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Affective Commitment to Change and Innovation Implementation Behavior: The Role of Charismatic Leadership and Employees’ Trust in Top Management

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ABSTRACT This questionnaire-based study investigated the relationship between two aspects of leadership (charismatic leadership and trust in top management) and followers’ innovation implementation behavior. Findings from 194 employees working in R&D teams of a multinational automotive company indicated that charismatic leadership and trust in top management were both positively related to innovation implementation behavior, controlling for followers’ individual differences, management level, and department affiliation. The findings demonstrate that both relationships were mediated by followers’ affective commitment to change. Results implicate the need to more closely bond the concepts of affective commitment to change and innovation implementation behavior and consider their connection in future investigations.

KEY WORDS: Charismatic leadership, trust in top management, affective commitment to change, innovation implementation

Introduction

Innovation implementation describes the process by which employees become capable and committed to using a particular innovation. It requires innovation adoption: ‘a decision, typically made by senior organizational managers, that employees within the organization will use the innovation in their work’ (Klein and Sorra, 1996, p. 1055). Implementation failure occurs when, regardless of
this decision, employees do not engage in the innovation as frequently or as con-
sistently as required for the potential benefits of the innovation to be realized
(Klein and Sorra, 1996).

The cause for an organization’s failure to achieve the intended benefits of an
innovation it has adopted may, therefore, result from either a failure of implement-
tation or a failure of the innovation itself. Increasingly, organizational analysts
support the former explanation suggesting that implementation failure, not inno-
vation failure, leads to an organization’s inability to achieve the intended benefits
of the innovations they adopt (Klein and Sorra, 1996). The understanding of
factors that promote employees’ innovation implementation behavior – ‘an
individual’s consistent and committed use of a particular innovation’ (Choi and
Price, 2005, p. 84) – is, therefore, needed. This study refers to an innovation as
‘a technology or practice that an organization is using for the first time, regardless
whether other organizations have previously used the technology or practice’
has identified several factors which play a critical role in influencing innovation
implementation behavior: the team’s or organization’s climate for innovation
implementation (see Klein et al., 2001; Holahan et al., 2004; Michaelis et al.,
2008), management support for innovation implementation (Sharma and
Yetton, 2003; Michaelis et al., 2008), and managerial patience (Repenning and
Sterman, 2002). Reviewing the above-described key situational factors, leader
behaviors may substantially influence employees’ innovation implementation
behavior.

The purpose of this study is to examine charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985,
1990b; Waldman et al., 2004) and employees’ trust in top management (Whitener
et al., 1998) and how they affect employees’ innovation implementation behavior.
Further, the study concentrated on identifying psychological processes by which
charismatic leadership and trust in top management are related to innovation
implementation behavior. Specifically, because commitment to change has been
identified as an important aspect of behavioral intention to support change (Hers-
covitch and Meyer, 2002; Fedor et al., 2006), the study examined the effects of
charismatic leadership and trust in top management on employees’ commitment
to actual changes and their innovation implementation behavior.

By testing these linkages, this study extends previous literature on innovation
implementation behavior in four ways. First, the study investigated how charis-
matic leadership is related to followers’ innovation implementation behavior.
Second, it examined how trust in top management is related to followers’
innovation implementation behavior. Third, the study tested whether affective
commitment to change mediated these relationships. Fourth, the study goes
outside the usual boundaries and combines organizational change and innovation
implementation research.

Affective Commitment to Change and Innovation Implementation Behavior

The study explored the role of affective commitment to change to investigate
the psychological mechanisms by which charismatic leadership and trust in top
management influence innovation implementation behavior. This article refers
to affective commitment to change as ‘a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits’ (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002, p. 475). Although some scholars studying innovation implementation behavior have included commitment to change as a central component in their theories (Klein and Sorra, 1996), no known studies have empirically tested the mediating role of commitment to change in the context of innovation implementation behavior. This is surprising, given that research has indicated that psychological reactions to a particular innovation determine the ultimate success of innovation implementation (Leonard-Barton, 1988; Hartwick and Barki, 1994).

