ($\beta = .33$) and significant relationship to trust ($\beta = .28$).

Seltzer and Bass (1990) examined three factors of transformational leadership: charismatic leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. The MLQ uses a 5-point scale of 4 (*frequently, if not always*), 3 (*fairly often*), 2 (*sometimes*), 1 (*once in a while*), and 0 (*not at all*). There were three transformational leadership scales from the MLQ: charisma (e.g., “My manager makes me proud to be associated with him/her”), individualized consideration (e.g., “My manager provides advice to those who need it”), and intellectual stimulation (e.g., “My manager enables me to look at old problems in new ways”). A leader has an impact both on individual followers and the entire group of followers (Seltzer & Bass, 1990). The subjects were 98 full-time managers who were also part-time students in an advanced MBA elective (Seltzer & Bass, 1990). The results showed that by examining the regression equations, charisma and individualized consideration were positively connected to the three outcome measures: leader’s effectiveness, subordinate’s extra effort, and subordinate’s satisfaction with the leader. Intellectual stimulation was positively related to extra effort (Seltzer & Bass, 1990). This study is significant to the current study because its focus was on two of the factors that were used to determine whether followers found meaning in work through the hypothetical leadership descriptions. Providing followers with one-on-one feedback shows individual consideration and not a one-size-fits all model.

Kark and Shamir (2002) proposed that self-concept is what enables a transformational leader to influence followers through relational identification. When followers can relate directly to their supervisor, it causes them to become internally engaged and to produce more than the goal. Also, it enhances the meaningfulness of their work, because they now feel affinity (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Lord and Brown (2004) agreed that followers find meaning in their work when their leaders affect the view they have of themselves. Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) found that “transformational leadership increased the followers’ relational identification, when the leader was selfless, and exhibited poise and nerve” (p. 246). When leaders possess behaviors such as relational identification, selflessness, and poise and nerve, followers’ meaningfulness in work increases (Kark et al., 2003).

Behaviors of Transformational Leaders

In organizational science, transformational leadership is frequently studied for the behaviors that distinguish them from other types of leaders (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Humphreys and Einstein (2003) highlighted two key behaviors that transformational leaders possess: justice and integrity. Burns (1978) referred to these as moral standards that cannot be conceded. House (1977) also stated that charismatic leaders possess a distinctiveness that sets them apart from their counterparts, such as high self-confidence, dominance, a strong belief in the moral correctness of the vision, and the need to influence other people. Bass (1990, p. 21) described the importance of the transformational leader remaining appealing to employees in an effort to succeed. Bass (1985) stated that charismatic leaders have the

ability to influence—employees want to identify with their leader when the leader exhibits a firm belief of trustworthiness. Charismatic leaders give followers the hope of accomplishing great things. Weber stated followers obey the charismatic leader based on the personal trust and beliefs in the leader's power and revelations (as cited in Wren, 1994, p. 195). Followers are apt to follow a charismatic leader during times of affliction because of the trust they have developed for the leader (Bass, 1985, 1990; Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson, & Spangler, 1995; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Humphreys & Parise, 2000). Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggested, "The distinction from charismatic and noncharismatic leaders are their ability to recognize the limitations in the current system" (p. 83).

Transformational leaders can be of benefit to organizations where there has been no fairness (Bass, 1985). On the other hand, all leaders who possess charisma are not transformational leaders (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003); cults, such as the Branch of Davidians, and Adolf Hitler led followers to disaster (Bass, 1985).

Perceived Meaning in Work and Transformational Leadership

According to Bass (1985), among the leadership theories, transformational leadership has been identified as the original link to meaningful work. Transformational leadership refers to leader behaviors that focus on building followers (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Transformational leaders are identified by followers based on their perception of the values the leaders possess (Krishnan, 2004). Walumbwa et al. (2013) suggested that followers find meaning in their work when they can identify with their transformational

leaders. Followers can experience meaning in their work when the overall goal of the company is a priority over their individual goals (Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Arnold et al. (2007) conducted two studies to investigate the relationships among transformational leadership, followers' insight as to what they gain from work, and their mental and emotional state. In Study One, the participants were 319 Canadian health care workers and most were female (93%), 40 to 49 years of age, and had been employed for a minimum of 6 to 10 years (Arnold et al., 2007). The response rate for the surveys was 29%. The researchers used the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1990) to measure transformational leadership characteristics detailed to each dimension. "The scale has four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration" (p. 193). The questionnaire measured the items from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*frequently, if not always*). The items were separated into subscales, one for each component of transformational leadership and yielded high intercorrelations (average $r = .76$). The reliability of the aggregated measure was .93. The followers finding meaning in work involved a scale of four items from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The greater the number, the more significance followers deemed work meaningful. The measure had stability ($\alpha = .84$). The results of the study showed there was significance between transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work ($\beta = .48, p < .01$). Validity was shown through the positive outcome of transformational leadership being linked to psychological well-being. In a recent study, Arnold (2017) asked whether transformational leadership predicts employee well-being? The findings showed there

was no all-inclusive “positive” or “negative” connection between transformational leadership and employee well-being. Future research is necessary in this area.

Sparks and Schenk (2001) found that followers’ capability to find meaning in their work was connected to transformational leadership. There has been extensive research on transformational leaders and the employees they motivate to produce more and few studies on the instruments which these outcomes occurred. The purpose of this article was to appraise transformational leadership and the mechanisms to investigate the outcome as to how employees are motivated and perform high. A sample of 31 participants was randomly selected from a computerized database and attended a focus group. Published measures were used as a guide and they were adapted or items were created to suit the present search context, attitude, and performance. The evidence showed transformational leadership may be influential to the recruits and their job satisfaction. Sparks and Schenk offered an early check of leadership in multilevel marketing organizations (MLMs), an exceptional and expanding organizational framework. The contributions from this study were an understanding of the nature of MLMs and how transformational leadership may influence followers to find meaning in their work and exceed expectations in their performance. It also showed positive relationships between transformational leadership and both job satisfaction and perceptions of units of cohesion. Both paths were significant ($r_{3.1} = 0.22$, $r_{4.1} = 0.59$, both $p < 0.01$). There were significant positive relationships between transformational leadership and higher purpose in one’s work ($r_{5.1} = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$; Sparks & Schenk, 2001).

Ghadi, Fernando, and Caputi's (2013) study included participants who were full-time employees working under a supervisor in a wide range of businesses in Australia. There were 530 participants, 259 were men and 271 were women. The participants ranged in age from 20 to over 61 years. Their academic backgrounds represented no high school to PhD. Participants worked in a variety of business sectors, including agricultural, tourism, and transportation. "The Global Transformational Leadership Scale was used to assess for the four behaviors of transformational leadership (Carless, Wearing, & Mann, 2000): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration". There were two measures: transformational leadership and meaning in work. "There was strong evidence that the seven-item GTL is highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.93$) and has strong validity has evidence which should have substantiated utility value" (Ghadi, Fernando, & Caputi's, 2013, p. 541). "These results lend support to the discriminant validity of this measure and did not suggest that common method variance was a problem in the data" (p. 401). "The factor loading of the seven-items are above the required 0.50 cut-off value which range from 0.78 to 0.88 with a mean of 0.84 (SD = 0.05)" (p. 396). Responses to the GTL range from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently, if not always*). For meaning in work, the authors used May et al.'s (2004) scale.

