Supervisors' self-disclosure enhances subordinates' trust: The mediating role of subordinates' charismatic attributions

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Abstract

Purpose. Drawing on a cognitive attribution approach to charismatic leadership, this study identifies an overlooked influence behavior – supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss as contributing to subordinate charismatic attributions (e.g., idealized influence) and trust toward their supervisor.

Design/methodology/approach. Employing an experimental vignette method, participants (n = 201) were assigned to one of two conditions: (1) supervisor self-disclosure of traumatic loss or (2) control condition and then reported on charismatic attributions about the supervisor in the scenario and trust toward the supervisor.

Findings. The results revealed that supervisors' self-disclosure to subordinates influences subordinate attributions of charisma toward their supervisors and affective-based, cognitive-based trust.

Research limitations/implications. While an experimental approach supports causal inference, future research may consider the long-term effects of supervisors' self-disclosure on subordinates' attributions and trust.

Practical implications. Self-disclosure may be used authentically but cautiously to build relationships with subordinates and potentially benefit management development programs.

Originality/value. This study provides the first empirical insights into how a supervisor's disclosure of a traumatic loss – an uncharted territory – affects subordinates' perceptions of the supervisor's charisma and subsequent trust.

Keywords: Self-disclosure, charismatic leadership, affective-based trust, cognitive-based trust, traumatic loss

Trust, also known as embracing vulnerability and positive expectations of the other's intentions (Rousseau et al., 1998, p.395)– between supervisors and subordinates remains a significant challenge for management today. A recent study suggests that almost half of all employees (49%) have not reported something to their manager, which they should have, because they fear retaliation (Robinson, 2021). This shows a significant lack of confidence that subordinates have in their managers. A lack of trust in managers is concerning because it can lead to turnover and losses in productivity, among other harmful consequences (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Dirks and de Jong, 2022). In response, scholars have explored how perceptions of supervisor behavior impact subordinate trust (Lau *et al.*, 2014; Zheng *et al.,* 2019). Indeed, subordinates make cognitive attributions about supervisor behavior, which, in turn, influences subordinates' perceptions of supervisors (Antonakis *et al.,* 2021; Antonakis *et al.,* 2016; Lord and Maher, 1993).

An important aspect of the subordinates' trust attribution process is the subordinates' perceived authenticity of the supervisors' behavior (Gardner *et al.,* 2005). Part of being authentic is sharing positive events but also those that are negative, suggesting a degree of supervisor vulnerability. When supervisors exhibit vulnerability to subordinates, it can build subordinate trust because it gives subordinates a sense of the supervisor's values and beliefs (i.e., it is okay to share weakness), perhaps more of an idealized influence in the eyes of subordinates (e.g., Bligh and Robinson, 2010).

One way supervisors may exhibit vulnerability to subordinates is through self-disclosure. Broadly speaking, self-disclosure refers to sharing relevant information that modifies relationship expectations (Gibson, 2018) and can improve organizational-based relationships (Coutifaris and Grant, 2022; Johnson *et al.,* 2020). Self-disclosure allows others a glimpse of the self-discloser's world, thereby fostering the development of a relationship and a sense of intimacy among receivers (Li and Lee, 2023; Toth and Dewa, 2014). Indeed,

the person self-disclosing can influence the receiver's relational cognitions. One type of

supervisor behavior that may influence subordinate trust processes is self-disclosure (Lau *et al.,* 2014; Zheng *et al.,* 2019), particularly a traumatic loss (i.e., Ding, 2021). Within the

context of a supervisor self-disclosing to a subordinate (Zhang *et al.*, 2023) and the disclosure

of a traumatic loss (i.e., Knox *et al.,* 2011), we consider this process also to include the

attributions that subordinates make about the self-disclosing supervisor, particularly about the

special nature and uniqueness – or charismatic qualities of the supervisor (Antonakis *et al.,* 2016). In the present study, we identify supervisors' self-disclosure of a traumatic loss to

subordinates as signaling behavior (Antonakis *et al.,* 2016) that can promote subordinates'

charismatic attributions and subsequent trust.

      Drawing on a cognitive attribution approach to charismatic leadership (e.g., Antonakis

et al., 2016; Lord and Maher, 1993), we investigate whether a supervisor's self-disclosure of a

traumatic loss to subordinates can promote subordinate attributions of charisma and

subsequent trust toward their supervisor, as presented in Figure I.