In order to explain why affective commitment to change might be related to employees’ innovation implementation behavior, Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) (Ajzen, 1985, 1987, 1991) was applied. Ajzen’s theory has been successfully employed in many studies linking attitudes and behaviors (Conner and Armitage, 1998; Sutton, 1998; Jimmieson et al., 2008). A review of nine meta-analyses for instance, which included the TpB or its predecessor, the Theory of Reasoned Action, provided strong evidence that a person’s attitudes determine behavioral intention (Sutton, 1998). Behavioral intention defines the degree to which a person exerts effort to perform a behavior and includes the motivational forces that produce planned behavior. As behavioral intention increases, a person is more likely to perform a behavior. We, therefore, assume that employees’ attitudes are particularly relevant to organizations willing to implement innovations and to reduce the likelihood of implementation failure, because they determine behavioral intention and decide on the degree to which a person puts effort to perform innovation implementation behavior.

Additionally, the study applied a social exchange explanation in order to explain why charismatic leadership and employees’ trust in top management might be related to followers’ innovation implementation behavior. Social exchange theories (Homans, 1961; Adams, 1963; Blau, 1964; Gergen, 1969) describe how social relationships are based on the exchange of benefits between parties. If charismatic leadership and trust in top management is considered as a perceived benefit for employees, social exchange theories suggest that employees will be motivated to reciprocate that benefit (Gouldner, 1960), for instance through commitment to change and innovation implementation behavior.

Charismatic Leadership and Innovation Implementation Behavior

Charismatic leadership has been defined as ‘the ability of a leader to exercise diffuse and intense influence over the beliefs, values, behavior, and performance of others through his or her own behavior, beliefs, and personal example’ (House et al., 1991, p. 366). Unlike the ‘traditional’ leadership theories, which emphasized rational processes, charismatic leadership theory focuses on emotions and values, acknowledges the importance of symbolic behavior and the role of the leader in making events meaningful for followers. Charismatic leaders transform followers’ needs, values, preferences, and aspirations. They motivate followers to make personal sacrifices in order to achieve the mission articulated by the leader and ‘to perform above and beyond the call of duty’ (House et al., 1991, p. 364). Followers’ motivation become less driven by self-interests and is shifted
towards serving the interests of the larger collective. Charismatic leadership usually emphasise leaders at or near the top of the organization (Waldman et al., 2004; Agle et al., 2006) or even at the societal level (see Fiol et al., 1999; Seyranian and Bligh, 2008). Conceptual works, however, tend to emphasize multiple hierarchical levels (Yukl, 1999) and experiments on first-level leader–follower relationships (De Cremer and van Knippenberg, 2002). The latter perspective implies that not only top-executives can motivate followers by articulating a compelling vision or by providing a behavioral role model, but also non-executives at lower management levels. Therefore, the study followed Bass (1990a) and Conger et al. (2000) who argue that charismatic leaders can also be found at levels below the executive suite and investigated charismatic leadership at lower and middle management positions.

Another leadership theory which takes a very similar approach in explaining effective leadership processes is transformational leadership. Various scholars (Dvir et al., 2002; House and Aditya, 1997) conclude that transformational and charismatic leadership have only minor differences with a strong convergence among the empirical findings. Transformational leadership has been already extensively studied in the context of innovation research in recent years (Mumford and Licuanan, 2004) and has demonstrated its effectiveness on innovation processes, such as creativity (Jung, 2001; Jaussi and Dionne, 2003; Shin and Zhou, 2003), improvement-oriented voice (Detert and Burris, 2007), and organizational innovation (Jung et al., 2003).

