

## Organizational Leadership: Motives and Behaviors of Leaders in Current Organizations

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Organizational leadership is fundamental for the working and development of current organizations. It helps members of an organization to face transcendental challenges. One of the fundamental aspects of leaders is their personal characteristics and behaviour as perceived by their co-workers. Although research has established a relationship between these components, findings have failed to come up with any congruent evidence and further to this the organizations and contexts used are from several decades ago.

This article, which forms part of the international GLOBE project, analyses the relationship between motives and behaviour as perceived by co-workers in organizations, using quantitative and qualitative methods and including technological innovations. Using samples from 40 corporate directors and 84 of their co-workers, from different companies, it confirms how the main motives of leaders (power, affiliation and achievement) are related to different behavioral patterns (power to authoritarian, non-dependent and non-social-skill behaviours; affiliation to relationship and dependent behaviors, and achievement to proactive behaviors). It discusses the results with relation to traditional research and suggests practical measures and proposals for future investigations in this area.

*Keywords: leadership, management, motives, styles and behaviors*

El liderazgo organizacional resulta fundamental para el funcionamiento y desarrollo de las organizaciones actuales, implicando a sus miembros para afrontar retos transcendentales. Uno de los aspectos fundamentales del liderazgo son las características de personalidad de los líderes y las conductas percibidas por parte de los colaboradores. Aunque algunas investigaciones establecen relaciones entre ambas, no hay una evidencia congruente, y reflejan organizaciones y contextos de hace varias décadas. Este trabajo, que forma parte del proyecto internacional GLOBE, analiza la relación entre motivos y conductas percibidas por los colaboradores en organizaciones actuales utilizando métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos e incorporando innovaciones tecnológicas. Utilizando una muestra de 40 altos directivos y de 84 de sus colaboradores cercanos de diferentes empresas, se confirmó cómo los principales motivos de los líderes (poder, afiliación y logro) se asocian con diferentes patrones de conductas (poder con conductas autoritarias, no dependientes y no hábiles socialmente; afiliación con conductas de relación y dependencia, y logro con conductas proactivas). Se discuten los resultados en relación a las investigaciones tradicionales y se plantean medidas prácticas y propuestas de investigaciones futuras.

*Palabras clave: liderazgo, dirección, motivos, estilos y conductas*

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Leadership unquestionably plays a strategic role in the working and development of organizations. This role is all the more crucial today, when organizations have to face new challenges in changing and turbulent times, demanding flexible and adaptive leadership that is capable of predicting necessary changes in advance and developing the necessary commitment between co-workers to face these changes successfully. This action by leaders is decisive not only for the effectiveness of the organization but also for its very survival (Bass, 1990; Burke & Cooper, 2004; Yukl, 2004).

Leadership can be analysed from different perspectives, as corresponds to a multidimensional and complex concept (Bass, 1990; Sashkin & Burke, 1990; Yukl, 2006), and therefore the focus can be on motives, styles and behaviors, situations and other aspects, relating to the management of meanings, identification, change in values and attitudes, and so forth, as highlighted by the so-called *new models of leadership* (Bryman, 1996; Moleró, Cuadrado, Navas, & Morales, 2007). The long history of research into motives (see, for example, Atkinson, 1958; Heyns, Veroff, & Atkinson, 1958) was revitalized as of the 1970s due to substantial theoretical and methodological developments in the study of personality (Aditya, House, & Kerr, 2000). These new models of leadership (especially charismatic leadership) incorporate motives as a fundamental variable (House, Delbecq, Taris, & De Luque, 2001; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991), as is also reflected in the international project on organizational leadership GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) (see Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007; Gil, Rodríguez, & Martí, 2003; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Waldman et al., 2006).

### *Leaders' Motives*

Over the last three decades, several motives have been identified as being related to the behavior of managers and leaders, although the motives that have received most attention are those of power, affiliation and achievement (Atkinson, 1958; McClelland, 1975, 1985a, 1985b). One aspect that has been particularly important is the influence these motives have on subordinates.