               ---Insert Figure I here---

      A focus on supervisor self-disclosure primarily advances the charismatic leadership

literature in several ways. First, this study answers calls to identify antecedents of charismatic

attributions by suggesting supervisor self-disclosure as a contender (Antonakis *et al.,* 2017;

Antonakis *et al.,* 2011). We identify supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss as a strong

signaling behavior that can influence subordinates' trust process, considered uncharted

territory. Among numerous effective supervisor/leader behaviors, "sharing stories" is

identified in the leadership literature as one of the most important for influencing others. Yet,

little is known about the types of stories that enhance subordinate attributions of charisma

toward supervisors (i.e., Antonakis *et al.,* 2021; Engelbert *et al.,* 2023). Through an

experiment, we demonstrate that self-disclosure of a traumatic loss is one type of story that

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positively affects subordinates' attributions of charisma. Second, our study contributes to

research on improving subordinates' trust in supervisors (Dirks and de Jong, 2022; Ferrin et

al., 2008). We specifically consider how supervisors' sharing of a traumatic loss, a

vulnerability for the supervisor, can benefit subordinates' cognitive attributions. We provide

the first empirical insight into the effectiveness of supervisor self-disclosure of a negative life

event (i.e., traumatic loss) as an idealized influence in the eyes of subordinates. Such

supervisor self-disclosure has the potential to normalize potential shared experiences with

subordinates and strengthen rapport (Knox *et al.,* 2011), resulting in the supervisor being

viewed as more influential and favorable (Contrastano, 2020). Additionally, such self-

disclosure is associated with developing a stronger working alliance (Davidson, 2011). By

exploring the effects of supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss on followers'

attributions, we add to research calling for a follower-centric approach to studying supervisor

influence dynamics (Bastardoz and Vugt, 2019). Finally, the results from this study suggest

several practical implications and cautions for managers. Management development programs

may benefit from self-disclosure training as a relationship-building tool with subordinates

(Martin *et al.,* 1998).

Theoretical background and development of hypotheses

Supervisors' self-disclosure of a traumatic loss and subordinates' charismatic attributions

Self-disclosure refers to sharing relevant information that modifies relationship

dynamics (Gibson, 2018; Lehmann *et al.,* 2022). Self-disclosure allows others a glimpse of

the self-discloser's world, thereby fostering the development of a relationship and a sense of

intimacy among receivers (Li and Lee, 2023; Toth and Dewa, 2014). Conceptual research on

self-disclosure in organizations is emerging (Gibson *et al.,* 2018; Johnson et al., 2020),

although empirical research on supervisor self-disclosure is limited.

Most recently, Zhang et al. (2023) discovered that a leader signaling vulnerability or weakness by sharing errors increases the positive evaluation of an employee's integrity, thereby enhancing the leader's trust in the employee. Coutifaris and Grant (2022) also found that sharing feedback with individuals in higher positions, such as CEOs, promotes team psychological safety. The role of status has also been identified, suggesting that when high-status individuals disclose perceived weaknesses, it may negatively impact work relationships (Gibson *et al.,* 2018). However, most empirical studies have examined self-disclosure in coworker relationships (e.g., Brooks *et al.,* 2019). One study has examined self-disclosure in teams, finding that it enhances intimacy at the group level (Rosh *et al.,* 2012). Nevertheless, scholars have called for more research on supervisor-subordinate self-disclosure. For instance, Shamir *et al.* (1993) suggest that leaders use one rhetorical technique to create a charismatic effect: showing similarity with subordinates. This may be achieved by sharing a personal transformational story, including negative events, to emphasize similarity (Bligh and Robinson, 2010).

Traumatic loss is a prevalent negative life event, and it represents one form of self-disclosure that individuals may experience in the workplace (Genna *et al.,* 2023; Wilson *et al.,* 2019). While research has delved into the impact of employee grief disclosure and proposed solutions for individuals in higher hierarchical positions to cope with such events, little is known about the effects of a manager's self-disclosure on subordinates. When a supervisor shares their experience of a traumatic personal loss, it can be seen as negative self-disclosure because of the outcome itself (Tsai *et al.,* 2010). Yet, sharing a traumatic loss may be useful for building a connection with subordinates.