Despite the theoretical significance of charismatic leadership and its potential enhancement of innovation outcomes, no studies have contributed to an understanding of the mechanisms linking this type of leadership and innovation outcomes such as followers’ innovation implementation behavior. This is surprising, given that scholars have long bemoaned the paucity of research on mediating mechanisms in the relationship between leadership and innovation implementation behavior (Beyer and Trice, 1978; Tornatzky and Klein, 1982; Klein et al., 2001; Klein and Knight, 2005).

Fiol et al. (1999) summarizes the similarities among various concepts of charismatic leadership by noting that all of them share the common perspective that ‘effective leaders articulate visions that are based on normative ideological values, offer innovative solutions to major social problems, stand for nonconservative if not radical change, and generally emerge and are more effective under conditions of social stress and crisis’ (Fiol et al., 1999, p. 450). In other words, charismatic leadership causes followers to be more receptive to organizational change.

Specifically, when a leader is charismatic and followers identify with the leader, encouragement to re-examine assumptions, the status quo, and old ways of doing things are likely to be successful. Under these circumstances, followers are more likely to identify and concentrate on the positive outcomes of the change-initiative instead of on worries and concerns. This enhanced concentration on positive outcomes of the change-initiative should lead to high levels of affective commitment to change.

Charismatic leaders provide a behavioral role model and articulate a compelling vision to energize followers to perform beyond expectations (Shamir et al., 1993).
They affiliate the self-concepts of followers with the mission articulated by the leader (Fiol et al., 1999; Seyranian and Bligh, 2008). By doing so, they generate a common frame of reference. Consequently, followers of charismatic leaders are likely to be able to recognize the need for the use of a particular innovation and develop high levels of affective commitment to change.

Likewise, charismatic leaders increase self-efficacy by evaluating positively, showing confidence in followers’ ability, and emphasizing followers’ ties to the collective (Shamir et al., 1993). According to the social exchange theory, these behaviors are likely to lead to heightened levels of affective commitment to change because followers are likely to repay their leader for support and encouragement. Consequently, followers respond more likely to the change-initiative and accept the change message (House and Mitchell, 1974). More importantly, followers are much more likely to persist when they perceive their environment to be supportive (Bandura, 1986). In addition, followers may be encouraged to stay focused on the goals of the change-initiative and to keep trying even when they suffer a setback. Taken together, followers’ personal support and encouragement are likely to enhance followers’ affective commitment to change.

According to Ajzen’s TpB, an increase of affective commitment to change (behavioral intention) contributes to the prediction of change-relevant behavior. Building on this notion, the study suggests that followers with high levels of affective commitment to change are more likely to exhibit innovation implementation behavior. Subsequently, the findings suggest that charismatic leadership contributes to affective commitment to change, which, in turn, contributes to innovation implementation behavior. Thus:

Hypothesis 1. The positive relationship between charismatic leadership and employees’ innovation implementation behavior will be mediated by employees’ affective commitment to change.

Trust in Top Management and Innovation Implementation Behavior

Scholars have identified trust to play an important role in innovation and change research (Armenakis et al., 1993). Trust has been defined as a willingness to be vulnerable to others, based on the prior belief that others are trustworthy (Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Mishra, 1996; Mayer et al., 2007). Based on this definition, trust in top management was conceptualized as an attitude held by employees toward the leadership of the organization that indicates a willingness to be vulnerable to top management (Korsgaard et al., 2002). The concept of trust has already demonstrated its effectiveness in the context of organizational change. Armenakis et al. (1993) for instance, emphasized the importance of change agents’ credibility, trustworthiness, and sincerity in creating employees’ readiness for change. Additional research by Reinke (2003) has demonstrated that the level of trust between employees and their leaders is the strongest predictor of employees’ acceptance of a new appraisal system. Similarly, Condrey (1995) found that employees with greater trust in their organization evaluated a new human resource management system more positively, believed that their supervisors had a fundamental role in the change process, and were more motivated to become involved in
the project. Still, despite the theoretical significance of this concept and its potential enhancement of innovation implementation behavior, no studies have contributed to an understanding of the mechanisms linking trust in top management and innovation outcomes such as followers’ innovation implementation behavior.