This scale has good psychometric qualities with high reliability ($\alpha = 0.90$). The participants' perceptions of meaning in work were measured by asking followers to rate their perceptions of six items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The researchers found a correlation between

transformational leadership and meaning in work ($r = 0.69, p < 0.01$). (Ghadi, Fernando, & Caputi's, 2013, p. 543)

Pradhan and Pradhan (2016) investigated how the mediator of meaningful work relates to “transformational leadership and two job outcomes of affective organizational commitment and contextual performance” (p. 175). *Affective commitment* is a follower's emotional attachment to the organization when identifying with the vision and mission (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The participants for the study were informational technology specialists. There were 480 participants, 345 were men and 135 were women. The average age of the participants was 26.82 years. The researchers used the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1990) to evaluate the level to which followers attributed transformational leadership to their superiors. The questionnaire has “20 items on the four dimensions of transformational leadership. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.95. The researchers used the Workplace Spirituality Scale (WSS) to determine the level to which followers experienced meaningful work in their job performance. The scale has six items and a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.76. The results of the study showed transformational leadership was positively associated with affective organizational commitment ($r = 0.56, p < 0.01$) and contextual performance ($r = 0.53, p < 0.01$). The correlation value of transformational leadership and meaningful work was $r = 0.54 (p < 0.01)$ ” (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2016, p. 185).

Summary and Conclusions

The review of literature provided the history of the model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), the MLQ (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), and perceived

meaning in work. Transformational leadership theory has been used in both the public and private sectors. The four elements of transformational leadership (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) are key indicators for a transformational leader (Bass, 1985). The literature showed that transformational leaders can positively affect followers' mental state, actions, creativity, and their work performance (Arnold, 2017). The one important limitation of the studies was that they did not allow for causal conclusions. There is not much known about the effects of transformational leadership as much of the research has been correlational in nature. More experimental research on transformational leadership is needed to gain a better understanding of its influence. Overall, results of the studies reviewed in this chapter support that the relationship between transformational leaders and employees' well-being is not universal.

Transformational leadership is deemed to be an influence in leadership styles (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) stated that charismatic and transformational leadership has played an integral role in research to advance leadership in terms of their early influence on the volume of work. Weber (1947) and Burns (1978) described the effects of transformational leadership on followers and how transformational leadership instills pride, respect, and trust in followers, which motivates performance beyond expectations (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Bass (1999) identified that transformational leadership would generate a higher level of commitment from followers, a statement that has been supported by numerous studies. Givens (2008) stated there are several studies showing the importance of transformational leadership

and the organization. According to Barling et al. (1996), transformational leadership is connected to outcomes linked to the organization and employees' dedication. Sparks and Schenk (2001) found that followers' ability to find meaning in their work was connected to transformational leadership. Although there is a link between transformational leadership and finding meaning in work identified in theory, there is no empirical test relating leader behaviors to the task meaningfulness (Walumbwa et al., 2013). Cooke and Walker (2013) linked transformational leadership to higher levels of morale and performance among followers.

The current research involved an experimental aspect that is the original contribution of the study. The experiment was designed to determine whether reading information on transformational leadership influenced perceived meaning in work. The study was a randomized experiment. Information on the hypothetical leader's charisma and individualized consideration was independently manipulated in a detailed description of the leader in a 2 x 2 between-subjects design.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the rationale and methodological design for this experimental study and provide a detailed overview of the population, sampling procedures and processes specific to followers, and the data collection procedures used in the study. Finally, I present the ethical considerations and the measures taken to prevent ethical conflicts within this experimental study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine whether reading information on transformational leadership influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work. This chapter includes an overview of the quantitative study, including the research design and rationale; population and sampling procedures; recruitment, participation, and data collection procedures; the instrumentation and operationalization of constructs; threats to external, internal, and construct validity; and ethical concerns. This chapter also contains a discussion of the specific research methods used to conduct the study.

Research Design and Rationale

This study included a 2 x 2 between-subjects design in which information on the independent variables (IVs) of charisma (i.e., charisma versus no information on charisma) and individualized consideration (i.e., individualized consideration versus no information on individualized consideration) was manipulated in a description of a hypothetical leader. The dependent variable (DV) was the hypothetical judgment of meaning in work based on the hypothetical description of the leader. The study was a randomized experiment conducted to enable causal inferences.

I analyzed the data using SPSS. There were no major time or resource constraints related to the research design. The data were gathered within a 3-week time frame.

Methodology

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of men and women who were working for organizations within the United States and reported directly to a supervisor or leader,

were at least 18 years of age, and had been employed for a minimum of 6 months. Once a participant answered in the affirmative to the prescreening questions, he or she was allowed to continue to the consent form page.

To determine the needed sample size for the two-way ANOVA expressed as a multiple regression model, I used the G*Power 3.1 software program (see Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). With three predictors (i.e., presence of charisma, presence of individualized consideration, and the interaction of the two) based on a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) and an alpha level of $\alpha = .05$, the minimum sample size needed to achieve sufficient power (.80) was 77 respondents. Because there were four groups of respondents, efforts were made to obtain at least 20 per condition.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment procedures. I conducted convenience sampling of participants through a private company, Qualtrics, located in the United States. Qualtrics uses specific advertisements to attain respondents for online recruitment projects. They offer various incentives based on respondents' unique identifiers for surveys and the length of the survey (Qualtrics, n.d., p. 13).

Potential participants were required to answer three prescreening questions to determine whether they met the criteria to participate in the study; if they met the criteria for participation, they were taken to the informed consent form. Because the participants provided their responses anonymously, they were not required to sign the consent form; proceeding to the next page was a signal of their voluntary consent. The participants who selected to participate in the study first read the hypothetical description of the leader (see

Appendix A) and then made a judgment about the perceived meaning in work. On the next page, participants completed the two manipulation check questions. Last, they answered questions pertaining to their demographics (see Appendix B), including age, ethnicity, highest degree or level of school completed, and gender. Finally, participants read a debriefing statement.

Informed consent. The informed consent form provided participants with details about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw from the study, privacy rights, and contact information for me and Walden's institutional review board (IRB) in case of questions or concerns. The volunteer participants were informed that I was a doctoral candidate who was studying leadership. The participants were also informed that their participation would last between 10 and 20 minutes. The respondents received an incentive from Qualtrics based on the length of the survey, their specific panelist profile, and target acquisition difficulty. The specific type of rewards varied and included cash, airline miles, gift cards, redeemable points, sweepstakes entries, and vouchers.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

All participants read a standardized description of a hypothetical leader, and the information about charisma and individualized consideration was independently manipulated. Each participant was randomly assigned to read one of four different versions of the hypothetical description. The hypothetical leader description is located in Appendix A. The four versions reflected all combinations of the levels of charisma and individualized consideration. The information that reflected charisma was in bold and the individualized consideration information was italicized. The participants were asked to

imagine that the leader in the description was their supervisor and to indicate how much meaning they would find in their job if the leader was their supervisor. Participants responded to the following question: “Imagine that the leader in the description that you read is your supervisor. How much meaning would you find in your job if this person was your supervisor?” Then, they rated their response on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very little meaning*) to 7 (*a great deal of meaning*). The IVs for this study were the information participants read on charisma and individualized consideration concerning the leader. Charisma refers to a transformational leader who has foresight, assuredness, and sets high standards for followers to emulate (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Individualized consideration refers to a leader who is attentive to each follower’s needs and coaches followers along (Bass, 1985).

The participants answered the following questions for the manipulation check. The first question was “How charismatic did the leader in the description seem to you?” Participants rated their responses on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very little charismatic*) to 7 (*a great deal charismatic*). The second question was “Rate the leader in the description, with respect to the level of individualized consideration they have shown.” Participants rated their responses on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very little individualized consideration*) to 7 (*a great deal of individualized consideration*).