Leadership researchers have been making a case for self-disclosure and storytelling to build trust and relationships for quite some time. For instance, pragmatic scholarship on vulnerability suggests benefits to organizational leaders being vulnerable by opening up about

the hardships they have overcome, such as signaling to followers a vulnerability, which helps to boost trust with their leaders (Brown, 2015). According to Goffee and Jones (2019), leaders should share personal stories of their weaknesses with their subordinates because it demonstrates their willingness to take risks by potentially putting their image at stake to humanize themselves in the eyes of their subordinates. Moreover, recent research suggests that self-disclosure of a vulnerability can signal authenticity to colleagues, promoting proximal high-quality connections (Pillemer, 2024). Aside from management scholarship, research in clinical psychology empirical research shows that therapists who self-disclose to patients (e.g., share their experiences of loss and grief) can encourage several positive outcomes, such as fostering a stronger bond and acting as a positive role model (Tsai *et al.,* 2010). This research suggests the positive effects of sharing stories of past weaknesses/hardships, such as signaling leaders' willingness to be vulnerable and authentic, taking risks for their followers' needs, and creating trust-based relationships between supervisors and subordinates. We extend this thinking to argue that supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss promotes positive charismatic attributions about the supervisor (Antonakis *et al.,* 2016; Lord and Maher, 1993).

According to the cognitive attribution approach to charismatic leadership (Antonakis *et al.,* 2016; Lord and Maher, 1993), perceiving charisma is a symbolic and emotional influence arising from a supervisor's behaviors (Antonakis *et al.,* 2016; Grabo *et al.,* 2017). This, in turn, encourages subordinates to view charisma as a quality associated with the leader's behavior and the leader themselves (Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Ekmekcioglu *et al.,* 2018; House, 1999; Shamir, 1999). According to this perspective, charisma is an attributional phenomenon that subordinates associate with the supervisor because the supervisor can use vivid and emotional methods to engage in collective action (Antonakis *et al.,* 2011; Den Hartog and Verburg, 1997; Shamir *et al.,* 1993). Research has identified that examples of

perceived leadership qualities that help leaders to be seen as charismatic are being generous, inspiring, and visionary (Hollander, 1992; Williams *et al.,* 2018).

Within the context of a supervisor self-disclosing to a subordinate, we consider the cognitive attributions that subordinates make about the self-disclosing supervisor of a traumatic loss (Lord and Maher, 1993), particularly about the special nature and uniqueness – or charismatic qualities of the supervisor themselves (Antonakis et al., 2016). Thus, we expect a supervisor's self-disclosure of a traumatic loss can help establish a connection with their subordinates and increase their charismatic attributions towards the supervisor.

Hypothesis 1. Supervisors' self-disclosure of a traumatic loss will increase subordinates' charismatic attributions about supervisors.

Charismatic attributions as a mediator of supervisor self-disclosure (of a traumatic loss) and subordinate trust

Trust is the willingness to embrace vulnerability, built upon positive expectations of the other's intentions of behavior (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998, p.395). Subordinate trust toward their supervisor is particularly important for enhancing job satisfaction (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002), fostering open communication (Men *et al.,* 2019), and promoting organizational commitment (Kleine *et al.,* 2019). An important part of how subordinates trust their supervisors is based on how genuine they perceive their supervisors (Gardner *et al.,* 2005). This means that supervisors who are open about both positive and negative experiences, showing a level of vulnerability, can help to build trust with their subordinates (Meyer *et al.,*2017). Research in personal relationships suggests that self-disclosure, especially when sharing content about personal experiences such as moments of happiness and depression, can lead to increased trust from the recipient. (Collins and Miller, 1994; Ma and Clark, 2023). We argue that when leaders show vulnerability through self-disclosing a traumatic loss, it can

help subordinates understand the values and beliefs of their leaders and may make them see their leaders as more charismatic – or influential and inspiring. We draw from the extant literature on leadership and trust to provide a basis to understand how supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss will indirectly promote subordinate trust in the leader.

In seminal research, Dirks and Ferrin (2002) identified two perspectives on trust: relationship-based and character-based, which can explain different trust processes. A relationship-based perspective is linked to the affect-based trust process and includes attributions about leader behavior (e.g., caring, benevolent, and protective of followers) and the balance of exchanges (Kark and Shamir, 2007; Zhu and Akhtar, 2014). A character-based perspective is linked to a cognitive-based trust process. It includes follower attributions about leader characteristics, such as integrity, dependability, and leader competence, which influence their dependence within the hierarchical relationship (Schoorman *et al.,* 2007; Zhu and Akhtar, 2014).