Research demonstrates that trust in top management provides employees with an understanding of management’s good intentions (Harvey et al., 2003). Employees, who trust their top management, believe in the value of the innovation and think that they and the organization will benefit from it, consequently trust in top management should enhance followers’ affective commitment to change.

Specifically, individuals with a high degree of trust in top management may feel that they will not be the target of negative attacks or manipulation, because they believe that the intentions of the upper management are trustworthy (Byrne et al., 2005). Further, they feel that they are respected by the organization and have some opportunity to protect their own interests (Korsgaard et al., 2002). Under these circumstances, followers are more likely to concentrate on the positive outcomes of change-initiatives instead of constantly questioning or criticizing them. Consequently, followers who perceive that the organization treats them with respect and dignity through difficult times of change should have higher levels of affective commitment to change than those who believe that they are treated unfairly.

Likewise, trust in top management, which is mostly evoked through open communication and disclosure, may give individuals a sense of control by feeling protected by the good intentions of upper management (Byrne et al., 2005). These behaviors are likely to lead to affective commitment to change because by providing support and encouragement, followers are more likely to respond to change-initiatives and accept the change message (House and Mitchell, 1974). Taken together, trust in top management is likely to be associated with high levels of affective commitment to change.

Finally, according to the social exchange theory, the relationship between the organization and followers consists of followers’ perceptions of organization obligations on the one hand (that is, what they believe the organization has promised) such as advancement opportunities, training, and job security; and their perceived obligations towards the organization on the other hand (what they believe they owe the organization in return) such as loyalty, hard work and commitment (Robinson et al., 1994). Specifically, when followers feel high levels of trust in top management, they are more willing to cooperate within and have greater attachment to this exchange relationship (Whitener et al., 1998), leading to higher levels of affective commitment to change.

Building on the notion of Ajzen’s TpB, it can be argued that followers with high levels of affective commitment to change are more likely to exhibit innovation implementation behavior. Subsequently, it is argued that trust in top management contributes to affective commitment to change, which, in turn, contributes to innovation implementation behavior. Thus:

Hypothesis 2. The positive relationship between trust in top management and employees’ innovation implementation behavior will be mediated by employees’ affective commitment to change.
Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from employees working in a multinational automotive corporation located in Germany, which had introduced a new computer software within the nine months prior to this study. The software is based on the company’s email program and developed to support team and project tasks. A successful implementation of this software implied a ‘paperless office’ that could be achieved through information technologies and new work procedures. For instance, employees were prompted to use this software for their audit trails, calendar, address and meeting administration, filing, and absence planning. All information was accessible in every German subsidiary. Furthermore, employees were encouraged to create their own profile enabling the software to inform them about new and relevant documents. The utilization of this software was mandatory and consequently played a central role for every employee.

All employees in the sample held Research & Development (R&D) jobs in the truck development division, were in operational, lower- and middle-management positions, and were working in the company’s headquarters in Germany. The questionnaire administration took place online. Employees received a link via email, which allowed them to access the online questionnaire. The link was sent out by department heads, with an appeal to fill out the questionnaire within a period of four weeks. Respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire during normal work hours in front of their own computer. Participation was voluntary and confidential in all cases. The study collated usable responses from 194 of the possible 270 employees, which represents a 72% net response rate. Respondents were working in 10 different teams within two departments, namely, truck vehicle testing (40%) and truck vehicle systems (60%). The mean age of the responding employees was 43 years (SD = 9.11). A majority of the respondents were male (89%), held lower level management positions (78%), had been with the company for more than 10 years (65%), and reported college-level education (technical college degree, 40%; university degree, 32%; completed apprenticeship, 10%).

Measures

If not already available, German versions of all measures were created following Brislin’s (1980) translation-back-translation procedure.