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using SPSS to address the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: Does reading information on charisma increase perceived meaning in work?

Research Hypothesis 1 – Reading information on charisma increases perceived meaning in work.

Null Hypothesis 1 – Reading information on charisma does not influence perceived meaning in work.

RQ2: Does reading information on individualized consideration increase perceived meaning in work?

Research Hypothesis 2 – Reading information on individualized consideration increases perceived meaning in work.

Null Hypothesis 2 – Reading information on individualized consideration does not influence perceived meaning in work.

I performed a two-way ANOVA to answer the research questions. Although the two-way ANOVA included an interaction, only the main effects were used to address the hypotheses. Appropriate follow-up analyses were conducted, and I checked for outliers. The descriptive statistics included means, standard deviations, and effect sizes.

Threats to Validity

Internal and External Validity

According to Mertler and Vannatta (2010), there are some forms of errors associated with research. In this research study, the external validity of the experiment was questionable because the judgment and description were hypothetical. Another external threat related to using an online survey, which could have eliminated potential participants who had limited computer access. The potential threats to internal validity related to the willingness of participants to provide well thought out responses. The

content validity of the manipulations was addressed by writing the manipulated sentences based on their definitions of each variable, charisma and individualized consideration. Also, construct validity was addressed with the manipulation check questions in the manner in which they were formulated. The dependent measure was a subjective judgment that depended solely on the perspectives of the participants; there was no objective indication of the validity of the measure. When validity threats are reduced, the research is more viable (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993).

Ethical Procedures

I ensured the rights of participants by following the APA guidelines for the ethical protections of humans and the ethical guidelines established by Walden's IRB. During the informed consent process, I advised participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. To protect the privacy of volunteers, numbers were assigned to the participants. I will ensure the security of the data for 5 years by storing them on an external drive that requires password access.

Summary

This experimental study involved participants reading a hypothetical description of a leader to determine whether perceived meaning in work was shown. In this chapter, I discussed the research and design rationale, the methodology, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, instrumentation and operationalization of constructs, data analysis, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. In Chapter 4, I summarize the data from the experimental study to address the research questions and hypotheses.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter provides information on data collection, participant demographics, descriptive statistics, research questions and hypotheses testing, and manipulation check questions. The purpose of this quantitative research study was to determine whether reading information on transformational leadership, which focused on charisma and individualized consideration, influenced a hypothetical judgment of perceived meaning in work. This study appeared to be the first experimental study addressing the relationship between transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work. The research questions and hypotheses were as follows:

RQ1: Does reading information on charisma increase perceived meaning in work?

Research Hypothesis 1 – Reading information on charisma increases perceived meaning in work.

Null Hypothesis 1 – Reading information on charisma does not influence perceived meaning in work.

RQ2: Does reading information on individualized consideration increase perceived meaning in work?

Research Hypothesis 2 – Reading information on individualized consideration increases perceived meaning in work.

Null Hypothesis 2 – Reading information on individualized consideration does not influence perceived meaning in work.

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis to answer the research questions and address the hypotheses.

Data Collection, Response Rate, and Time Frame

After receiving approval from Walden's IRB, I developed the survey. The participants for the study were recruited through an online survey company, Qualtrics, and an e-mail was sent to respondents with the survey link. The criteria for participating in the research study were as follows: The participants had to report directly to a supervisor or leader, had to be at least 18 years of age, and had to have been employed for a minimum of 6 months. Data for the study were collected from April 3, 2018, to April 5, 2018. A total of 106 respondents completed the survey. There were no discrepancies in the data.

Participant Demographics

The participants were between the ages of 18 and 75 years. Most participants were in the age range of 25 to 34 (38.68%), and only two (1.9%) were between the ages of 65 and 74 years. Regarding ethnicity, 82 participants (77.36%) were Caucasian, nine (8.49%) were Black or African American, eight (7.55%) were Hispanic or Latino, six (5.66%) were Asian/Pacific Islander, and one (0.94%) was Native American or American Indian. No participants selected other for their ethnicity. Regarding highest level of education, 23 participants (21.70%) were high school graduates or had a GED, 25 (23.58%) had an associate's degree, 34 (32.08%) had a bachelor's degree, 18 (16.98%) had a master's degree, and six (5.66%) had a doctorate. Most of the participants were women ($n = 56$, 52.83%), 49 (46.23%) were men, and one (0.94%) was other.

The sample was diverse with respect to the variables of age, ethnicity, education level, and gender. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

(BLS; Torpey & Watson, 2014), in 2013, 27% of jobs were occupied by those with less than a high school diploma; 39% of jobs were held by those with a high school diploma or equivalent; 1% of jobs were occupied by those with some college but no degree; 6% of jobs were occupied by those with postsecondary, nondegree awarded; 4% of jobs were occupied by those with an associate's degree; 18% of jobs were occupied by those with a bachelor's degree; 2% of the nation's jobs were occupied by those with a master's degree; and 3% of jobs were occupied by those with a doctoral degree or first professional degree. The sample in this study was significantly more educated than the population reflected in the BLS data (Torpey & Watson, 2014). Based on the educational statistics in this study, 23.58% of the participants had an associate's degree compared to 4% in the BLS data, 32.08% had a bachelor's degree compared to 18% in the BLS data, 16.98% had a master's degree compared to 2% in the BLS data, and 5.66% had a doctoral degree compared to 3% in the BLS data (Torpey & Watson, 2014). An overview of the participant demographics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics (N = 106)

	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18-24	6	5.6%
25-34	41	38.6%
35-44	26	24.5%
45-54	21	19.8%
55-64	10	9.4%
65-74	2	1.8%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	82	77.3%
Hispanic or Latino	8	7.5%
Black or African American	9	8.4%
Native American or American Indian	1	0.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	5.6%
Education		
High school graduate or GED	23	21.7%
Associate degree	25	23.5%
Bachelor's degree	34	32.0%
Master's degree	18	16.9%
Doctoral degree	6	5.7%
Gender		
Female	56	52.8%
Male	49	46.2%
Other	1	0.9%

Screening and Statistical Assumptions for Perceived Meaning in Work

I screened the data for normality with skewness and kurtosis statistics.

Distributions are deemed to be normal if their skewness and kurtosis coefficients are between ± 2 (George & Mallery, 2010). The skewness for perceived meaning in work was -0.82 ($SE = 0.24$) and the kurtosis was 0.57 ($SE = 0.47$). The histogram for perceived meaning in work is shown in Figure 1.

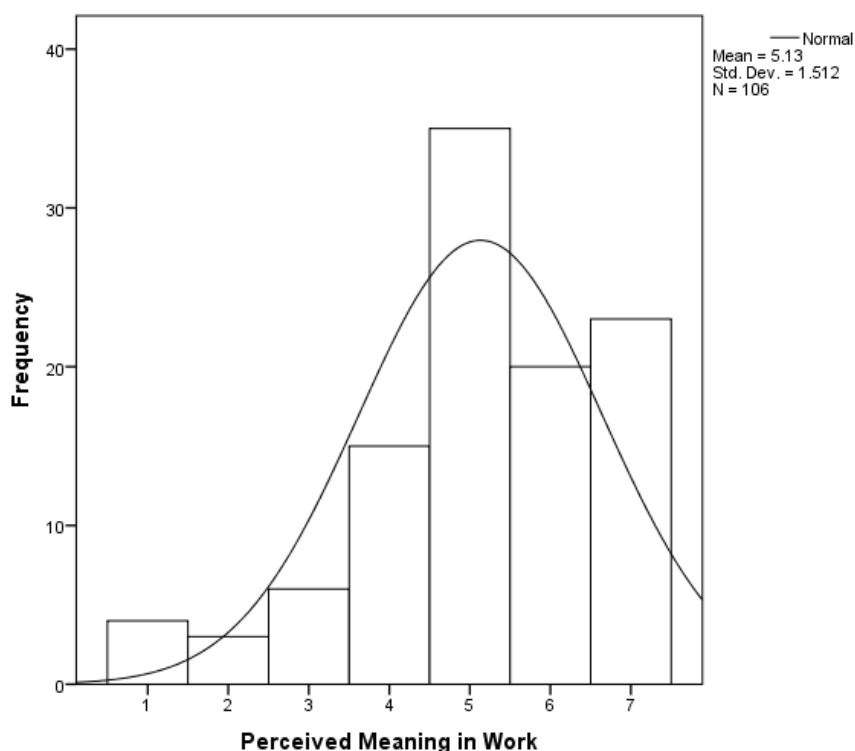


Figure 1. Histogram for perceived meaning in work.