The power motive is conceived as a desire to acquire status and have an impact on others, thus affecting their behavior and emotions (Winter, 1992). In the more general meaning of the term, it is identified with a factor that is fundamental to the conception of leadership, namely the motivation to acquire and to exert social influence, so that possessing a certain amount of power would appear to be a necessary requirement to be an effective leader. The main roles played by managers (convincing others, getting them to commit themselves, motivating them, etc.) involve exerting some sort of social influence, so a strong power motive encourages and sustains social influence behavior (House et al., 1991).

The affiliation motive is defined as a desire to establish, maintain and restore personal and emotional relationships with others (Heyns et al., 1958). Individuals with a strong affiliation motive tend to be unassertive, and may be submissive and dependent on others (McClelland, 1985a). Leaders with a strong affiliation motive are primarily concerned with establishing good relationships around themselves.

Lastly, the achievement motive is defined as a desire to surpass some standard of excellence or do something unique (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1958). Individuals with a strong achievement motive are motivated to do things and attain goals for the sake of it, making a personal effort instead of delegating to their co-workers or using other means at the organization's disposal. Leaders with a strong achievement motive show an enterprising disposition (McClelland, 1985a; House et al., 1991).

### *Relating Motives to Perceived Behaviors*

Several research works have related leaders' motives to particular behavioral patterns. Thus, for example, a number of studies reveal that leaders with a strong power motive have an authoritarian disposition, manifested through greater intervention in debates than the rest of the group. They prevent others from contributing information, with the resulting lack of participation of the members of the group. They show little interest in debating the matter at hand (Fodor & Smith, 1982) and are not perceived as having a cooperative attitude in debates in small groups (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1970), while they seek out people who will be loyal to them and easy to dominate (Winter, 1973).

Furthermore, various studies confirm the perception of certain behaviors in these leaders (see House et al., 2001) as being assertive and overbearing, more prone to deceit and less cooperative (Terhune, 1968, 1970), and very active psychologically when supervising others (Fodor, 1984). They show hardly any ingratiation towards their subordinates (Fodor & Smith, 1982), evaluate others more negatively, pay them little attention (Fiske, 1993), reveal themselves to be more belligerent, resentful, bad-tempered, cynical, etc. (Gough & Heilbrun, 1975), neither listen nor share (McAdams, Healey, & Krause, 1984), make and break alliances to their own benefit (Schnackers & Kleinbeck, 1975) and are only willing to deal with issues that interest them. These individuals are perceived as being negative and even aggressive (Winter & Stewart, 1978).

Leaders with a strong affiliation motive, on the other hand, are perceived as people who favour participation within the group, care about other people, show warmth and sincerity (Sorrentino & Field, 1986), are not dominant (McAdams & Losoff, 1984) and listen actively (McAdams, Jackson, & Kirshnit, 1984). They prefer to work with people with whom they have formed a bond of friendship (Koestner & McClelland, 1992), and see group activities as opportunities

for members to participate and integrate within a common undertaking (McAdams & Powers, 1981).

On applying this motive to the study of management and leadership, we find certain associated characteristics, such as reluctance to supervise the behavior of subordinates, give negative feedback when it is necessary and take disciplinary measures against transgressions or violations of the organization's policies or rules (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). Leaders with a strong affiliation motive are also assumed to address their subordinates on the basis of the personal relationships they have with them, sometimes to the point of showing favoritism. These managers are portrayed as being permissive, soft, unassertive and dependent on others for acceptance and approval (House et al., 1991; Pillai, Williams, Lowe, & Jung, 2003).

Lastly, several research works have emphasized the capacity for innovation, proactivity and initiative of leaders with a strong achievement motive, together with their enterprising nature (De Charms & Moeller, 1962; McClelland, 1961, 1986, 1987; McClelland et al., 1958; Sinha & Mehta, 1972; Utsch & Rauch, 2000).