Charismatic leadership

The German version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), Form 5X-Short (Avolio and Bass, 1995), developed by Felfe and Goihl (2002), which has four items for the charismatic leadership scale ($\alpha = 0.91$) were utilized. Employees were asked to refer to their direct workgroup leader. Items assessed the degree to which followers admired their leader for his or her outstanding skills and abilities or to which degree their leader inspired them. Sample items included, ‘The leader, which I refer to impresses and fascinates me with his or her unique personality’ and ‘The leader, which I refer to is consistently able to
inspire me’. On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘strongly agree’), employees indicated how well each statement fitted their leader.

**Trust in top management**

Trust in top management was assessed with an adapted three-item scale ($\alpha = 0.78$), developed by Cook and Wall (1980). Sample items included, ‘I feel confident that top management will always treat me fairly’ and ‘top management would try to gain an advantage by deceiving workers’ (reverse-scored). On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘strongly agree’), employees indicated how well each item represented their feeling of trust in the company’s top management.

**Affective commitment to change**

Affective commitment to change was assessed with a six-item scale ($\alpha = 0.88$), developed by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), concentrating on followers’ affect experienced during the change-initiative. Sample items were, ‘I believe in the value of this change’ and ‘I think that management is making a mistake by introducing this change’ (reverse-scored). On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘strongly agree’), employees indicated how well each item represented their feelings about the introduced software.

**Innovation implementation behavior**

Employees’ innovation implementation behavior was assessed with an adapted version of a six-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$) from Choi and Price (2005). Sample items included, ‘I heavily use this innovation at work’ and ‘I use this innovation for task-related communication.’ On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘strongly agree’), employees indicated the extent to which each of the six items applied to them in terms of employing the introduced software.

**Control variables**

Given the critical role of followers’ characteristics in the leadership process, particularly charismatic leadership (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Conger et al., 2000), participants’ age and gender were assessed. Dummy-coded variables were included to control for the variance in perception of leaders’ charisma that could be attributed to followers’ age (age up to 40 years, age above 40 years) and gender (male, female).

In addition, employee’s hierarchical levels might influence their ratings of the study variables. Charismatic leadership, for instance, occurs to a greater extent at higher hierarchical echelons (Shamir et al., 1993), and employees may tend to rate their job characteristics more favorably the higher their hierarchical positioning (Robie et al., 1998). Hence, respondents’ hierarchy level were included (operational/ lower management and middle management) as dummy-coded variables.

Finally, prior research indicates that employees’ department affiliation might influence their innovation implementation behavior (Krause, 2004). Consequently, department affiliation was dummy-coded, to prevent department differences form biasing the relationships obtained (that is, truck vehicle testing and truck vehicle systems).
Analytical Strategy

The data analyses was conducted utilizing structural equations modeling (AMOS 16.0). The study followed Anderson and Gerbing’s (1988) widely recommended procedure and added the discriminant validity of the study variables (a conformationary factor analysis of the measurement model), prior to assessing the fit of the overall structural model. Consistent with other researchers (Bommer et al., 2005), four dummy-coded control variables were included to the measurement and structural model. This approach is appropriate if: (a) the control variables are theoretically justified; (b) the model complexity is not overstressed; and (c) the sample size is ample (Fletcher et al., 2006). Further, an approach described by Marsh et al. (1989) was utilized and resorted items randomly into item parcels, to gain an adequate sample size to parameter ratio. A $\chi^2$/df ratio test, a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) index, and a comparative fit index (CFI) were all used to assess the fit of the different models to the data. A $\chi^2$/df ratio less than 3 indicates an acceptable model fit (Kline, 1998). A RMSEA below 0.08 and a CFI above 0.09 (DiLalla et al., 2000; Cunningham, 2006) indicate that the specified model fits well with the observed data.

Results

Means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach’s alpha values for all study variables are presented in Table 1. As shown, innovation implementation behavior is significantly and positively correlated with charismatic leadership, trust in top management, and affective commitment to change. Affective commitment to change is significantly and positively correlated with charismatic leadership and trust in top management.