I checked for statistical outliers by generating a boxplot. With a boxplot, statistical outliers are indicated by data points outside the whiskers. Outliers are defined by numerically arranging the dataset from smallest to largest to determine the means of the first and second halves (Hayden, 2005). The values are then divided by 2 to determine Q1 and Q3 (Hayden, 2005). The inner quartile range is found by subtracting the two

values, adding +1.5 to the upper quartile, subtracting -1.5 from the lower quartile, and multiplying by the Q1 and Q3 (Hayden, 2005). The values of Q1 and Q3 show the lower and upper quartile (Hayden, 2005). Outliers can be identified if they are lower or higher than the inner quartile range (Hayden, 2005). There were no data points outside the whiskers. Therefore, no statistical outliers were observed, as shown in Figure 2.

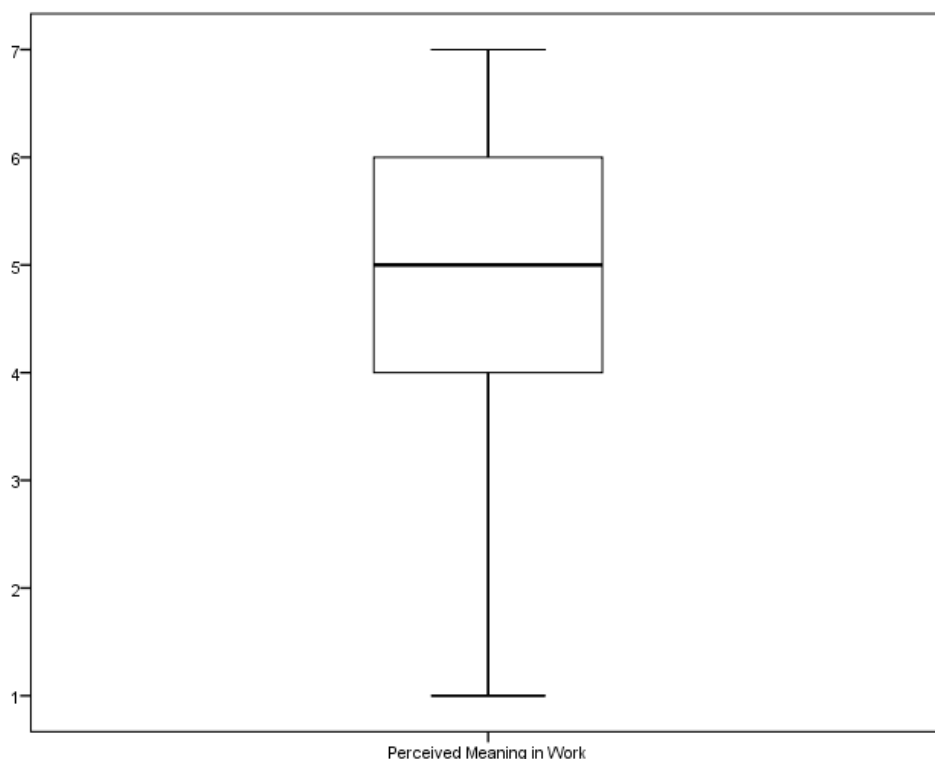


Figure 2. Boxplot of perceived meaning in work.

The distributions of scores for perceived meaning in work for each group (i.e., no charisma and charisma) were also within normal limits relative to skewness and kurtosis. For no charisma, the skewness was -0.67 ($SE = 0.32$) and the kurtosis was -0.01 ($SE = 0.63$). For charisma, the skewness was -0.86 ($SE = 0.34$) and the kurtosis was 1.52 ($SE = 0.66$). The normal histograms for perceived meaning in work within the two charisma groups are shown in Figure 3.

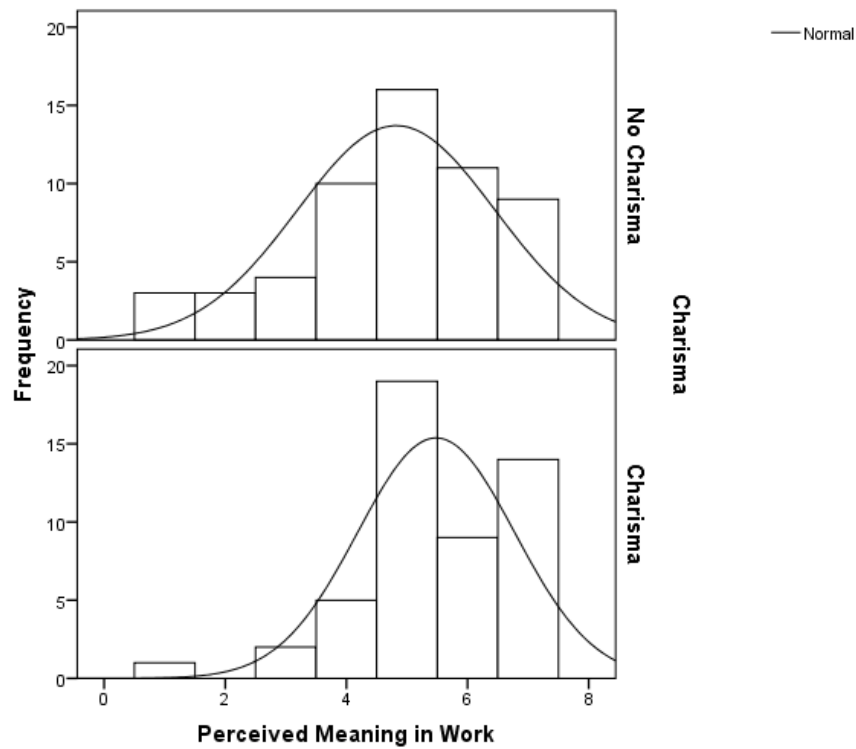


Figure 3. Normal histograms for perceived meaning in work within charisma groups.

The distribution of scores for perceived meaning in work for each group (i.e., no individualized consideration and individualized consideration) were also within normal limits relative to skewness and kurtosis. For no individualized consideration, the skewness was -0.70 ($SE = 0.34$) and the kurtosis was 0.25 ($SE = 0.67$). For individualized consideration, the skewness was -0.79 ($SE = 0.32$) and the kurtosis was 0.40 ($SE = 0.62$). The normal histograms for perceived meaning in work within the two individualized consideration groups are shown in Figure 4.