Consistent with this line of research and in line with a cognitive attribution approach of charismatic leadership (Lord and Maher, 1993), we suggest that subordinates make attributions about supervisors' self-disclosure in terms of the leader's behavior itself as well as the nature of the supervisor (Antonakis *et al., 2016*). Since supervisor self-disclosure is a type of behavior, subordinates are likely to make attributions about how charismatic it is. Similarly, subordinates can also make inferences about supervisors' self-disclosure in terms of the supervisors themselves and how charismatic they are as a person, which would influence subordinates' vulnerability within the power-based relationship. Taken together, we suggest that self-disclosure is likely to influence both affective-based and cognitive-based trust through charismatic attributions. Indeed, empirical evidence shows that charismatic attributions precede trust (Antonakis *et al.,* 2011; Antonakis and House, 2002; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996).

Hypothesis 2. Subordinates' charismatic attributions toward supervisors will mediate the positive effect between supervisors' self-disclosure of a traumatic loss and subordinate (a) affective-based trust and (b) cognitive-based trust.

Method

Sample and Procedures

To examine the hypotheses, we employed experimental vignettes because they provide ecological validity and can neutralize pre-existing impressions of a real person (Aguinis and Bradley, 2014). By adopting a vignette approach, we ensured that any differences observed were based on theoretical behavior rather than physical characteristics.

Participants were full-time employees recruited from Prolific Academic who had no supervisory duties. They were from a wide variety of occupations. The average age was 39; 63 percent self-identified as female (37 percent male).

Participants were randomly assigned to the supervisor self-disclosure condition (n = 101) or the control condition (n = 100). We followed the vignette methods preconized by Adams and Webster (2017) by giving a gender-neutral name to the supervisor described in the scenarios to encourage participants from the follower's perspective to respond to subsequent questions. Both scenarios were approximately 100 words and are available in supplemental material.

In the self-disclosure condition, participants read a vignette describing the supervisor, Pat, who self-discloses a traumatic loss. In the control condition, participants were presented with the same vignette, but the traumatic loss was left out, and instead, a neutral piece of information about office location was included. After reading the vignette, participants completed the manipulation check on supervisor self-disclosure and the measure of

charismatic attributions and affective-based and cognitive-based trust. For all measures, a 7-point Likert-type scale was used (1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree).

Measures

Self-disclosure manipulation check. Participants were asked to rate how much the supervisor self-disclosed a tragic loss in the speech on a 7-point scale using three items. Items include "the leader Pat went through a traumatic experience," "the supervisor Pat shared a personal loss in the first meeting," and "the supervisor Pat went through a traumatic experience" ($\alpha = .98$).

Participants in the self-disclosure condition reported receiving more personal information (i.e., tragic loss) (M = 6.50, SD = 0.90) than did participants in the control condition (M = 2.05, SD = 1.05), F(1, 199) = 995.804, p < .001, $\eta2 = .839$), thus providing support of the effectiveness of the self-disclosure manipulation.

Subordinates' charismatic supervisor attributions. To assess subordinates' attributions of charisma toward the supervisor based on the vignette, we adapted the "attributed idealized influence" scale of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Form 5X (Bass and Avolio, 1995). This subscale included five items and has been used in research examining charismatic leader attributions (e.g., Antonakis *et al.,* 2003; Antonakis *et al.,* 2011). Participants were then asked to indicate their agreement on the extent to which the supervisor is charismatic based on the vignette. A sample item includes "Pat, the supervisor, talked about their most important values and beliefs" ($\alpha = .90$).

Subordinate*s' affective-based and cognitive-based trust.* McAllister's (1995) measure of affective-based and cognitive-based trust was slightly adapted to the vignette to include "Pat the subordinate" as the reference point. *Affective-based trust* consists of five items. A sample item includes: "I can talk freely to Pat, the supervisor, about difficulties I am having at work and know that they will want to listen." ($\alpha = .92$). *Cognitive-based trust* consisted of six

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items. A sample item includes: "Given Pat the supervisor's track record, I see no reason to doubt their competence and preparation for the job" (α = .74).

Results

Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the study variables. Notably, age and gender were not correlated with charismatic attributions or affective-based and cognitive-based trust; thus, they were not included in further analyses.