Measurement Model Testing

The measurement model consisted of the four control variables and the four focal variables. The study followed various scholars (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Cunningham, 2006) and compared the measurement model with an alternative model and a one factor model to check which model fit the observed data best. In the first model, the single factor model, all items were forced on a single factor. In the second, alternative model, charismatic leadership and trust in top management were forced on one factor, affective commitment to change on a second factor, and innovation implementation behavior on a third factor. In the third model, the measurement model, items were forced according to their scales on the factors charismatic leadership, trust in top management, affective commitment to change, and innovation implementation behavior. The CFA results show that the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 92.92; df = 53; p<0.001; \chi^2$/df = 1.80; RMSEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.95), relative to both the alternative model ($\chi^2 = 198.02; df = 60; p < 0.001; \chi^2$/df = 3.30; RMSEA = 0.11; CFI = 0.83), and the single factor model ($\chi^2 = 522.09; df = 71; p < 0.001; \chi^2$/df = 7.35; RMSEA = 0.18; CFI = 0.46) provided a better fit to the data. These results also indicate that common method bias is not a major concern, because “if method
Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among all variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Management level</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>−0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Department affiliation</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>−0.08</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Charismatic leadership</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trust in top management</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>−0.08</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
<td>−0.30</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>(0.78)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Affective commitment to change</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>−0.17</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Innovation implementation behavior</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>−0.14</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) are on the diagonal, in parentheses. Age, gender, management level, and division affiliation were dummy-coded.

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.
variance is a significant problem, a simple model (e.g. single factor model) should fit the data as well as a more complex model (Korsgaard and Roberson, 1995, p. 663). Thus, the measures can be viewed as distinct and were kept for analysis.

**Hypotheses Testing**

The results of the structural equations modeling are presented in Table 2. The fit indices for the proposed model fulfilled above described criteria ($\chi^2 = 134.39; \text{df} = 69; p < 0.001; \chi^2/\text{df} = 1.95; \text{RMSEA} = 0.07; \text{CFI} = 0.92$), revealing that the data were consistent with the proposed model. Figure 1 shows the pathway estimates for the hypothesized model indicating that all assumed paths were significant. Specifically, affective commitment to change was positively linked to charismatic leadership ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.05$) and trust in top management ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$), and it was also linked significantly positively to innovation implementation behavior ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.001$). For significance testing of the indirect effects postulated in the mediation hypotheses, the study followed recommendations by MacKinnon et al. (2007). As postulated in Hypothesis 1, commitment to change mediates the relation between charismatic leadership and innovation implementation behavior (indirect effect $= 0.06; p < 0.001$). As suggested in Hypothesis 2, commitment to change also mediates the relation between trust in top management and innovation implementation behavior (indirect effect $= 0.12; p < 0.001$).

Although the hypothesized mediated model provided an adequate fit to the data, the study tested three alternative models and checked for partial mediations (Cunningham, 2006). Alternative models were all tested within the proposed model. The study tested models which add the pathway between charismatic leadership and innovation implementation behavior (Partially-mediated Model A), the pathway between trust in top management and innovation implementation behavior (Partially-mediated Model B), and the pathway between charismatic leadership and trust in top management (Partially-mediated Model C).

![Table 2. Results of structural equations modelling](image-url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-factor model</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>522.09</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative model</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>198.02</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement model</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>92.92</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized (fully-mediated) model</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>134.39</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(nested within hypothesized model)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially-mediated (A)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>133.70</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially-mediated (B)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>134.34</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially-mediated (C)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>133.69</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Note: Partial mediated models: (A) addition of pathway between charismatic leadership and innovation implementation behaviour; (B) addition of pathway between trust in top management and innovation implementation behaviour; (C) addition of pathway between charismatic leadership/trust in top management and innovation implementation behavior; $\Delta \chi^2$ values are calculated by comparison with adjacent, less restrictive model. Controls: age, gender, management level, department affiliation. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; N = 194.*
behavior (Partially-mediated Model B), and both pathways (Partially-mediated Model C). Table 2 presents the fit indices for the alternative models.