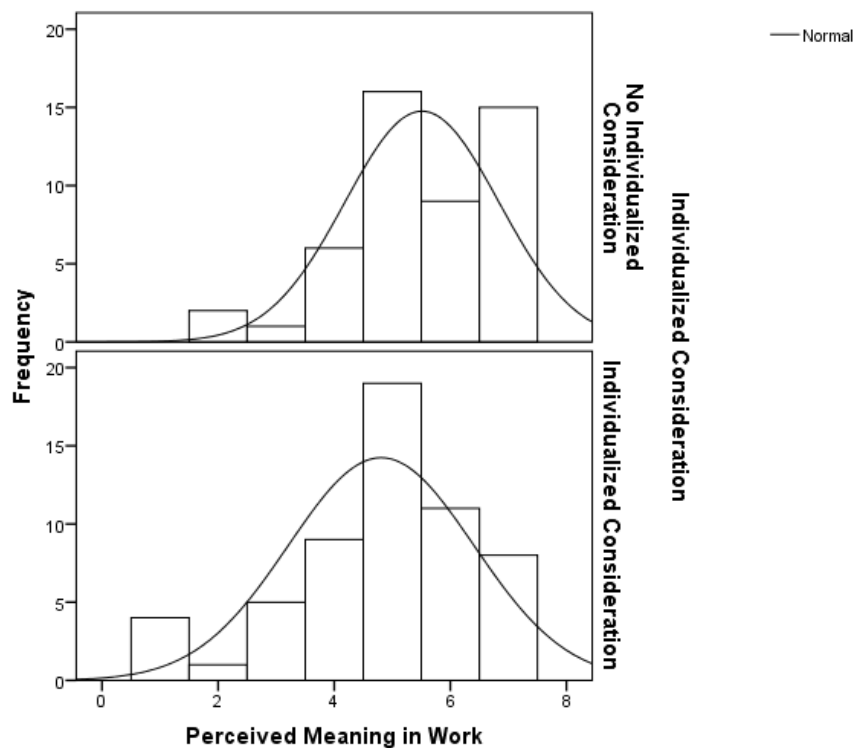


Figure 4. Normal histograms for perceived meaning in work within the two individualized consideration groups.

Levene's test for equality of error variances confirmed that the assumption had not been violated, $F(3, 102) = 1.45, p = .234$.

Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Meaning in Work

Group means for perceived meaning in work, standard deviations, and number of participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Number of Participants (N = 106)

Charisma	Individual Consideration	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
No Charisma	No Individual Consideration	5.20	1.53	25
	Individual Consideration	4.52	1.67	31
Charisma	No Individual Consideration	5.83	1.01	24
	Individual Consideration	5.15	1.46	26

ANOVA Results and Hypotheses

I conducted a two-way ANOVA to address the hypotheses. Although the two-way ANOVA included an interaction, only the main effects were used to address the hypotheses. The ANOVA results for perceived meaning in work are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

ANOVA Results for Perceived Meaning in Work

Source	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Charisma	1	10.60	5.00	.028
Individualized Consideration	1	12.20	5.75	.018
Charisma * Individualized Consideration	1	.00	.00	.994
Error	102	2.12		
Total	105			

Research Question 1/Hypothesis 1

Does reading information on charisma increase perceived meaning in work?

There was a main effect for reading information on charisma, $F(1, 102) = 5.00$, $p = .028$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. Participants who read the hypothetical description of the leader with charisma ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.30$; 95% CI: 5.09-5.90) had significantly greater perceived

meaning in work than participants who read the hypothetical description of the leader with no charisma ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.63$; 95% CI: 4.47-5.25). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected (see Figure 5).

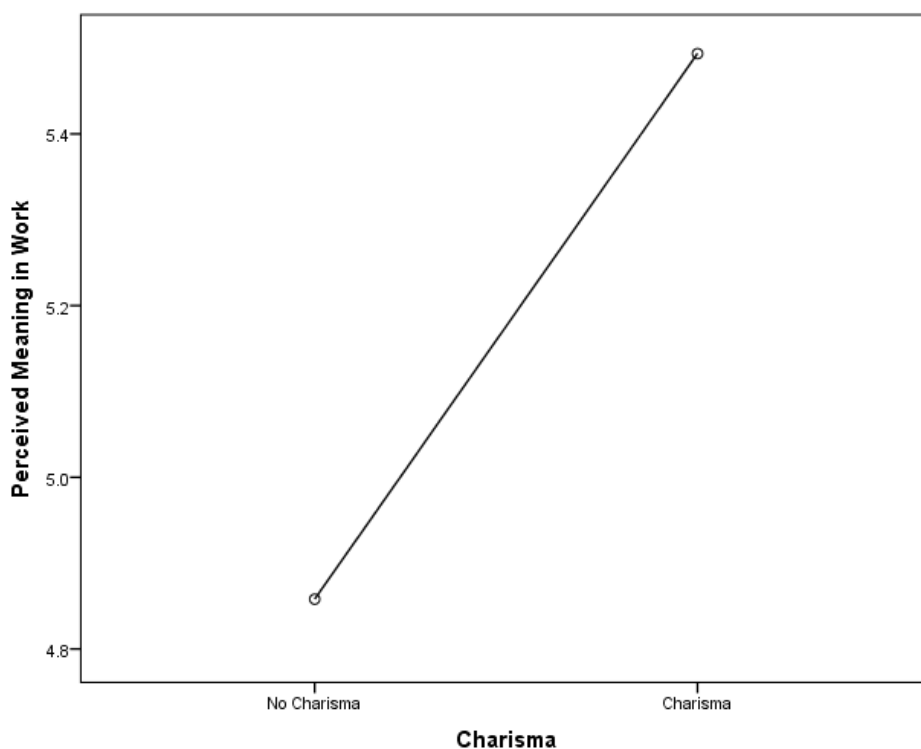


Figure 5. Charisma and perceived meaning in work.

Research Question 2/Hypothesis 2

Does reading information on individualized consideration increase perceived meaning in work? There was a main effect for reading information on individualized consideration, $F(1, 102) = 5.75$, $p = .018$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. Participants who read the hypothetical description of the leader with individualized consideration ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.60$; 95% CI: 4.45-5.22) had significantly lower perceived meaning in work than participants who read the hypothetical description of the leader with no individualized consideration ($M = 5.51$, $SD = 1.33$; 95% CI: 5.10-5.93). Because the means were in the

opposite direction, the second research hypothesis was not supported, and the null hypothesis was rejected (see Figure 6).

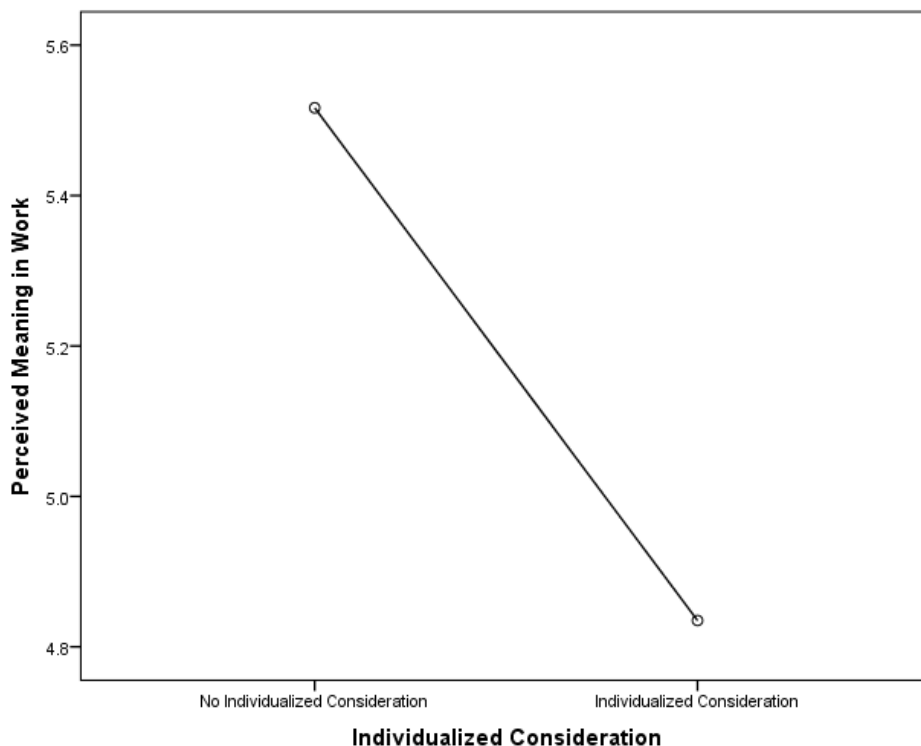


Figure 6. Individualized consideration and perceived meaning in work.