However, although the traditional literature relates leaders' motives to certain behaviors observed in them by their subordinates, the evidence is nevertheless not entirely congruent. Furthermore, the research was done several decades ago, and as such does not provide an accurate reflection of the profile and behavior of present-day leaders, whose functions and roles have undergone major changes (Barrasa, Gil, Rico, & Alcover, 2004; Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004; Waldman et al., 2006; Yukl, 2004), to the extent that today proactive behaviors and those related to the anticipation of change and innovation, among others, are fundamental. A third factor is that although qualitative methods have been used to evaluate motives throughout, these methods have improved substantially in recent years, basically through the refinement of the methods used and computerization.

Therefore, in this work we set out to analyse the relationship between leaders' motives and their behaviors as perceived by their co-workers in current organizations, thus contributing to the development of the international GLOBE project, which seeks to analyse organizational leadership worldwide.

On the basis of the above review, a series of hypotheses are proposed, as shown below. Subordinates will perceive behaviors of managers coherently with the latter's motives, such that:

Hypothesis 1. The power motive will be positively associated with authoritarian behaviors (Hypothesis 1a), and negatively associated with relationship (Hypothesis 1b), dependence (Hypothesis 1c) and social skill (Hypothesis 1d) behaviors.

Hypothesis 2. The affiliation motive will be positively associated with relationship (Hypothesis 2a), dependence (2b) and social skill (2c) behaviors, and negatively associated with authoritarian behaviors (2d).

Hypothesis 3. The achievement motive will be positively associated with behaviors such as anticipation of change (Hypothesis 3a) and proactive behavior (3b), and negatively associated with rule-following behaviors (3c).

## Method

### *Participants*

Two samples were used as part of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project. In one sample, interviews were conducted with 40 CEOs of various organizations with a required minimum staff of 100 employees and five (or six) consolidated functional areas. The ages of the CEOs ranged from 31 to 66, with an average age of 51.2 ( $SD = 1.06$ ). Regarding gender, 33 of them were men. The companies involved covered a wide variety of business activities, most notably computers and consultancy. The rest were related to the chemical industry, electrical equipment, information services and data processing, transport and others.

The second sample comprised 83 managers, corresponding to either 2 or 3 direct co-workers of each of the above company leaders. Each of these managers was in charge of one of the company's functional areas and formed part of its direct team of co-workers. In terms of gender, 25 of them were women, the average age was 40.8 ( $SD = 8.26$ ), and they were mostly responsible for human resources, general administration and production.

### *Measures*

Different techniques were combined in order to provide both qualitative and quantitative information. The former type was used to evaluate the leaders' motives, and the latter to measure the leaders' behaviors as perceived by their direct co-workers.

Both instruments were designed and validated by the GLOBE international research team in Phase 2 of the project, for application in later phases (see Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004; Gil et al., 2003). The instruments used by the Spanish team in this study are described in detail below.

*Measuring motives.* The 40 interviews with the respective leaders followed a basic script with open questions (e.g., "What are your main strengths with respect to your management functions? What are your main weaknesses?"). The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed by three different judges. These judges had been previously trained to apply the motive imagery coding system as described by Winter (1994) in his *Manual for Scoring Motive Imagery in Running Text*. Interjudge reliability analysis of the answers yielded a kappa index of 0.81.

*Leaders' behaviors.* Behaviors were assessed using a questionnaire developed by the GLOBE project research

team. The questionnaire includes 84 items referring to various previously identified dimensions that are widely accepted in the management and leadership literature (Bass and Avolio, 1993; House, 1996; House and Shamir, 1993). The answers were in the form of a Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). For the validation of the questionnaire on the leaders' behaviors we used a larger sample of direct subordinates of each of the leaders. This sample was made up of a number that ranged from 5 to 9 per leader ( $n = 239$ ). The descriptive statistics of the items gave scores ranging from 2.05 to 4.24 and a standard deviation that in no case exceeded 1.25, and item discrimination indices that were always positive and greater than 0.35. The internal consistency of the instrument was analysed ( $\alpha = .71$ ), and an exploratory factor analysis explained 67% of the total variance, the percentage explained by the factor Relationship being the largest (18%) and that explained by the factor Social Skill the smallest (7%). In the rotated matrix of factor saturation, all the items showed values greater than .40 of their respective factors. Seven factors were identified for behavior: Relationship (e.g., "cares about the well-being of the group"), Authoritarian (e.g., "imposes his/her values and opinions on others"), Proactive (e.g., "talks to his/her subordinates about important projects"), Anticipation of Change (e.g., "anticipates possible future events"), Dependent (e.g., "depends on others; has no self-sufficiency"), Rule-Following (e.g., "acts according to rules, conventionalisms and ceremony"), and Social Skill Behavior (e.g., "is skillful in dealing with interpersonal relationships; has tact") (Martí, Gil, & Barrasa, 2007).