The results of the comparison of partially-mediated models A and B with the hypothesized fully mediated model indicate that the change in chi-square is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($\Delta \chi^2$, 1 df). Further, the study compared model C with the hypothesized fully mediated model and did not find a significant improvement in fit at the 0.05 level. Therefore, none of the partially mediated models yield an improvement over the fully mediated model, which makes the more parsimonious (that is restrictive) fully mediated model the preferred model (Mulaik et al., 1989). These results indicate that affective commitment to change mediates the relation between charismatic leadership and innovation implementation behavior and that affective commitment to change also mediates the relation between trust in top management and innovation implementation behavior.

Discussion

Leadership qualities have been linked to several innovation-relevant factors such as subordinates’ creativity (Jung, 2001; Jaussi and Dionne, 2003; Shin and Zhou, 2003), improvement-oriented voice (Detert and Burris, 2007), organizational innovation (Jung et al., 2003), and social change (Seyranian and Bligh, 2008). However, only a few studies exist investigating leadership and its relation to innovation implementation behavior. Notably, Krause (2004) examined the effects of influence-based leadership on followers’ innovation implementation behavior and found a positive relationship. Furthermore, Herold et al. (2008) found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and change commitment. This study found that charismatic leadership is related to innovation implementation behavior and, consequently, identified another leadership construct which plays an important role in promoting followers’ innovation implementation behavior. It is important to recognize that Krause’s (2004), Herold et al. (2008), and the present study have moved the fragmentary research on innovation
implementation behavior (Klein and Knight, 2005) forward by identifying theory-based leadership behaviors, which are beneficial for innovation implementation behavior.

Second, the study has demonstrated that followers’ trust in top management is related to innovation implementation behavior. Only a few studies exist that investigate trust in top management in the field of innovation and change research. In particular, Korsgaard et al. (2002) demonstrated the importance of trust in top management while planning change-initiatives. However, the study has extended prior research in demonstrating that trust in top management is related to the aspect which determines the ultimate success of change-initiatives: innovation implementation behavior.

The third and most important contribution of this study is that it identified psychological processes by which charismatic leadership and trust in top management are related to innovation implementation behavior. By investigating charismatic leadership and trust in top management simultaneously in one model, the study revealed that trust in top management has a stronger indirect effect through affective commitment to change on innovation implementation behavior than charismatic leadership. This result indicates that both sentiments regarding top management and immediate managers are important and complementary for successful innovation implementation. However, it also shows that trust in top management might be even more important, because of its stronger relation to followers’ affective commitment to change. Klein and Sorra (1996) emphasized the role of commitment to change as a mechanism by which situational factors influence innovation implementation behavior. However, no known studies have empirically tested this relationship in actual work settings. Most studies, so far, have concentrated on investigating situational factors that either influence psychological mechanisms, such as followers’ affective commitment to change (Herold et al., 2007), or outcome variables, such as innovation implementation behavior, separately (Axtell et al., 2000; Choi and Price, 2005). This research has gone outside these boundaries and combined organizational change and innovation implementation research. Moreover, research in the context of organizational change has mostly concentrated on negative reactions such as cynicism toward change-initiatives (Bommer et al., 2005). The study extended prior research by explicitly concentrating on a positive reaction – affective commitment to change – and its relation to charismatic leadership and trust in top management. Thus, the study has contributed to the innovation implementation literature by applying Ajzen’s TpB and demonstrated its significance in explaining the influence of affective commitment to change on innovation implementation behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the study found several encouraging results, it is important to recognize that the current findings also have several limitations. First, the study used perceptual data because the influence of the leader and the perceptions of upper-management eventually depend on what followers perceive their leader or top management to have done or been like (Bandura, 1989). Nevertheless, future
research should investigate the influence of charismatic leadership and trust in top management on followers’ innovation implementation behavior using data from multiple sources. Second, the cross-sectional design prevents us from a causal interpretation of the relationship between charismatic leadership and trust in top management, respectively, and innovation implementation behavior. Supplemental studies with experimental or longitudinal design and the obtainment of independent or objective confirmation of employees’ innovation implementation behavior are needed to determine causality. Third, all participants came from one company in the automotive industry and were working in the R&D division. Although this sample helps to control for industry and division effects, employees working in different industries and divisions may respond to innovations in different ways. One might argue, for instance, that employees working in R&D divisions are particularly open to innovations because they have innovation-relevant knowledge and higher levels of autonomy, which leads to innovation implementation behavior (Krause, 2004). Finally, the study indicates that trust in top management is stronger related to affective commitment to change than charismatic leadership. However, it acknowledges that trust in top management might be only more important because it matches the level most responsible for the change studied. Supplemental studies, expanding both constructs to both levels such as top management charisma and trust in direct supervisor, are needed to determine the relative importance of trust and charisma for evoking followers’ affective commitment to change.