Manipulation Checks

The participants answered the following questions. The first question was “How charismatic did the leader in the description seem to you?” Participants rated their responses on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very little charismatic*) to 7 (*a great deal charismatic*), and the mean was 5.08 ($SD = 1.56$). The second question was “Rate the leader in the description with respect to the level of individualized consideration they have shown.” Participants rated their responses on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very little individualized consideration*) to 7 (*a great deal of individualized consideration*), and the mean was 4.73 ($SD = 1.61$). I conducted a two-way ANOVA for both manipulation check

variables to address whether the manipulations were successful. Prior to the analyses, I screened the data for normality. The skewness for charisma was -0.62 ($SE = 0.24$) and the kurtosis was -0.05 ($SE = 0.47$). The histogram for charisma is shown in Figure 7.

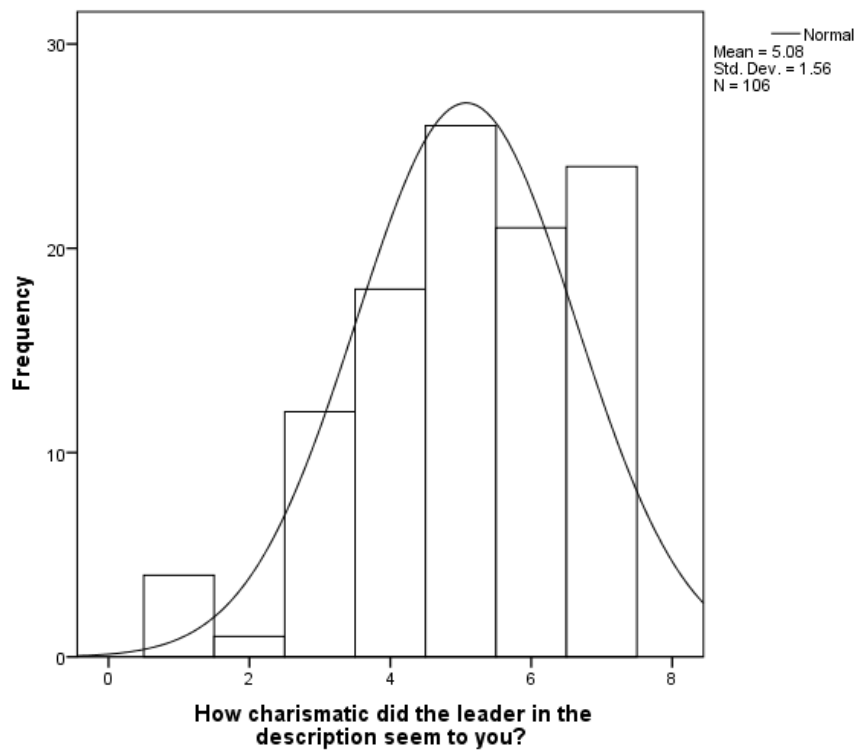


Figure 7. Histogram for charisma.

No statistical outliers were observed, as indicated in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Boxplot of charisma.

Levene's test for equality of error variances confirmed that the assumption had not been violated, $F(3, 102) = 0.36, p = .782$. The ANOVA summary for charisma is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

ANOVA Summary Table for Charisma

Source	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η²</i>
Charisma	1	9.35	3.96	.049	.04
Individual Consideration	1	4.33	1.83	.179	.02
Charisma * Individual Consideration	1	0.07	0.03	.859	.000
Error	102	2.36			
Total	105				

Note. Dependent variable = How charismatic did the leader in the description seem to you?

For the first question (i.e., How charismatic did the leader in the description seem to you?), participants in the charisma group rated the leader significantly higher ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.50$; 95% CI: 4.98-5.84) than participants in the no charisma group ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.57$; 95% CI: 4.40-5.22), $F(1, 102) = 3.96$, $p = .049$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. However, the ratings of the leader were not significantly different between the individualized consideration ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.63$; 95% CI: 4.50-5.31) and no individualized consideration ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 1.46$; 95% CI: 4.88-5.74) groups, $F(1, 102) = 1.83$, $p = .179$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. Therefore, the manipulation for charisma was successful (see Figure 9).

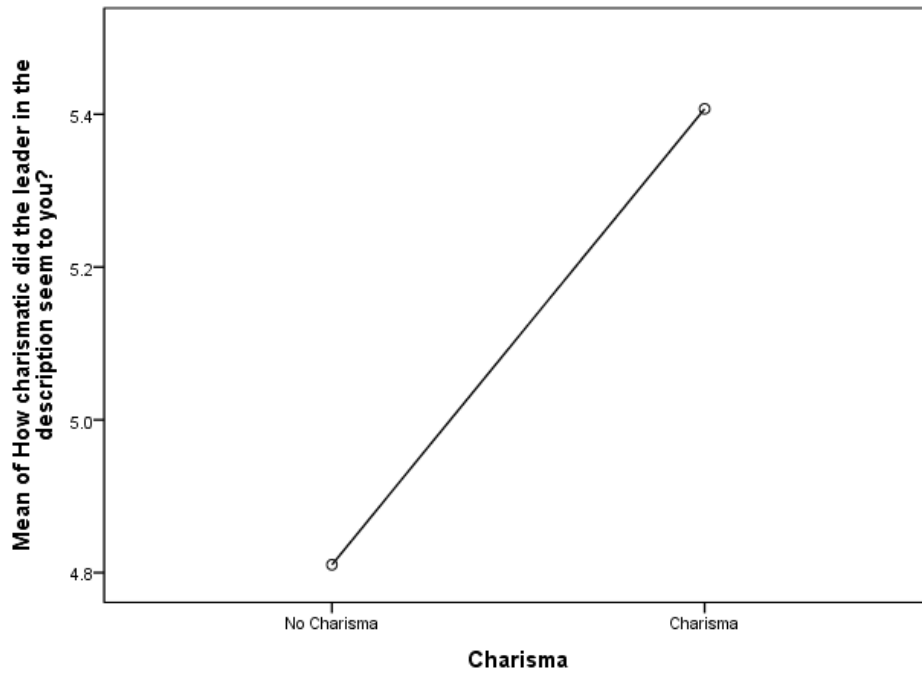


Figure 9. Manipulation check for charisma.

The skewness for individualized consideration was -0.50 ($SE = 0.24$) and the kurtosis was -0.39 ($SE = 0.47$). The histogram for individualized consideration is shown in Figure 10.