### Procedure

Leaders were interviewed by appointment at the workplace by an expert interviewer, and permission was sought to record the interview. The questionnaires were distributed among the previously identified direct co-workers, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured in their application and collection.

To analyse the interviews, qualitative category analysis was performed according to a motive imagery coding system (Winter, 1998) using version 4.2 of the ATLAS/ti software

package (Muñoz, 2003). Imagery coding was done by counting and analysing elements (phrases, expressions or ideas) that arose in the course of the interviews and were allocated to the three main motives: (a) power (strength, control or regulation, attempts to influence, help or impress others, and a strong positive or negative emotional reaction); (b) affiliation (expression of positive affection, sadness or other negative feelings, affiliation activities, and friendly activities of care and protection); and (c) achievement (adjectives that assess performance; performance goals, reference to winning or succeeding, mistakes and unique achievements).

To analyse the questionnaires, first an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principal components as the extraction method, with oblimin rotation of the 84 items that made up the questionnaire, given that the factors that were expected to be obtained were related to each other. A hierarchical regression analysis was then performed according to a linear model using the three motives as predictive variables and the factors obtained from the questionnaire as dependent variables. In both cases the SPSS software package was used.

### Results

As can be appreciated in Table 1, the power motive is positively associated with authoritarian behaviors ( $= .240$ ), and negatively associated with dependent ( $= -.205$ ) and social skill behaviors ( $= -.370$ ). In turn, the affiliation motive is positively associated with relationship behavior ( $= .251$ ) and the achievement motive is positively associated with authoritarian behavior ( $= .185$ ).

Hierarchical regressions, performed to test for the influence of motives on the various perceived behaviors, yield the following results. First, with regard to Relationship Behavior (see Figure 1), we find a significant positive influence of the affiliation motive ( $\beta = .285$ ), with a percentage of explained variance of  $R^2 = .17$ .

As regards Authoritarian Behavior (see Figure 2), we find a significant positive influence of the power motive ( $\beta = .227$ ) and a negative one of the affiliation motive ( $\beta = -.225$ ), with a percentage of explained variance of  $R^2 = .14$  and  $R^2 = .13$  respectively.

Table 1  
*Correlations between leaders' motives and behaviors as perceived by co-workers*

Motives	Factors						
	Relationship	Authoritarian	Anticipation of change	Proactive	Dependent	Rule-following	Social skill
Power	-0.070	0.240**	0.089	-0.092	-0.205*	-0.134	-0.370***
Affiliation	0.251**	-0.165	0.118	0.126	0.178	-0.019	0.050
Achievement	-0.112	0.185*	0.014	0.102	-0.078	-0.113	-0.073

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

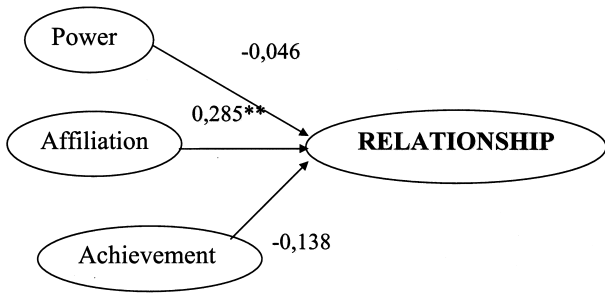


Figure 1. Regression of motives on the factor relationship.