Moreover, additional determinants could be integrated into future investigations. Since recent research (Zhou and George, 2003; Amabile et al., 2004; Bono and Ilies, 2006) and this study suggest that emotions play a major role in the innovation-process, and particularly during change-initiatives (Kiefer, 2005; Bartunek et al., 2006), future research might investigate the role of supervisors’ capability to influence followers’ emotions in promoting affective commitment to change and innovation implementation behavior. It is also recognized that there are other mediators, which have not been examined in this study. As indicated by Klein and Sorra (1996), innovation-relevant skills and knowledge are also critical for innovation implementation behavior. Prior research has suggested that supervisory behaviors enhance employees’ skills and knowledge which, in turn, results in higher levels of innovation implementation behavior (Krause, 2004). Thus, future research might investigate skill and knowledge development as mediators linking charismatic leadership to innovation implementation behavior. Finally, scholars could focus on additional types of leadership and its effects on affective commitment to change and innovation implementation behavior. A promising approach might come from complexity leadership theory (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007), which emphasizes the role of ‘enabling leadership’ in disseminating innovative products through formal managerial systems.

Practical Implications

Given the consistent positive effects of trust in top management, it may be argued that systematic efforts to enhance this factor is particularly important to companies that want to promote innovation implementation behavior. In order to enhance trust in top management, it should be integrated into the organizations’ reward
system, leadership guidelines, and company policies. Supervisors could be evaluated by their followers, for instance, on how trustworthy they seem.

The results suggest that companies should invest in leadership training and in the selection of charismatic supervisors before initiating the implementation of innovations. Research indicates that charismatic leadership behaviors are trainable (Barling et al., 1996). By training idealized influence, for example, leaders improve their ability to articulate a vision and to become more effective role models (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999). More specifically, by training leaders’ capability to provide role models in terms of using new innovations and demonstrating the value of these innovations, leaders are most likely to maximize employees’ affective commitment to change which, in turn, leads to innovation implementation behavior.

In addition, by showing affective commitment to change as a mediator, the findings indicate that managers need to consider the psychological mechanisms by which charismatic leadership and trust in top management are related to innovation implementation behavior. This may lead to a better ability to guide the impact of these influences to proper psychological processes, resulting in higher levels of innovation implementation behavior.

**Conclusion**

Leadership, organizational change, and innovation implementation have been, and continue to be, important fields of study for both researchers and practitioners. The purpose of this study was to demonstrate the connection between these constructs and the importance of better integrating these three fields of study. In line with these deliberations, the results illustrated the impact of charismatic leadership and trust in top management on affective commitment to change and innovation implementation behavior. Most importantly, the results demonstrate the importance of affective commitment to change, because it functions as a mediator in this relationship. Hence, if successful innovation implementation within organizations requires affective commitment to change, and affective commitment to change is about facilitating innovation implementation, then there is a need to more closely bond these concepts and consider their connection in future investigations.

**References**


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