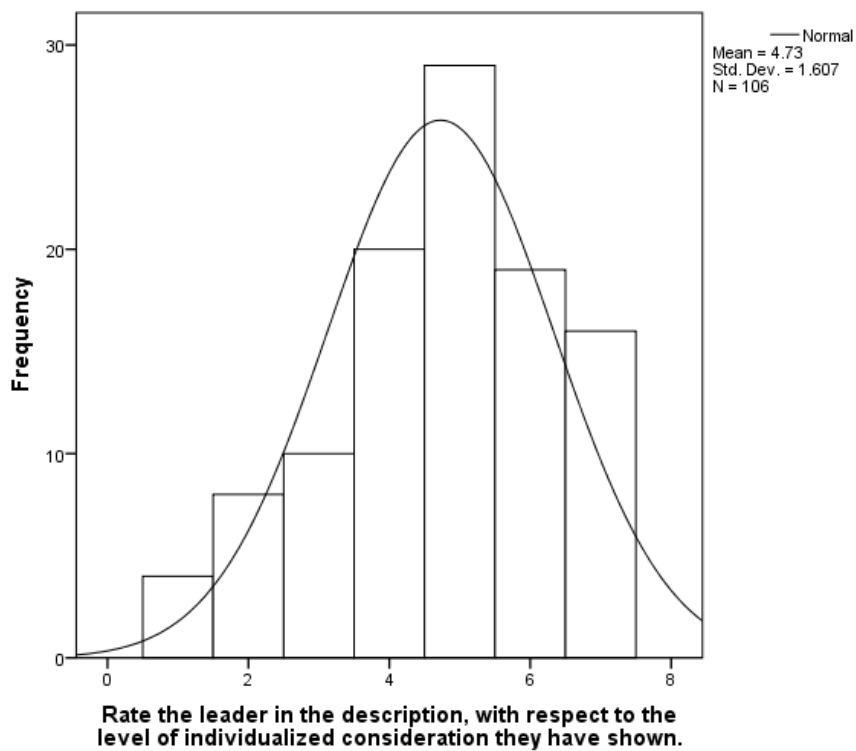


Figure 10. Histogram of individualized consideration.

No statistical outliers were observed, as shown in Figure 11.

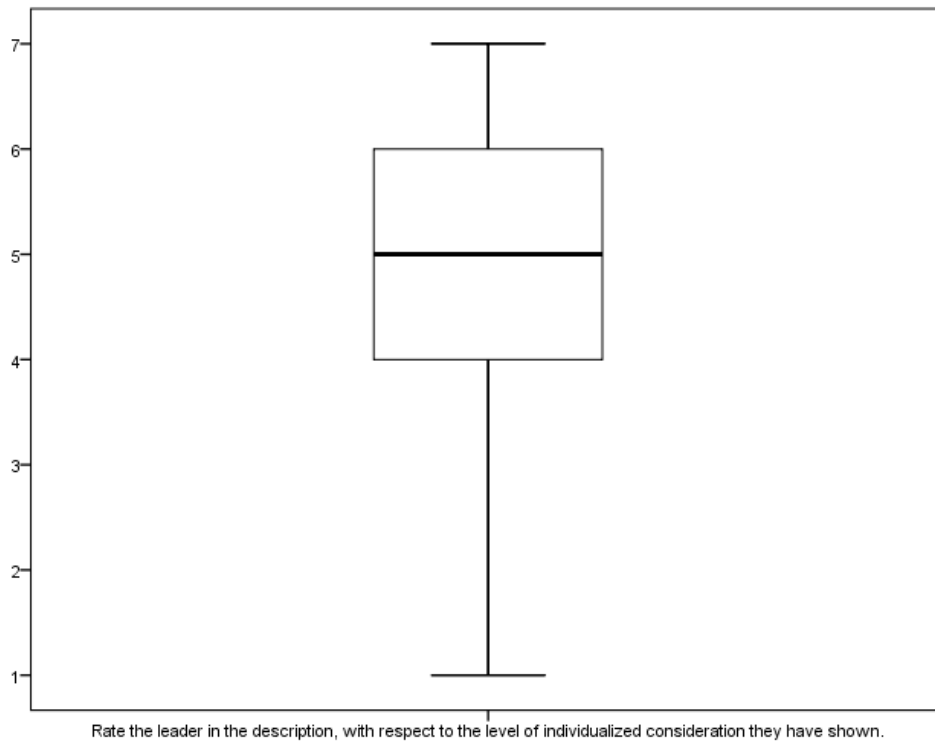


Figure 11. Boxplot of individualized consideration.

Levene's test for equality of error variances confirmed that the assumption had not been violated, $F(3, 102) = 1.15, p = .334$. The ANOVA summary for individualized consideration is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

ANOVA Summary Table for Individualized Consideration

Source	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η²</i>
Charisma	1	3.71	1.42	.236	.01
Individual Consideration	1	0.42	0.16	.689	.00
Charisma * Individual Consideration	1	0.92	0.35	.554	.00
Error	102	2.61			
Total	105				

Note. Dependent variable = Rate the leader in the description with respect to the level of individualized consideration they have shown.

For the second question (i.e., Rate the leader in the description with respect to the level of individualized consideration they have shown), there was no significant difference in the ratings between the individualized consideration ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.64$; 95% CI: 4.25-5.10) and no individualized consideration ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.58$; 95% CI: 4.34-5.26) groups, $F(1, 102) = 0.16$, $p = .689$, partial $\eta^2 = 0$. There also was no significant difference in the ratings between the charisma ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.55$; 95% CI: 4.47-5.38) and no charisma ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.65$; 95% CI: 4.12-4.98) groups, $F(1, 102) = 1.42$, $p = .236$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. Therefore, the manipulation for individualized consideration was unsuccessful.

Conclusion

This chapter provided information on the data collection, participant demographics, screening and statistical assumptions, descriptive statistics, research questions and hypotheses testing, and manipulation check questions. In summary, in response to Research Question 1 (i.e., Does reading information on charisma increase

perceived meaning in work?), results showed reading information on charisma significantly increased perceived meaning in work. In response to Research Question 2 (i.e., Does reading information on individualized consideration increase perceived meaning in work?), results showed reading information on individualized consideration significantly decreased perceived meaning in work; the second research hypothesis was not supported. The manipulation check for charisma was successful and the manipulation check for individualized consideration was unsuccessful. The effect sizes in the study were measured with the partial eta squared, which provides the percentage of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. Thus, if the partial eta squared is equal to .05, as it was for both charisma and individual consideration, this means 5% of the variance in perceived meaning can be accounted for by charisma manipulation and 5% can be accounted for by (no) individualized consideration manipulation. Based on Cohen's (1988) conventions, effect sizes are classified as small (.01), medium (.06), or large (.15). In Chapter 5, I discuss the results, limitations of the study, implications for positive social change, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter contains a summary, interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for positive change, and conclusions from the study. Considering the gap in the literature on experimental studies concerning the effect of transformational leadership on perceived meaning in work, this appeared to be the first experimental study on transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work. The first research question was the following: Does reading information on charisma increase perceived meaning in work? The results showed that reading information on charisma significantly increased perceived meaning in work. The second research question was the following: Does reading information on individualized consideration increase perceived meaning in work? The results showed that reading information on individualized consideration significantly decreased perceived meaning in work. I conducted the manipulation check with charisma and it was successful. The manipulation check with individualized consideration was unsuccessful.

Interpretation of the Findings

After reviewing several other studies, Arnold (2017) determined that further research was needed to focus on the conditions in which transformational leadership affects the well-being of followers. The current study confirmed the extension of knowledge needed in this discipline of experimental studies on transformational leadership and perceived meaning in work. The theoretical framework for this study was the model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). There are four elements of the model: idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation,

and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). The focus in this experimental study was on charisma and individualized consideration.

