

Commitment to Public Values, Charismatic Leadership Attributions, and Employee Turnover in Street-Level Bureaucracies

Gustavo M Tavares ✉, Filipe Sobral, Bradley E Wright

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, muaa057,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa057>

Published: 21 January 2021

Abstract

Public values (PV) are receiving growing attention in public administration research and scholars frequently stress the need for public leaders to commit to and promote PV to protect the public interest and build citizens' trust in government. However, the relationship between public leaders' commitment to PV and *intra-organizational*, behavioral outcomes has received much less theoretical and empirical attention. To help address this gap, we draw on the social identity theory of leadership to propose that leaders in street-level bureaucracies who are perceived to be committed to PV are also more likely to be perceived as charismatic leaders and that these leadership attributions will be associated with lower employee turnover, especially in more stressful work contexts. We test our hypotheses with ordinary least squares and negative binomial regression. Additional mediation tests were conducted with structural equation modeling. Based on a sample of 87 public organizations and 874 participants, our results reveal that perceived leader commitment to PV is positively associated with perceived charismatic leadership which, in turn, is associated with lower employee turnover in more stressful and demanding work environments. This study brings more publicness to public leadership studies and can inform public leaders on how to develop more engaging and inspirational forms of leadership with their constituencies.