Abstract

Background: Effective leaders understand that loyal followers are the key for success. To win their loyalty, leaders usually build social exchange relationships with them, through a wide range of behaviours, such as honouring agreements or using open and transparent communication. However, the effect of these behaviours on their followers' loyalty can differ depending on followers' individual differences, especially in relational traits such as agreeableness and extraversion. Method: We explored the moderating role of followers' agreeableness and extraversion in the relationship between authentic leadership (using transactional leadership as reference group) and followers' loyalty. A two-wave experiment, where 224 participants with and without work experience were randomly assigned to either a transactional or authentic leadership style condition was conducted. Results: Our results show that followers in the authentic leadership condition had higher levels of loyalty toward their leader. Moreover, followers' agreeableness played a negative moderating role in this relationship whereas extraversion played a positive moderating role in it. Conclusions: Our results indicate that followers' characteristics influence the effect of situational factors on their attitudes, such as loyalty, providing support for the need of a more integrative approach to leadership, where followers need to be considered as active elements of this process of influence.

Keywords

Authentic leadership, loyalty towards the leader, extraversion, agreeableness