---Insert Table I here---

To examine the hypotheses, we ran mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 4 in SPSS (Hayes, 2013) using bootstrapping analysis with 10,000 randomly selected samples. Self-disclosure was coded as 1 and the control as 0 and added as the independent variable, with charismatic attributions as the mediator and affective and cognitive-based trust as the dependent variables. Thus, we proceeded without controls. Table II presents the mediation results.

---Insert Table II about here---

Hypothesis 1 stated that supervisors' self-disclosure is positively related to subordinates' charismatic attributions, which is supported (a = 1.12). Hypothesis 2 (a) stated that subordinates' charismatic attributions about their supervisor will mediate the indirect effect of supervisor self-disclosure on subordinate affective-based trust, which is also supported (b = .47). The results revealed that supervisor self-disclosure was associated with subordinate affective-based trust independently of its effects on subordinates' attributed charisma (c' = .55, p = .00), yet larger than the direct effect. This suggests a suppression effect from attributed charisma on the relationship between supervisor self-disclosure and affective-based trust (Hoyle *et al.,* 2023; Watson *et al., 2013*). The effect of supervisor self-disclosure on affective-based trust strongly influenced affective-based trust in supervisors. Hypothesis 2 (b) stated that subordinates' charismatic attributions would mediate the indirect

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effect of supervisor self-disclosure on subordinates' cognitive-based trust. Attributed supervisor charisma was positively associated with cognitive-based trust in the supervisor (b = .38). In contrast to subordinates' affective-based trust, there is no evidence that supervisor self-disclosure is associated with subordinates' cognitive-based trust independently of its effects on subordinates' attributed charisma (c' = -.16, p > .05), thereby suggesting full mediation.

Discussion

Leadership effectiveness is strongly predicated on the trust between employees and supervisors, which remains challenging to develop and sustain (Zheng et al., 2019; Zhu and Akhtar, 2014). Drawing on a cognitive attribution approach to charismatic leadership, we examined how supervisors ' self-disclosure of a traumatic loss can influence subordinates ' charismatic attributions and trust toward their supervisor (Antonakis et al., 2016; Lord and Maher, 1993). We developed an experimental vignette to manipulate supervisor self-disclosure. Our study shows that when supervisors share personal experiences, such as a traumatic loss, it can increase subordinates' trust by enhancing charismatic attributions. We discuss contributions to theory, future research directions, and implications for managerial practice.

Theoretical contributions

The results make at least two important contributions to charismatic leadership research. First, our focus on supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss, an act of embracing vulnerability, as contributing to subordinates' trust process is unchartered territory. Our findings provide the first empirical insights into the potential of supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss as a key antecedent of attributions of supervisor charisma (Antonakis *et al.,* 2016). Antonakis *et al.* (2011) examined leader story-sharing with followers as a potential predictor of charismatic attributions. However, examination of specific types of stories has

been neglected, limiting self-disclosure's practical utility in a hierarchical management relationship context. As our findings suggest, as an idealized influence, supervisors' self-disclosure of a traumatic loss can promote positive subordinate attributions. This is a particularly unique contribution to the charismatic leadership literature because it considers traumatic loss as a type of story that serves as a signaling behavior (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2011; Conger, 1991) in subordinates' cognitive attribution process (Lord and Maher, 1993). Moreover, within the dynamics of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, this is a first step toward developing a manipulation of self-disclosure of traumatic loss (Grabo and van Vugt, 2016; Joireman *et al.,* 2006; Kafashan *et al.,* 2014). In doing so, we also contribute to empirical research on self-disclosure within the supervisor-subordinate context (Rothbard et al., 2022).

Second, our findings show that supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss – a specific signaling behavior — can also enhance charismatic attributions and subsequent trust processes, namely affective-based and cognitive-based trust. This also represents a significant advancement of the supervisor-subordinate trust literature because we provide a theoretical and empirical extension to the notion that supervisors who share personal challenges and vulnerabilities can build stronger relationships with their subordinates (e.g., Brown, 2015; Goffee and Jones, 2019). Indeed, our findings also suggest that supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss has the potential to signal trustworthiness and authenticity about the self-disclosure to foster stronger connections with subordinates. Such conclusions support research arguing that self-disclosure can signal authenticity, which promotes high-quality relationships with others (Pillemer, 2024).