The first component of the model of transformational leadership is idealized influence, or charisma, meaning a transformational leader is envisioning and confident and sets high standards for followers to emulate (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The results of the current study are consistent with the mediational model of leadership by Walumbwa et al. (2013). The four mediators are self-efficacy, five core job characteristics, relational identification, and self-concordant goals. In the current study, the mediator of relational identification may be linked to the outcome of charisma increasing followers' perceived meaning in work. The relational identification mediator is when the follower relates to the role of the leader. Through reading the hypothetical description of the leader, the followers may have identified a role shown in the characteristics modeled by the transformational leader. In the description of the charismatic leader, Susan (the leader in the hypothetical description of the leader) exhibited confidence in how she conveyed the company's vision and mission statement to followers to ensure everyone understood the process.

The fourth component of the model of transformational leadership is individualized consideration, which means the leader treats each follower as an individual and provides opportunities for growth (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The results of the current study demonstrated that reading the hypothetical description of a transformational leader with individualized consideration significantly decreased perceived meaning in work. The reason for the outcome may be that the readers did not perceive the

transformational leader in the hypothetical description as focusing on each follower's individual needs. Also, the followers may have been concerned about training and development to expand their knowledge and improve their skills for promotion within the company. However, when followers think about training and development, it may lead to the belief that promotion is unlikely, which then reduces perceived meaning in work.

Limitations of the Study

Chapter 1 contained a discussion of two factors that could affect the generalizability of findings: (a) the study involved only two elements of transformational leadership, and (b) the experimental study involved hypothetical judgments. The first limitation of this study was that the results focused on two of the four elements of the transformational leadership model: charisma and individualized consideration. The two elements that were not included were inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Inspirational motivation is used by a leader who provides followers with a clear understanding of shared goals and their importance, and intellectual stimulation occurs when a leader incorporates an open-minded structure for situation evaluation, vision formulation, and patterns of implementation (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The two elements may have resulted in findings similar to charisma and increasing followers' meaning in work. Leaders can be significant in the workplace based on the behaviors they model for followers. Followers may find meaning in their work is more important than compensation. An open-minded structure enables the leader with charisma to build trust with followers by putting the company's goals before his or her own.

The second limitation was that this experimental study involved hypothetical judgments. One issue concerned how followers interpreted the hypothetical description versus actual situations. The followers acknowledged the hypothetical description as fictional and based their judgment on that awareness. However, if perceived meaning was based on an actual observation, the outcome may have been different, as the followers may have seen the leader modeling behaviors that were relatable. This may have affected the results of the study based on followers' personal experiences with their current leaders.

Another limitation of the study was that it was not broad in the spectrum of organizations at which the participants were employed. For instance, it did not focus on nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, educational institutions, churches or industries (e.g., manufacturing, auto, or retail businesses).

Validity concerns were considered at the beginning of the study. Although the judgment and description were hypothetical, the content validity of the manipulations were addressed by writing the manipulated sentences based on their definitions of the two variables, charisma and individualized consideration. Also, construct validity was addressed with the manipulation check questions. The dependent measure was a subjective judgment that depended solely on the perspectives of the participants, and I assumed participants would respond honestly. Although the manipulation check for charisma was successful, it was unsuccessful for individualized consideration. This indicates there may have been a problem with the validity of the manipulation. It may

have been unsuccessful as a result of the participants' interpretations of the hypothetical description of the leader along with the ratings for the question.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this study was on two of the four elements of the model of transformational leadership: charisma and individualized consideration. Future researchers should examine the other components of the model of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (see Bass, 1985). It may be insightful to conduct an experimental study on the remaining elements to determine their influence on participants' perceived meaning in work.

Also, quantitative research does not allow human contact for any component of the model of transformational leadership; future researchers should use qualitative methods to conduct further research on transformational leadership. The qualitative approach would enable a researcher to explore the what and how of the relationships between leaders and followers by conducting one-on-one or group interviews and observations. This approach would add the component of face-to-face participation that is not possible when quantitative methods are used.

Future researchers should also use a larger sample size when examining the remaining components (i.e., intellectual stimulation and inspiration motivation) of the model of transformational leadership. A larger sample size may afford researchers more data to work with if outliers are present in the study. Future research could involve selecting specific industries to determine whether there is a greater impact in one field versus another. For instance, future researchers could study how leaders in Fortune 100

and Fortune 500 companies lead in different regions in the United States. Future researchers could explore the outcome of the unexpected finding in this study that individualized consideration decreased perceived meaning in work.

Implications

This study contributes to the existing knowledge based on the finding that transformational leaders with charisma can increase followers' meaning in work. Leaders with charisma can influence followers' performance by helping them to see the vision of the company versus their individual goals. Leaders can use the results of this study to hire transformational leaders who possess charisma to develop followers to become future leaders (e.g., succession planning programs), and then followers may find perceived meaning in their work. The human resources department may implement programs to enhance employees' performance throughout the company by selecting leaders who possess charisma, which may increase followers' meaning in their work (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Charismatic leaders inspire followers through the behavior they model for followers to emulate. Therefore, an organization may develop leaders within the company because of the impact they may have on followers (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012). Although the model of transformational leadership was the foundation for this study, the theoretical implications are that the mediational model of leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2013) could be linked to the outcome of this study based on the relational identity element.

The results of the study may aid organizations in the reduction of turnover costs by hiring leaders who possess charisma. When followers find no perceived meaning in

their work, turnover rates may be negatively affected. For instance, if followers are only doing the work to earn their wages and there is no value connecting them to do more, they may leave the company.

Conclusion

Transformational leaders are individuals who encourage followers to set aside their personal agenda for the organization's vision. Leaders have a great responsibility in leading followers within their organizations. The results from this study showed that reading information on charisma significantly increased perceived meaning in work. On the other hand, reading information on individualized consideration decreased perceived meaning in work. The results contributed new information to the research on transformational leadership by identifying two elements that may affect followers' perceived meaning in work.

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Appendix A: Description of a Hypothetical Leader

Instructions:

Please read the description below of a hypothetical leader.

Description of a Hypothetical Leader:

Susan exhibits confidence in communicating the company's vision and mission to employees and ensures everyone understands the process. Susan leads by example and her followers emulate her leadership style. Susan is concerned about her followers' growth and development. Susan encourages her followers to attend webinars and conferences to build their skill set to improve their chances for promotion. Susan is all about being successful. She is a leader that provides meaning for the goals at hand. She makes the followers forget about their personal goals and pursue the organizational goals. She makes her followers feel comfortable to think outside the box and be innovative and creative in their job. She asks her team members to share their ideas of how the job can be done more efficiently to increase output. She values her followers' insightfulness about their role. In hopes that this will streamline processes and allow more widgets to be produced. Susan did not address the rumor mill going throughout the office about the North location closing and followers became discouraged. Susan's followers' absences increased due to her failed actions. Susan was unable to engage her followers and the company morale continued to decline. Susan tried various methods to encourage her followers to trust her again, but nothing appeared to be working. She provided lunch, hosted conferences and free after work activities with hopes to amend the mistrust. Susan became transparent and decided to clear up the rumor mill by

scheduling an office wide meeting to inform followers. Once Susan took this measure, she could see a change in the followers' behavior. She makes herself available daily to connect with her followers and interact with them. Susan is an inspiration to her followers and her peers, because she is understandable and engaging.

Appendix B: Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 years or older

2. Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity.

- Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Other

3. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- High school graduate, or GED
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

4. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other