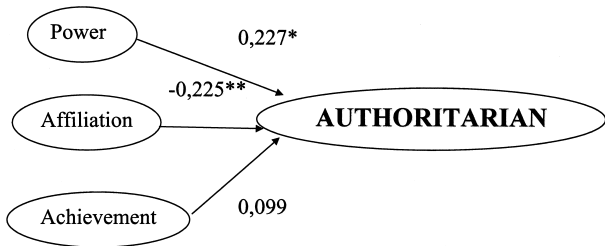


Figure 2. Regression of motives on the factor authoritarian.

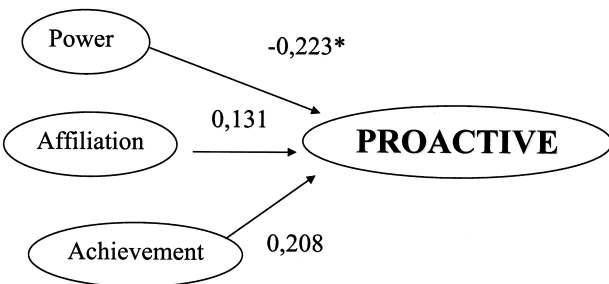


Figure 3. Regression of motives on the factor proactive.

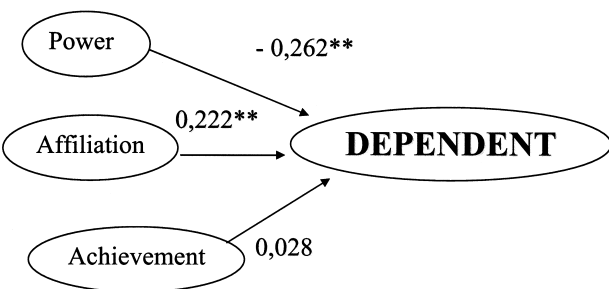


Figure 4. Regression of motives on the factor dependent.

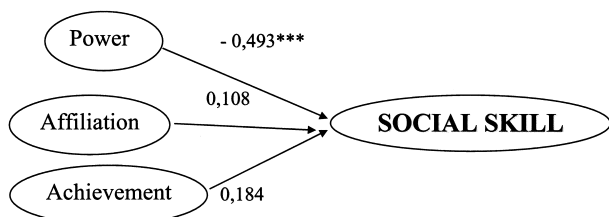


Figure 5. Regression of motives on the factor social skill.

On the other hand, none of the three motives was found to have any influence on behavior perceived as Anticipation of Change.

Regarding Proactive Behavior (see Figure 3), the power motive was found to have a negative influence ( $\beta = -.223$ ) on this behavior, with a percentage of explained variance of  $R^2 = .15$ .

As far as Dependent Behavior is concerned (see Figure 4), we find a negative influence of the power motive ( $\beta = -.262$ ) and a positive influence of the affiliation motive ( $\beta = .222$ ), with a percentage of explained variance of  $R^2 = .15$  and  $R^2 = .14$  respectively.

None of the three motives was found to influence Rule-Following Behavior. In contrast, the power motive was found to have a strong negative influence (see Figure 5) on Social skill Behavior ( $\beta = -.493$ ), with a percentage of explained variance of  $R^2 = .23$ .

### Discussion

Most of the hypotheses formulated in this research are confirmed. A strong power motive in leaders is positively associated with authoritarian behaviors (Hypothesis 1a), and negatively associated with dependent (Hypothesis 1c) and social skill behaviors (Hypothesis 1d), and shows an equally negative trend with relationship behaviors (Hypothesis 1b). A strong affiliation motive in leaders is positively associated with relationship (Hypothesis 2a) and dependent behaviors (Hypothesis 2b), again showing a positive trend with social skill behaviors (Hypothesis 2c), and is negatively associated with authoritarian behaviors (Hypothesis 2d). Lastly, a strong achievement motive is positively associated with proactive behaviors (Hypothesis 3b) and shows a slight trend, in one case positive with anticipation of change (Hypothesis 3a), and in another negative with rule following (Hypothesis 3c).