Interestingly, the effects were stronger for affective-based trust relative to cognitive-based trust. Importantly, supervisor self-disclosure has a direct effect on affective-based trust. In contrast, supervisor self-disclosure's effect on cognitive-based trust disappeared without

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including charismatic attributions toward supervisors. This difference in findings dovetails with previous research showing the immediate effects of self-disclosure on recipient relationship-based trust processes such as liking (e.g., Cozby, 1972; Huang *et al.,* 2017; Sprecher *et al.,* 2013). Indeed, personal relationship research uses the "disclosure-liking hypothesis" to illustrate that self-disclosure can promote recipients' affection for disclosers (Collins and Miller, 1994). As a natural extension, future research might build on these findings by investigating how supervisor self-disclosure may influence subordinate trust behavior. The charismatic appeal of a supervisor's self-disclosure may influence relational and exchange-based subordinates' trust behavior. The possibility of subordinates reciprocating by self-disclosing is also an interesting future avenue.

Limitations and future research directions

While our experimental scenario can provide valuable insights into the effects of a supervisor's self-disclosure of a traumatic loss, several limitations highlight the need to interpret these findings with caution. First, the experimental vignette took place in a controlled setting, suggesting concerns with ecological validity, which can limit the generalizability of the findings to actual organizational contexts (Araújo *et al.,* 2007). Likewise, the emotional impact of a supervisor's self-disclosure of a traumatic loss in an experimental setting may not be as profound or genuine as in real-life situations, limiting participants' full cognitive-based and affective-based trust reactions. Second, our experiment was conducted at a single point, which may not capture the long-term effects of a leader's self-disclosure on follower attributions of charisma. Indeed, followers' charismatic attributions and their impact on follower trust might evolve over time. Future research might extend these findings to capture supervisor self-disclosure using dynamic methods, such as experience sampling (Horstmann, 2021), to understand how subordinate charismatic attributions unfold over time. One possibility is that increased charismatic perceptions may be

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due to the emotional value of self-disclosure (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999; den Hartog and Verburg, 1998; Engelbert *et al.,* 2023). Future research should explore how self-disclosure of a traumatic loss may induce short-term affection toward the supervisor.

Third, it is important to consider the frequency of leader self-disclosure, as frequent self-disclosure may reduce the element of surprise and perceived value and potentially undermine perceptions of authenticity (Derlega and Grzelak, 1979). To address these issues, future research should complement experimental findings with field studies and longitudinal research to capture the dynamics of leader self-disclosure of a traumatic loss over time.

Finally, our study focused on the positive consequences of supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss, but future research may consider the negative consequences. For instance, when a leader's self-disclosure of traumatic loss is perceived as inauthentic, it can adversely affect followers' charismatic attributions and trust. Research suggests that inauthentic self-disclosure can lead to negative outcomes such as decreased trust and reduced perceptions of leadership effectiveness (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Gardner *et al.,* 2009). Exploring these potential negative impacts is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of supervisor self-disclosure (Knox *et al.,* 2011). Research suggests that future research should explore this avenue.

Implications for management development

Self-disclosure may be used in management development programs to build subordinate trust and improve relationship functioning (Kou and Gray, 2018). There are several pragmatic points to consider when developing such programs. From the follower's perspective, the fact that supervisor self-disclosure is seldom performed creates an effect of surprise (Derlega and Grzelak, 1979). The fewer times subordinates hear a story, the more powerful a supervisor's self-disclosure becomes, as its rarity enhances the special and unique nature of being placed in the supervisor's confidence. Furthermore, supervisor self-disclosure

can help to emphasize the role of signaling in charismatic leadership training (i.e., Antonakis *et al.,* 2021). It suggests that self-disclosure, as a form of storytelling, can be effectively employed by supervisors to cultivate trust among subordinates, consequently influencing their attributions of charisma towards supervisors.

At the same time, we urge caution in the use of supervisor self-disclosure of traumatic loss as either a transactional tactic or as a calculated tool to develop trust with subordinates. As with all aspects of leadership, tactics and behaviors can be utilized for self-interest or collective goals, resulting in personalized or socialized charismatic attributions (Shamir and Howell, 1999). Similarly, supervisors' self-disclosure can lead to both ethical and unethical consequences for followers. We thus explicitly recognize that supervisors may utilize self-disclosure for manipulation or to enhance their emotional connections with subordinates and that this reveals a potential "dark side" of supervisor disclosure. However, to the extent that leader self-disclosure is grounded in the supervisor's own values and his/her authentic journey of learning and discovery, it remains an important avenue to explore. More specifically, it may be a critical mechanism to create and foster lasting understanding and trusting relationships with followers in organizational contexts in which both are increasingly difficult to find and maintain.

Conclusion

In this study, we assess the effects of supervisor self-disclosure of a traumatic loss on subordinates' charismatic attributions and subsequent trust toward their supervisor. In doing so, we dive into uncharted territory to advance research on charismatic leadership and provide the first insights into the role supervisor self-disclosure can play. More broadly, we hope this research will spark future work on the role of self-disclosure of traumatic loss in supervisor-subordinate relations.

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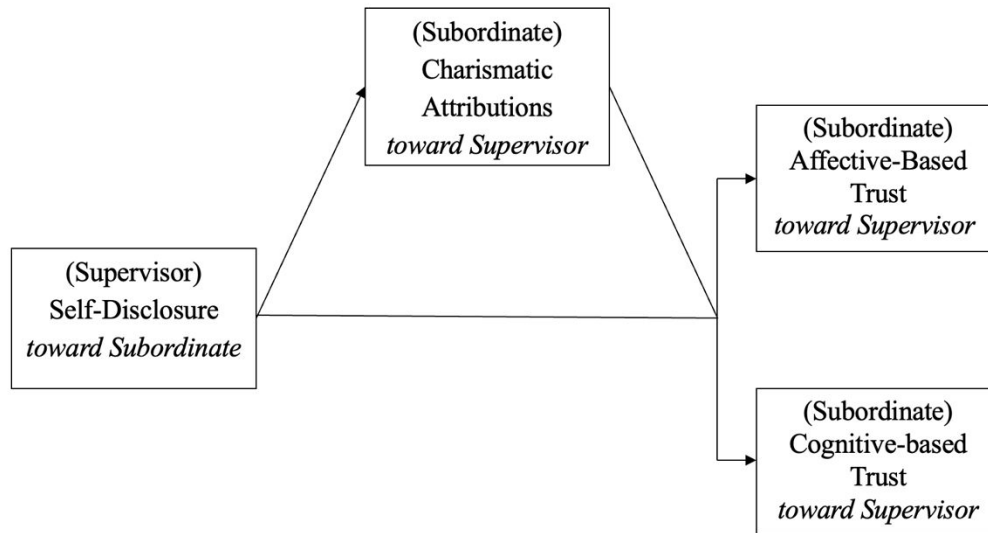
Figure 1. Hypothesized model

Table I

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the study variables (N = 201)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Age	38.62	11.713						
2 Gender	.63	.523	.036					
3 Supervisor self-disclosure	.50	.501	.022	.061				
4 Charismatic attributions	3.75	1.255	-.064	-.038	.443**			
5 Affective-based trust	4.29	1.082	.003	-.049	.493**	.657**		
6 Cognitive based-trust	4.41	.710	-.102	-.079	.187**	.634**	.655**	
Cronbach's alpha	-	-	-	-	-	.90	.92	.74

Note(s): *n = 201*. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), Self-diclosure (1 = manipulation; 0 = control).

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01 (two-tailed)

Table II

Results of the mediation analysis

Path	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total effect						
Direct effect (c')	0.55	0.12	4.40	0.00	0.30	0.79
IV-M (a)	1.12	0.16	7.05	0.00	0.81	1.44
M-Affective-based trust (b)	0.47	0.05	9.47	0.00	0.37	0.57
Total effect						
Direct effect (c')	-0.16	0.09	-1.79	> 0.05	-0.33	0.02
IV-M (a)	1.12	0.16	7.05	0.00	0.81	1.44
M-Cognitive-based trust (b)	0.38	0.03	11.08	0.00	0.32	0.45
	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI		
Total indirect effect						
IV-M- Affective-based trust (ab)	0.53	0.10	0.34	0.73		
IV-M-Cognitive-based trust (ab)	0.43	0.08	0.28	0.58		

Note(s): These path coefficients for the mediation model of Hayes PROCESS model 4, indirect effects and 95% confidence interval (N = 201), SE is the standard error, IV = independent variable (Self-disclosure), M = Charismatic attributions; a and b are regression coefficients for X; while b is the regression coefficient for M. Boot-LLCI and Boot-ULCI are respectively the abbreviations for lower limit bootstrap confidence interval and upper limit bootstrap confidence interval