The results obtained for leaders' profiles and behaviors largely confirm the data provided by research done several decades ago. Thus, for example, there is confirmation of the authoritarian attitude (Fodor & Smith, 1982), dominance and non-dependence (Winter, 1973) of leaders with a strong power motive; the formation of good relationships (Sorrentino & Field, 1986) and the non-authoritarian attitude (McAdams & Losoff, 1984) of leaders with a high level of affiliation; and lastly, the proactive attitude (McClelland et al., 1958) of those leaders with a strong leaning towards achievement.

We can conclude, therefore, that in current situations and before the challenges facing leaders at present, differentiated behavioral patterns can be identified that are related to the three main motives (power, affiliation, and achievement). Furthermore, the patterns corresponding to the power motive and the affiliation motive appear to be antagonistic.

Lastly, this research has yielded a peculiar result concerning leaders with a strong power motive: they are associated with non-proactive behaviors. Initially no hypothesis was formulated that related these two variables negatively, whereas the achievement motive was hypothesized to be associated with proactive behavior. One explanation for this result could be that although power may be an important reason for putting behaviors of a proactive nature into practice this motive, at least at high levels and considering its associated behaviors (which have negative connotations such as authoritarianism, lack of social skills, etc.), causes the opposite perception, with the result that power is negatively associated with proactivity. It would be desirable to explore this subject in greater depth in future research.

Generally, it can be said that these data confirm that predispositions related to personality traits, at least when manifested at a high level, do not go unnoticed by leaders' closest co-workers, who identify them in clear and perfectly differentiated behavioral patterns. Therefore, it is important to include the study of motives when examining a multimodal process such as leadership, as several authors confirm in research related to the variables of what is called *new leadership* (House et al., 1991; 2001). Furthermore, it seems likely that the final results of the still unfinished GLOBE project will provide further evidence of the importance of these variables in other international samples, as is the case in the Spanish sample.

Although the importance of these variables is clear, we should not neglect the contribution of other approaches, for example contingent theories of leadership. As Winter (2005) explains, summing up his long history of research on motives, behaviors and outcomes can be predicted from personality, but only in contingent (if/then) ways. However, it should be noted that the existence of motives increases the probability of the leader acting in a particular way, and even with a conditional and contingent influence, the presence of these behavioral patterns at a given moment may have far-reaching effects, considering the characteristics of leadership. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind another of the conclusions reached by Winter in the same review, namely that although personality exists in a social context, the past and present social context is embodied in personality.

The results of this research can be used to obtain practical guidance, especially with application to leader selection processes, in which it is recommendable to include evidence for the evaluation of leaders' motives, and to apply contrasted systems to analyse qualitative material, such as is used in this investigation (including computer systems). It is also important to design interventions that enable leaders to become aware not only of their motives but also of their associated behaviors (as perceived by their co-workers), both through discussion with these co-workers and through training processes that will allow them to use and train behavioral repertoires in order to exercise more effective leadership.

This work presents certain limitations and in turn paves the way for new research. The limitations are basically the cross-sectional nature of the design and the failure to include other variables. One fundamental undertaking in this respect would be to relate the variables motive and behavior to some outcome variable (team and/or organizational effectiveness) in order to reveal not only the relationship between motives and behaviors but also how motives influence organizations' functioning and results. Another important exercise would be to conduct a longitudinal study that could confirm the continuity of these behavioral patterns over time. It would also be advisable to relate these motives with different contextual and organizational variables – a fundamental yet almost unstudied issue, as has been stressed by Porter and McLaughlin (2006) as well as by Shamir and Howell (1999) – by analysing, for example, the influence of strong or weak organizational structures and contexts of entrepreneurship or non-entrepreneurship. This would make it possible to analyse the extent to which these conditions facilitate or inhibit leaders' predispositions. Answers to these questions will gradually be forthcoming as the international GLOBE project approaches its conclusion.

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